

Certainty of God's Witness

1 John 5:6-13

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1 John 5:1-5 Summary: Describes who is and what it means to be born of God.

Applications from this passage...

- All who believe that Jesus is the Christ is born of God.
- All who are born of God will love Him and His children.
- Loving God makes keeping His commandments something we'll want to do.
- Being born of God gives us victory over the world system.

1 John 5:6-8 – Identifying who Jesus Christ is.

This is He who came by water and blood — Jesus Christ; not only by water, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit who bears witness, because the Spirit is truth. For there are three that bear witness in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness on earth: the Spirit, the water, and the blood; and these three agree as one.

What does Jesus coming by water and blood tell us?

John makes it clear that the Jesus he speaks of is not the Gnostic, “phantom” Jesus who could have no physical nature because of His holiness.

- The Jesus we must believe in is the Jesus who **came by water and blood**; the Jesus who was part of a real, material, flesh-and-blood earth.

Is His coming by water and blood pointing to the two ordinances: baptism and communion?

Some believe that **water** speaks of *our own baptism*, and **blood** speaks of *receiving communion*, and that John writes of how Jesus comes to us in the two Christian sacraments of baptism and communion (Luther and Calvin had this idea).

- Yet, this doesn't add up with the tense used here; John seems to write of something that happened in the past, not something that is ongoing.

Could the water and blood be a reference to Jesus being stabbed with a spear on the cross?

Augustine believed that:

John 19:34 – *But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out.*

Yet, if this was John's meaning, it is a little unclear how it can be said that Jesus **came by water and blood**.

Could the water and blood be a reference to Jesus' birth and death?

Some believe the **water** spoke of Jesus being born of the “waters of the womb,” and **blood** speaks of His death.

- If this is the case, John would be essentially writing, “Jesus was born as a man and died as a man. He was completely human, not a super-spiritual being who had no real contact with the material world.”
- The Gnostics in John's day thought of Jesus as just such a super-spiritual being.

So, what is the best explanation for what it means that Jesus came by water and blood?

Probably the best explanation is the oldest recorded Christian understanding of this passage (by Tertullian):

- Most likely, John means the **water** of Jesus' own baptism, and the **blood** of His crucifixion.

Why was Jesus baptized?

When Jesus was baptized, He was not baptized in repentance for His own sin (He had none), but because He wanted to completely identify with sinful humanity.

- When He **came by water**, it was His way of saying, “I am one of you.”

How did the death of Jesus on the cross further identify with us humans?

Jesus did not die because He had to (death had no power over Him), but He laid down His life to identify with sinful humanity and to save us from our sin.

- When He **came by... blood** it was so that He could stand in our place as a guilty sinner, and to take the punishment our sin deserved.

How does the best explanation connect with John 3:5?

John 3:5 – *Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.*

The being *born of water* in this passage speaks of the public profession of identifying with the death & resurrection of Christ in baptism.

How were the Gnostics trying to avoid the offense of the cross in making Jesus only a spirit or only human?

The Gnostics were effectively saying, “It really wasn’t the Son of God who hung on the cross.”

How do modern people avoid the offense of the cross?

Some deny Jesus was God at all, and just think of Him as a “noble martyr.”

- Some trivialize the cross, making it a mere ornament in jewelry and pop fashion trends.
- Others replace the cross with a self-help, self-esteem gospel of psychology, or use a cross-less evangelism.

Who bears witness to the truth about Jesus?

The Holy Spirit also bears witness to the true person of Jesus, even as Jesus promised He would (*He will testify of Me... He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you* [John 15:26 and 16:14]).

How is the Spirit, the water, and the blood all witnesses about Jesus on earth?

Jesus’ life, death, and the Spirit all tell us who Jesus is, and they tell us in agreement.

Why are there footnotes regarding 1 John 5:7-8 in many Bibles?

1 John 5:7-8 – *in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness on the earth*

These words that are not included in the vast majority of New Testament Greek manuscripts.

- The words in question occur in no Greek manuscript until the 14th century, except for one 11th & 12th century manuscripts in which they have been added to the margin by another hand.

In the first few hundred years of Christianity, there were many theological debates regarding the exact nature and understanding of the Trinity.

