

GOD' S THREE WITNESSES TO HIS SON JESUS CHRIST
1Jno.5:6-12
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I. INTRODUCTION

1. The matter of Jesus of Nazareth being the Christ the Son of the living God has been under consideration throughout this Epistle of 1Jno.
2. John has placed great emphasis upon two things relative to the subject of faith in him as the Christ the Son of God.
 - a. 1st, In a bold manner he has branded those who were denying that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, as lying, deceiving, antichrists and false prophets, who are of the world and therefore speak they of the world.
 - b. 2nd, In a very emphatic way he has revealed and declared the present and eternal blessings available to those who continue to believe and openly confess that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh.
That:
 - (1) They have the promise of eternal life.
 - (2) They will have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming; they will have boldness in the day of judgment.
 - (3) Their abiding faith and habitual practice of righteousness is evidential proof of their being begotten of God; that they are of God, not of the devil, as are those who are liars because they say they have fellowship with God and yet walk in darkness.
 - (4) They dwell in God and God dwells in them
 - (5) By their faith in Jesus they gain the victory over the world; they are more than conquerors in Christ.
 - (6) They have assurance that their prayers will be heard and answered when offered according to his revealed will.
3. But upon what evidence and whose testimony does one believe that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, that he is the Son of God, as claimed? What is the substance of that testimony? How did it come, or how does it come to us?
4. Whereas John has discussed the absolute need for believing and confessing that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh in order to secure the promise of any of these blessings, he, now, in 1Jno.5:6-8 reveals the basis or the evidential proof for that faith.

5. Since the victory over the world can be secured only by those who believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God, then it is of the utmost importance that the Divine testimony to him should be unmistakably clear; that there should be infallible proof of his identity as claimed.
 - a. To this end John proceeds in Vv.6-8, in one of his most striking passages, to show, first, that the testimony of God concerning Jesus Christ as his Son is objectively given, and, then, in Vv.9,10, the commanding claim this testimony has upon our acceptance of it.
 - (1) Cf. what Jesus said in Jesus said in Jno.5:31-40.
 - b. The proof is offered by “the Holy Spirit that beareth witness,” V.6a.
 - c. The witness of the Holy Spirit is identical with that of God, V.9.
 - d. And the one possessed by every believer, V.10
6. John herein offers the most convincing testimony that confidence which is reposed in Jesus Christ as the Son of God is well founded.
 - a. The evidence to support our faith comes to us through incontestable, infallible, positive divine testimony.
 - b. The testimony offered here is **three-fold**: “there are three that bear witness, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one,” V.8.
7. According to Vv.6,8, we have three historical incidents bearing on the testimony that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. We have:
 - a. The testimony of the “water.”
 - b. The testimony of the “blood.”
 - c. The testimony of the “the Spirit.”
 - d. All of which, of course, is the testimony of God himself, V.9.
8. Thus, in Vv.11,12, he speaks of the testimony of God himself, as to:
 - a. What he has given us and where it is found, V.11.
 - b. Who has hope of that gift of God and who has not, V.12.
9. These witnesses we now proceed to discuss.

II. DISCUSSION

A. **1ST, THE TESTIMONY OF THE “WATER” : We have good reason to believe that Jesus is the Son of God for: “This is he that came by water...even Jesus Christ,” V.6a.**

1. This is he who was proved to be Son of God “**by water.**”

2. This does not refer to his Incarnation, his virgin birth, but to his baptism by John, the Baptist, in order that Jesus “should be made manifest to Israel,” and for John to “bear record” that he is “the Son of God.”
 - a. For John acted both as:
 - (1) A witness, and as,
 - (2) A record bearer of it.
 - b. See Jno.1:29-36.
3. His coming “by water” as testimony that he is God’s Son, was attested miraculously by both the Father and the Holy Spirit (Mt.3:16-17), as well as by John, who heard and saw this miraculous demonstration (Jno.1:32), as well as the one who baptized Jesus for the reason stated (Jno.1:31).
4. This coming of Jesus Christ, here spoken of, was his coming into his public life (his public, personal, earthly ministry, not his miraculous birth), and the preparation for his heavenly reign to follow at the right hand of God, through his death, burial and resurrection from the dead, by which he was attested, or proved to be the Christ, the Son of God.
5. And it was with great propriety that Jesus began his earthly mission immediately after receiving this miraculous attestation to his Sonship.
6. His coming “by water,” or his baptism in water at the hands of John, was:
 - a. At *the beginning*, the inauguration, of his great earthly ministry.
 - b. An inauguration characterized by miraculous, supernatural attestation, by both the Father and the Holy Spirit (Mt.3:16-17), of which John bore written record (Jno.1:29-34).

