

25. The Epistle of 1 John—5:6-13

(1/8/20)

Good evening everyone. Because of Christmas and New Year's Day—it's been three weeks since we last met.

At that time, we got as far as 1John 5:8—but let's read from verse 6 to refresh our memories:

1 John 5:6-8 (NKJV)

⁶ 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. ⁷ For there are three that bear witness in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one. ⁸ And there are three that bear witness on earth: the Spirit, the water, and the blood; and these three agree as one.

These verses have been a source of controversy and debate among Christians for many years.

But, before we look at the actual words that appear (or don't appear) in these verses when compared to various N.T. manuscripts—let's look briefly at the basic thought John is presenting here.

He is telling us how we can know that Jesus is really the Son of God and Savior of the world—based on the testimony of 3 powerful witnesses—

1 John 5:7-8 (NKJV)

⁷ For there are three that bear witness in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one. ⁸ And there are three that bear witness on earth: the Spirit, the water, and the blood; and these three agree as one.

Now, if you're reading from any other translation other than the **KJV** or the **NKJV**—your Bible reads, (as the **ESV**):

1 John 5:7-8 (ESV)

⁷ For there are three that testify: ⁸ the Spirit and the water and the blood; and these three agree.

Last time I mentioned how most of the modern translations of this passage leave out what the KJV and NKJV includes—the end of verse 7 and the beginning of verse 8—but I didn’t get into why?

One author put it well—under the heading: **“A few words on this text, regarding the notes in the margins or footnotes of many Bibles regarding 1 John 5:7–8”**

A. The New King James Bible makes a marginal note on 1 John 5:7–8, stating that the words *“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”* are words that are not included in the vast majority of New Testament Greek manuscripts.

1. The words in question occur in no Greek manuscript until the fourteenth century, except for one eleventh century and one twelfth century manuscript in which they have been added to the margin by another hand.

2. 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. If they were originally written by John, it seems very strange that no early Christian would have quoted them. In fact, though none of the ancient Christians quote from this verse, several of them do quote from 1 John 5:6 and 1 John 5:8. Why skip verse seven, especially if it is such a great statement of the Trinity?

3. 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.

B. 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.

While there is no explicit statement of the Trinity in the statement (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).

C. How did these words ever get included, if they are not in any ancient Greek manuscripts? The words were included in ancient Latin versions of the Bible, and in the year 1520, a great scholar named Erasmus produced a new, accurate edition of the Bible in ancient Greek. When people studied Erasmus' Bible, and compared it to the Latin version, they noticed he left out this passage, and they criticized him for it. When he was criticized, Erasmus said, *"You won't find these words in any ancient Greek manuscript. If you find me one Greek manuscript with these words in them, I'll include it in my next printing."* Someone *"discovered"* a manuscript with the words in them, but it wasn't an ancient manuscript at all. Erasmus knew this, but had already promised to add the words if someone found a manuscript with the words, so he reluctantly added the words in his 1522 edition. However, he also added a footnote, saying he thought that the new Greek manuscript had been written on purpose, just to embarrass him.

Since the Greek text of the New Testament that Erasmus printed became one of the Greek texts used to make the King James Bible, these added words became part of the King James Bible.

D. 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. If 50 passages sound like a lot, see it this way: no more than 1/1000th of the text is in question at all.

Evangelical Christians may not know much about these passages, but many religious people who don't believe the Trinity (such as a Jehovah's Witness) do know the textual issues around this passage. Therefore, if you bring up this verse to support your position, they will show you how this passage doesn't belong in the Bible. It may get some thinking, "Well, maybe the Trinity isn't true. Maybe Jesus isn't God. Maybe it's just the invention of people who would try to change the Bible." This can do some real damage.

E. The text of 1 John 5:7–8 should more accurately read: **"For there are three that bear witness: the Spirit, the water, and the blood; and these three agree as one."**

1 John 5:9 (NKJV)

⁹ 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.

John is saying that in a court of law, the testimony of human witnesses is accepted when seeking the truth and in the rendering of a verdict—since that is true, the testimony of God is greater than any testimony of man!

And what is the testimony of God?—"And there are three that bear witness [give testimony] on earth: the Spirit, the water, and the blood; and these three agree as one." (v.8)

The Spirit—a reference to how the Holy Spirit empowered Jesus with the power of God as a witness that He was exactly who He claimed to be—the Son of God, Messiah and Savior:

Acts 2:22 (NKJV)

²² "Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know--

John 14:11 (NKJV)

¹¹ Believe Me that I *am* in the Father and the Father in Me, or else believe Me for the sake of the works themselves.

Acts 10:38 (NKJV)

³⁸ how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him.

