

Opening Words

We accept human testimony all the time. If we accept human testimony to confirm things, should we not accept God's testimony?

347 44 1 John The Witness 2

In our previous broadcast, we started looking at a fascinating passage of Scripture in 1 John 5. In this Scripture John says there are three witnesses that show us the truth – the water, the blood, and the Spirit. The contest in the courtroom is between the false religions of the world and Christianity. In this case, the contest is between Gnosticism and the teaching of John, the Apostle of Jesus. The Gnostics have paraded their witnesses to the stand, but John has poked holes in their testimony. He exposed their false beliefs. They didn't believe in the historical Jesus that he followed. Their Jesus was just another man, the offspring of Joseph and Mary, who received some kind of spirit that left him and went back to heavenly realms before he died on the cross. They didn't really believe in the importance of love nor did they believe that their moral and ethical behavior were important.

After poking holes in their testimony, John presents his witnesses to testify. In our previous broadcast we saw the witness of the water. This referred to the baptism of Christ during which the Father said that the one being baptized was the Servant-King of Israel. We saw that the Father combined a kingship psalm (Psalm 2), with a Servant prophecy (Isaiah 42). This combination of these passages showed that the one who humbled himself by submitting to water baptism - even though he did not need it - was the one who would restore the kingdom to earth, but he would restore it by servanthood and humility. It showed that the true historical Jesus came, not to give us a secret knowledge to ascend to heavenly realms, but he came to restore God's kingdom to earth. The earth is God's focus – not some so-called heavenly realms the Gnostics talked about.

John has two more witnesses. The second witness he calls to the witness stand is the Blood. This one is easier to identify. John is obviously talking about the blood of the cross. The Gnostics said that Jesus' death was not important – that the so-called Christ spirit left him before he died because the Christ spirit could not be tainted by such suffering. But John is saying that the blood on the cross was from the eternal Christ, the eternal Word, and this man dying on the cross was more than a mere man. He was the eternal God in human form dying for us and that that death had to take place as a payment for our sins. Christ finished his ministry the same way he started his ministry. He started with the humble waters of baptism. He ended with the humble blood of the cross. These earthly physical acts were of the greatest significance for the fulfillment of God's plan on earth.

John is ready for the third witness; the Holy Spirit. What does the Spirit say? The Spirit says that this Jesus of Nazareth was and is the promised Messiah of the Old Testament. The Spirit says that his baptism and cross, both acts of humility were the acts of God in the flesh to obtain our salvation. God gained our salvation by humbling himself from glory, becoming a man, becoming a servant, and going all the way to death on a criminal's cross. The Spirit says that this same Jesus who was baptized with water and shed his blood on the cross is now exalted at the right hand of God. God raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the realms where angelic forces live,

and he is now Lord over these forces. This Jesus, the same Jesus who came by the waters of baptism and the blood of the cross has now poured out the Spirit of God upon his people and they are now empowered to take the message of the restoration of the kingdom to the nations of the world.

These were John's three witnesses – the water, the blood, and the Spirit. John wrote this because the churches he was pastoring were in danger of being deceived by false teachers, and that's why it is so important for you to know God's word because false teachers did not go out of business in the first century. We have them today! This is why it is important to learn this book because just as John refutes false teaching in his day, we should protect ourselves from false teaching in our day, and the primary way we do this is by understanding that God's witnesses, including the three that John talks about, the water, the blood, and the Spirit point to Jesus of Nazareth as being the promised Messiah of Israel.

Three witnesses, and what are they saying? They are saying that in order to gain eternal life, you must connect with Jesus Christ the eternal Son of God who came into this world. He was born fully human by a miraculous virgin birth. He had a normal, Jewish upbringing. At age 30, He entered His ministry of proclaiming salvation to Israel and the world. He was baptized in the Jordan River by the prophet John and three years later He died on the cross for our sins.

Now with this background in mind, listen to the rest of John's closing argument in verses 9-13. He said:

⁹We accept man's testimony, but God's testimony is greater because it is the testimony of God, which he has given about his Son. ¹⁰Anyone who believes in the Son of God has this testimony in his heart. Anyone who does not believe God has made him out to be a liar, because he has not believed the testimony God has given about his Son. ¹¹And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. ¹²He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. ¹³I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.

These are solemn words. I like how John said it in verse 9. We accept man's testimony, don't we? We accept human testimony all the time. In Jewish law, a trial against a person could only proceed if there were two or three witnesses. One witness was never enough. John says, "we have three witnesses and these three witnesses are from God." God Himself has spoken to the world. And if we accept human testimony to confirm things for us, should we not accept God's testimony?

John then becomes blunt. He says, "if we do not believe in God's testimony then we are calling God a liar." Those are serious words, but this is a serious subject because we are talking about eternal destiny. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.

John then states the purpose for writing this letter. In verse 13 he shows us he is writing to the Christians, to those who have believed in Jesus as the Son of God so that they can be fully assured that they have eternal life. They don't need to follow this new teaching, this new confusing religion. If they have Jesus, they can be assured that they have eternal life.

I want to point out one more phrase in this passage. It's in verse 10, "Anyone who believes the Son of God has this testimony in his heart."

Do you have the testimony in your heart? Do you have that inner confirmation that the Christ of history, the one who was baptized, crucified, raised, and enthroned is in your life? People today make two mistakes. The first mistake is to say, "these things didn't happen and so I am not going to follow Jesus." They don't have the Son of God in their life.

The second mistake is to say, "These things happened," and they never act upon the truth. They never receive Jesus in their heart, they never receive that inner confirmation or testimony in their heart. They don't have the Son of God in their life.

The correct approach is to say, "I believe in the historical Jesus. I believe that he came by water and that when he was baptized God showed that he was the true king of the world. I want to cease from my rebellion and submit to the true king who is also a servant. I believe that he came by blood and that when he died on the cross it was not just an unfortunate event, but that blood was the payment to get me out of the slavery of sin. I believe in the Holy Spirit who raised him up with the Father and who now lives in God's people because Jesus is enthroned at the right hand of God. I receive Him into my life – the same Jesus who lived, died, and rose again I will now follow."

Does that resonate with your heart? If so, I want to lead you in prayer right now, where you are, if you are getting ready for work or driving to work or at work or at home, you can and should call upon Jesus right now. The court case has been decided. The apostle John won. The Gnostics and all false religion lost. The jury passed the verdict in favor of John, the apostle of Jesus. They passed the verdict in favor of the historic faith which was once for all delivered to the world by Jesus and the apostles whom he chose.

Now, what will you do? How will you decide? I urge you to decide for the historic truth of Christianity. I urge you to submit to Jesus. Pray this with me right now, "Father in heaven ... thank you for sending Jesus... I believe that he came for me ... thank you that he died for me ... for my sins ... that I might come back to you. Take away my sins ... wash me ... make me your child ... come into my life... I will follow you."

Did you pray that? If so, I urge you to find a church and to tell a pastor. Confirm your prayer by submitting to baptism which shows your faith to the world. And if you would like to write us and tell us this, we will rejoice with you and we will send you some material to help you grow in the faith.

I'm so glad all of you have been with me today. For those who have already received Christ, I urge you to stand firm in the faith, be a witness for our Lord who is Lord of all. Thank you for your prayers for us and thank you for standing with us with your financial giving which helps us promote the message of Jesus across the land and into other countries of the world.

May the Lord bless you all.