B. 2ND, THE TESTIMONY OF “BLOOD” : We have good reason to believe that Jesus is the Son of God for: “This is he that came...not by (with) water only but by (with) water and (with) blood,” V.6b.

1. By or with blood refers to his sacrificial death on the cross for the sins of mankind, Isa.53:5-12; 1Pet.2:24; Mt.26:28; 1Cor.15:3; Gal.1:4; Eph.1:7; Col.1:14; Heb.2:9; 9:14,26-28.
2. Not by his baptism only, when he was declared to be God’s Son by a voice from heaven, but also by his death, when the same thing was demonstrated by his resurrection from the dead.
3. For this event was attested by extraordinary phenomena associated with his death, Mt.27:45,50,51; Lk.23:47,48.
4. Then, once more at his resurrection, Mt.27:53,54; Cf. Rom.1:1-4.

5. This second witness, his coming “by blood,” or his death on the cross, being at *the close* of his earthly ministry. Cf. Jno.19:30.
6. He was attested to be the Son of God by means of his death. For:
 - a. In his sufferings and death all the O.T. prophecies concerning the sufferings and death of Christ for sinners were fulfilled.
 - b. During his trial, he expressly called himself Christ the Son of God, before the Jewish council, and before Pilate, the Roman governor, Mt.26:63-66; Mt.27.
 - (1) In 1Tim.6:13, this is called his “witnessing a good confession.”
 - (2) And for that confession he was put to death as a blasphemer.
 - c. During his suffering and death, God bore witness to his as his Son by the three hours of darkness, by the earthquake, by the rending of the rocks, and by the splitting of the veil of the temple, Mt.27:50-54.
 - d. Jesus being put to death for calling himself Christ the Son of God, and his resurrection from the dead ,was an infallible proof of his being the Son of God. Cf. Ac.1:1-3; Rom.1:1-4.
 - (1) For if Jesus had falsely claimed divine Sonship, then God never would have raised him from the dead in proof of a false claim!
7. Jesus Christ came in the flesh, lived and died in the flesh; he lived a real life in the flesh; he died a real death.
8. On all these accounts, therefore, John had good reason to affirm, and we have good reason to believe, that Jesus came attested as the Son of God by water as well as by blood, by his baptism, as well as by his death.
9. Some of the Gnostic positions that John was opposing throughout this Epistle affirmed the water of Jesus’ baptism but denied the blood of the cross.
 - a. These people said that “the Christ” (a spirit being) came down on the man Jesus when he was baptized in water, but left him before his death on the cross.
 - b. Accordingly, the Christ, came through water (baptism) but not through blood (death).
 - c. Therefore, the Son of God did not die on the cross. Only the man Jesus died there.
10. But John here affirms that the One who died on the cross was a truly the Christ, the Son of God, as was the One who was baptized in Jordan by

John, the Baptist, and attested there by both the Father and the Holy Spirit.

11. This is the primary force of John's words in these first two of the three witnesses that testify to Jesus' identity!

C. 3RD, THE TESTIMONY OF "THE SPIRIT" : We have good reason to believe that Jesus is the Son of God, for: "And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth," V.7 (ASV).