Water—a reference to the *water* of Jesus' baptism.

Luke 3:21-22 (NKJV)

²¹ When all the people were baptized, it came to pass that Jesus also was baptized; and while He prayed, the heaven was opened. ²² And the Holy Spirit descended in bodily form like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from heaven which said, "You are My beloved Son; in You I am well pleased."

Blood—a reference to His *death* on the cross.

Those two notable events bracketed the Lord's earthly ministry—and in both of them the Father testified concerning His Son—once verbally when Jesus came up out of the Jordan after John baptized Him (Luke 3:22).

And then again, after Jesus had shed His blood on the cross and dismissed His Spirit—at that moment we read:

Matthew 27:51-53 (NKJV)

⁵¹ Then, behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth quaked, and the rocks were split, ⁵² and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; ⁵³ and coming out of the graves after His resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many.

And the Father used a centurion standing there to verbalize the testimony the creation was, at that moment, giving about the Man hanging on that cross—

Matthew 27:54 (NKJV)

⁵⁴ So when the centurion and those with him, who were guarding Jesus, saw the earthquake and the things that had happened, they feared greatly, saying, "Truly this was the Son of God!"

And then, John turns to believers—those who have the Holy Spirit within them and says to all of us that we don't need any other testimony from anyone or any other outside source, proving that Jesus Christ is Who He claimed to be, the Son of God—our very lives testify to that truth!

A changed life is the ultimate proof that Jesus is the Holy One of God, God in human form—our Savior!

When we accepted Him into our heart, He moved in (thru His indwelling Holy Spirit)—we know that because our lives began to change as we are being transformed from the inside out! (2Cor.3:18)

Paul said that all believers are '*living epistles*' known and read by all people. (2Cor.3:1-3—Comment)

1 John 5:9-10a (NKJV)

⁹ 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. ¹⁰ He who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself...

As we just said, once a person has put their faith in Jesus—they receive the Holy Spirit—the inner confirmation that Jesus is the Son of God who has now made us '*children of God*.'

Romans 8:16 (NKJV)

¹⁶ The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,

1 John 5:10-12 (NKJV)

¹⁰ 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. ¹¹ And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. ¹² He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.

If an unbeliever rejects everything the Father has testified about His Son in the pages of Scripture—they are essentially calling God a liar!

On the other hand, if they do believe the testimony of God (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) in Scripture (the *outward* testimony)—at that moment the Holy Spirit moves into their heart and now they have the *inner* testimony of the Spirit.

Of course, this inner testimony is the result of the new life (eternal life) that we now have in Christ which gives us a new heart producing a new attitudes, new desires and the fruit of the Holy Spirit.

Warren Wiersbe—

“The Spirit was given to bear witness to Christ (John 15:26; 16:14). We can trust the Spirit’s witness because ‘the Spirit is truth’ (v.6).’ We were not present at the baptism of Christ or at His death, but the Holy Spirit was present. The Holy Spirit is the only Person active on earth today who was present when Christ was ministering here. The witness of the Father is past history, but the witness of the Spirit is present experience. The first is external, the second is internal—and both agree.”

1 John 5:11-12 (NKJV)

¹¹ **And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son.**

¹² **He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.**

John 1:4 (NKJV)

⁴ In Him [alone] was life [eternal life]...

John 3:36 (NKJV)

He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.

In saying this (v.12), John was not talking about *physical* life because he uses the Greek word ‘Zoë.’

Zoë refers to *spiritual* life—whereas the Greek word ‘*bios*’ (from which we get the English word “biology”), is the word for *physical* life.

Eternal life (Zoë) isn’t just a *quantity* of life; it’s a *quality* of life.

The thing that makes eternal life so wonderful and so appealing is not its ‘quantity’ (never ending) but its ‘quality’ (richness and fullness).

Eternal life wouldn’t be appealing if it simply meant living forever—if that life was painful, hopeless and empty (people in hell will live forever but that won’t be a blessing!).

What makes the eternal life that Jesus gives so appealing and desirable is that—it is never ending life in all of its fullness, richness, joy, and blessing!

Spiritual life is to have your spirit resurrected and connected to God by the Holy Spirit—i.e. ‘*to be born again*’ (John 3:7)—in short, it is to have the life of God within us thru the indwelling Holy Spirit. (John 4:14)

1 John 5:13 (NKJV)

¹³ 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.*

Four times in this epistle John says, “*These things I write to you...*” or “*These things I have written to you...*”—

1. “*That your joy may be full*” (1:4)
2. “*That you may not sin*” (2:1)
3. “*That you be not deceived*” (2:26)
4. “*That you may know you have eternal life*” (5:13)