- In all of those debates, *no one* ever once quoted these words in question from 1 John 5:7-8.

In all ancient translations — Syriac, Arabic, Ethiopian, Coptic, Sahidic, Armenian, Slavonian, and so forth — this disputed passage is not included.

- Only in the Latin Vulgate does it appear.

So, what should we conclude about 1 John 5:7-8?

It is probably best to regard these words as the work of an over-zealous copyist who thought that the New Testament needed a little help with the doctrine of the Trinity, and he figured this was a good place to do it.

- Or perhaps the words just started as notes written in the margin of a manuscript, but the next person who copied the manuscript thought they must belong in the text itself.

Do we need 1 John 5:7-8 to make the case for the doctrine of the Trinity?

While there is no explicit statement of the Trinity such as this, it is woven into the fabric of the New Testament — we find the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit working together as equal, yet distinct Persons...

(Matthew 3:16-17; 28:19; Luke 1:35; John 1:33-34 14:16, 26; 16:13-15; 20:21-22; Acts 2:33-38; Romans 15:16; 2 Corinthians 1:21-22; 13:14; Galatians 4:6; Ephesians 3:14-16; 4:4-6; 1 Peter 1:2).

Should this discrepancy cause us to question the New Testament?

Passages like this give us no reason to fear that our New Testaments are unreliable.

- In the entire New Testament, there are only 50 passages which have any sort of question regarding the reliability of the text, and none of those are the sole foundation for any Christian doctrine or belief.
- no more than one-one thousandth of the text is in question at all.

In addition, when such a passage like this is inserted, the textual evidence from the manuscripts makes it stick out like a sore thumb.

- This gives us assurance, not doubt.

1 John 5:9-10 – The witness of men & God.

If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater; for this is the witness of God which He has testified of His Son. He who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself; he who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed the testimony that God has given of His Son.

How does the witness of men compare to the witness of God?

Everybody, everyday, receives the witness of men regarding various things.

- Therefore, we should have much more confidence in the witness of God when He tells us who Jesus is.

Is our faith in Christ blind faith?

No, our faith is to be based on reliable testimony.

- And we have the most reliable testimony possible, **the witness of God**.
- We have our experience with God working in our lives and answering prayer.

How does the Bible reinforce our faith?

We know the Bible has to be from God because of:

- It not having any contradictions despite 40 authors over 1500 years.
- Fulfilled prophecy
- Archeology verifying historical accuracy
- It's scientific accuracy
- It's wisdom that works

How is it that *he who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself*?

When we believe on Jesus, we receive the Holy Spirit as an inner confirmation of our standing before God.

Romans 8:16 – *The Spirit Himself bears witness with our Spirit that we are children of God.*

How do unbelievers make God a liar?

When we refuse to believe in Jesus, we reject *the testimony God has given of His Son*.

- Therefore, we call God a liar with our unbelief.
- Everyone who refuses to believe God doesn't *intend* to call God a liar. But they do it nonetheless.

1 John 5:11-13 – Assurance of life in the Son.

And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God.

What is the testimony from God that we must believe?

That God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son: This is God's essential message to man; that eternal life is a gift from God, received in Jesus Christ.

He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.

It is all about Jesus, and living in Jesus is the evidence of eternal life.

Why is this testimony of God so important?

These things I have written to you who believe... that you may know that you have eternal life: In stating the message so plainly, John hopes to persuade us to believe.

- Even if we already believe, he wants us to *know that you have eternal life*, so we can have this assurance, and so that *you may continue to believe*.

How can we know we have eternal life?

We can only **know** this if our salvation rests in Jesus and not in our own performance.

- If it depends on me, then on a good day I'm saved and on a bad day, I don't really know.
- But if it depends on what Jesus has done for me, then I can **know**.

What applications do we see from this discussion?

- Jesus identified with us in His coming by the water and the blood.
- God Himself is the best witness we have about Jesus Christ... who He was & why he came.
- The Godhead is a Trinity with three co-equal persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We don't need 1 Jn 5:7-8 to prove that.
- Eternal Security is an important biblical doctrine... God wants us to know for sure we're going to heaven.