1. John and his associates, the other apostles, bear witness to the truth of what they have seen and heard (1Jno.1:1-3; 4:13,14; Lk.24:44-49; Lk.1:1,2; Heb.2:3,4; Ac.1:1-8; 2:29-33), but behind their witness lies the witness of the Spirit.
2. This harmonizes with what the Lord promised in Jno.15:26,27.
3. The fulfillment of this promise was realized early in apostolic history, Ac.5:31,32; 4:31,33.
4. Of course, John here has primary reference to the Spirit bearing witness by the "water" and the "blood," which he did.
 - a. According to Mt.3:16,17, at the baptism of Jesus, when, by this miracle, the Holy Spirit pointed out Jesus to all present as the person of whom the voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."
 - b. Accordingly, John the Baptist told the Jews that Jesus was pointed out to him as the Christ by that witness of the Spirit, and that John himself was divinely selected to see this, and by baptizing Jesus in water manifest him to Israel as the Christ, the Son of God, Jno.1:29-34.
5. "Because the Spirit is truth," V.7b (ASV).
 - a. The Spirit was employed to bear witness to the true identify of Jesus, because the Spirit is truth.
 - b. That is, "the Spirit is true"; he is a witness who can neither deceive nor be deceived.
 - c. Whatever form the witness of the Spirit takes, it can be implicitly trusted, for "the Spirit of truth," as he is repeatedly called in Jno.14:17; 15:26; 16:13, is himself "the truth" (i.e., of the essence of truth).
 - d. The idea is that it is the Holy Spirit whose characteristic is truth.
 - e. The testimony of the water and the blood would be valueless and powerless without the testimony of the Spirit to reveal the truth

about them and their place and purpose in God's scheme of human redemption.

D. V.8 REPEATS THE SAME THREE WITNESSES OF V.6, BUT ADDS: "AND THESE THREE AGREE IN ONE."

1. This expression is literally in the Greek text, "Are to the one thing"; that is, "the converge upon the one truth, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is come in the flesh."
2. Alford translates, "Concur in the one, contribute to one and the same result, namely, the truth that Jesus is the Christ, and that we have life in him."
3. The witness which all three bear is "one" and the same; their testimony harmonizes, and points to the same end or purpose.
4. They are united in one witness and have one object and effect, which object and effect is declared in Vv.11,12.
5. God's voice from heaven and the miraculous demonstration of the Spirit owned *the first*: "by water"; the crucified and risen Lord to which both the Father and the Spirit bore witness ratified *the second*: "by blood"; the very existence of the church belonging to the Son of the living God, is the standing result of the testimony of *the third*: "the Spirit."

E. JOHN'S ARGUMENT "a fortiori" (a-for-she-o-ri) IN VV.9,10 COMPARING HUMAN AND DIVINE TESTIMONY STRESSES TWO VITAL POINTS WITH REFERENCE TO GOD'S TESTIMONY CONCERNING HIS SON JESUS CHRIST.

1. The first vital point is this: The claim which God's testimony has upon our acceptance of it, V.9: "If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son," or "for the witness of God is this, that he hath borne witness concerning his Son (ASV)."
 - a. John's argument "a fortiori" (a-for-she-o-ri) – the term meaning "for a stronger reason" – is a type of argument in logic where it is "said of a conclusion that follows with a yet stronger reason, or an ever greater logical necessity than another conclusion already accepted in argument."
 - (1) It's an argument from the less to the greater.

- b. In saying, “If we receive the witness of men,” V.9a, John alludes to the words of Jesus in Jno.8:17,18 quoting the Law of Moses with reference to the basis upon which the testimony of men is acceptable to other men. Cf. Deut.17:6; Num.17:30; Mt.18:16; 2Cor.13:1; 1Tim.5:19; Heb.10:28.
 - (1) Thus, we do, under certain circumstances rightly and justly accept the testimony of men.
 - c. Then John added, “the witness of God is greater; for the witness of God is this, that he hath testified of his Son,” V.9b.
 - (1) John thus reasons from the less to the greater, saying that we with a yet stronger reason, or an even great logical necessity, should more readily accept the testimony of God, which is greater than man’s.
 - (2) God’s testimony is that Jesus Christ is his Son; “that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of (from) God.” (1Jno.4:2)
 - (3) Therefore, this testimony has the most commanding claim upon our acceptance of it.
 - d. Here God’s witness is considered in conjunction with the three previous witnesses referred to Vv.6,7 – the water, the blood, and the Spirit.
 - e. And the whole – all three of them – are here termed “the witness of God,” because in witnessing, all three act in subordination to him; all three constitute God’s witness to the fact that Jesus is his Son.
 - f. God’s witness “is greater” than that of men; it is more certain and more worthy of credit, than the witness of men, be they ever so numerous or ever so respectable for their understanding and their integrity; so that we may rely on God’s witness with the greatest assurance. Cf. Heb.6:16-18; 10:23; 1Cor.1:9; 1Th.5:24; 2Th.3:3; Rom.3:4.
2. The second vital point is that of V.10, and involves two issues concerning this thought: If God’s testimony concerning his Son is so clear, so great, so commanding, and without a doubt true, what then?
- a. 1st, The believer is abundantly justified in his faith in the Son of God: he “hath the witness in himself,” V.10a.
 - (1) Lit. “He that keeps on believing in the Son, continues to have the witness in himself.”
 - (2) On the basis of the evidence, he believes God; he does not make God a liar.

- (3) This is not setting forth an assurance that comes from mere blind faith, or blind feeling, an inner assurance that has no objective ground.
 - (a) Rather, it is grounded in the objective facts of the testimony of God and recorded in the Sacred Scriptures written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.
- (4) For the written word, the sword or instrument of the Spirit, through which the Spirit indwells the Christian, is the basis of our faith, and that which furnishes us unto all good works, Rom.10:17; Eph.6:17; 2Tim.4:16,17; Jno.8:31,32.
- (5) This faith based upon positive proof (Jno.20:30,31) supplies us with confidence that the witness is true; and this confidence is ever with us. Cf. Heb.11:1,6
- (6) We thus have a continual witness to the reality of that to which we have committed our lives. Cf. 1Pet.3:15; 2Tim.4:6-8.
- b. 2nd, The unbeliever is not only condemned, but he “hath made him (God) a liar, because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son,” V.10.
 - (1) How? He declares the greatest work which God has ever done in the world to have its basis in a delusion and a lie.
 - (2) He has charged God with lying about Jesus of Nazareth being his Son.
 - (3) Their not only refusing to believe God’s testimony or witness but denying it is the truth, John terms **a making**, that is, **an endeavoring to make God a liar, or a false witness**, “because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son.”
 - (4) Moreover, that testimony is on record, miraculously confirmed, Mk.16:19,20; Heb.2:1-4; gal.1:11,12; Eph.3:1-5.

F. VV.11,12 CONCLUDE THE DIVINE WITNESS WITH GOD’S OWN WITNESS OR TESTIMONY CONCERNING THE SON, AND THE LIFE THAT IS IN THE SON.

- 1. V.11a: “And this is the witness”; that is, “the witness (or the testimony) of God” (Cf. V.9), or, “now this is the thing which God hath witnessed,” or given his testimony.

- a. 1st, The fact: “that God hath given to us eternal life,” V.11b.
 - (1) God has given his testimony.
 - (2) The testimony which God has given is with reference to eternal life.
- b. 2nd, The embodiment of the gift of God: “And this life is in his Son,” V.11c.
 - (1) Macknight: “In this, as in other passages of scripture, the preterite tense, God hath given, is used of the future, God will give us eternal life, to show the certainty of our obtaining that great blessing through his Son. Cf. its use in Jude 11: ‘and (have perished) shall perish in the gainsaying (rebellion) of Korah.’”
 - (2) Macknight: Jude 11: “And have perished”. “Here, as in many passages of Scripture, a thing is said to have happened, which was only to happen. This manner of expression was used to show the absolute certainty of the thing spoken of. ‘Have perished, therefore, means shall certainly perish.’”
 - (3) Cf. What was said to Abraham in Rom.4:17; Gen.17:5. At the time God said, “I have made thee a father of many nations” Abraham *had no son*. Thus God “callesth the things that are not, as though they were.
 - (4) This harmonizes with other passages which plainly tell us, or necessarily imply, that eternal life is a promise, not a present possession; such as: Mk.10:29,30; 1Jno.2:24,25; Tit.1:2; Rom.8:24,25; Cf. Jno.6:27, 40; 10:28; 17:2; 5:28,29.
 - (5) Therefore, those passages which apparently assert the possession of eternal life here and now, are to be understood as referring to it *in prospect, and promise*, but not in realization. Cf. Jno.5:24; 6:47; 1Jno.5:11-13.
 - (6) Furthermore, the life the believer now has in Christ can be lost or forfeited through unbelief and disobedience – falling from grace (1Cor.10:12; Gal.5:4; 1Tim.5:12; 1Tim.1:19,20; 2Tim.2:16-18; Heb.12:15; 2Pet.2:20-22); but the actually possess eternal life is to possess that which can never be lost or forfeited.
 - (7) Life is one of the great words of the Scripture. And everlasting or eternal life of which we have the promise is:

- (a) The life of the age to come; the life of the resurrection age; is something to be experienced in the future.
 - (b) The opposite of perishing eternally, Mt.25:46.
 - (c) The deliverance from eternal condemnation and death, Jno.3:16; 5:24,29; 10:28.
 - (d) It is satisfaction, security and enjoyment, Jn.6:35; 10:10.
 - (e) Eternal; forever. But eternal life does not refer just to duration or to length of time.
 - (1) Those eternally lost because of sin will exist throughout eternity; but exist under the curse of the guilt of sin in eternal ruin, Jno.5:29; 2Th.1:7-10; Mt.25:46; 10:28; Dan.12:2.
 - (2) The idea of eternal life is also quality, a certain kind of life, a life that consistently and eternally knows love, joy, peace, glory, honor. Rom.2:6-11.
 - (f) In Jesus Christ the Son of God, and only in him. Cf. 1Jno.2:24,25.
2. The sobering conclusion declared in V.12 both positively and negatively.
- a. Positively: “He that hath the Son hath life,” V.12a.
 - (1) That is, he hath the life promised, the eternal life; the life made sure in him; he has it in the sense previously explained – in promise.
 - (2) He has it in prospect; he is in hope of it, by virtue of his faith in and active confession of the Son.
 - b. Negatively: “he that hath not the Son of God hath not life,” V.12b.
 - (1) To be without the Son is to be without the life; that is, that eternal life which is found only in the Son.
 - (2) He may have fame and fortune; intelligence, education and talent; influence, reputation and honor; but, if he hath not the Son, he has not the life.
 - (3) To be without faith in and active confession of Jesus as the Christ, as were the antichrists, is to be without the Son of God!
 - (4) To be without the Son is to be without the Father. Cf. 1Jno.2:22,23; 4:2,3; 2Jno.9.

- (5) The Son of God, who is the embodiment of life, is also Source thereof, having been appointed by God the Father to bring life to man. Cf. Jno.1:4; 5:26; Ac.3:15.
 - (6) He who acknowledgeth not the Son of God, hath no reason to expect this eternal life which is in and through the Son.
- 3. This message of eternal life to be found only in his Son Jesus Christ, to which God bore witness, strikes a fatal blow against the Gnostic speculation that made God and eternal life available only to those who were initiated into the so-called deep mysteries of a speculative philosophy, an initiation which they claimed for themselves, through some supposed superior knowledge and spiritual insight. Cf. Col.2:8,9.
 - 4. The gospel, with its promise of eternal life in and through the Son of God, is for all, predicated upon their faith in Jesus as the Son of God come in the flesh.
 - 5. To this God has testified thus giving the believer assurance, confidence and boldness.

III. CONCLUSION

- 1. Because of these three witnesses we have good, solid, scriptural reason to believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.
- 2. According to 1Jno.5:6-10, we have:
 - a. The testimony of the “water,” his baptism.
 - b. The testimony of the “blood,” his death.
 - c. The testimony of the “Spirit,” the Holy Spirit.
- 3. And all three of these are considered to be “the witness of God,” because in witnessing, all three act in subordination to him; all three constitute God’s witness to the fact that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God. And that God hath given the believer eternal life in and through him.
- 4. To deny that is to make God a liar! Spiritually this is what the Bible calls:
 - a. The lying antichrists.
 - b. The unbelieving Jews.
 - c. The Modernist.
 - d. Those of the Islamic religion.
 - e. The Atheist, and others.