

**SERIES: Authentic Christian Community/1 John, Wk. 4**

**By Pastor Bryan Clark**

**Message Title: The Testimony**

**Release Date: Wednesday 2/26/2020**

If you have a Bible, turn with us to 1 John, Chapter 5:

**Who is the one who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God? (\*NASB, 1 John 5:5)**

Now that of course raises the question: how do we know that? I mean, what would be the basis by which we believe that? So John is going to present three witnesses. He really operates like a lawyer in a courtroom — as a matter of fact his favorite word in this paragraph is the word *testifies*. It's basically taking the witnesses, putting them on the witness stand, presenting three solid witnesses for the belief that Jesus is the Son of God.

We pick it up in Verse 6:

**This is the One who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ; not with the water only, but with the water and with the blood. (Vs. 6a)**

Now this part of Verse 6 is probably the most discussed, argued, and disputed verse in the entire epistle. There's a lot of discussion about, "What does he mean by *the water* and *the blood*?" If we go back and remind ourselves, "What did the false teachers teach?" we remember that they believed that Jesus was a mere man. But at His baptism, the Spirit of God — the Spirit of The Christ — came upon Him and empowered Him to do miracles. But before His death, that Spirit departed and He died as a mere man. So think about that: they affirm His baptism and that something happened there, but they don't affirm that it was God in the flesh dying on the cross. With that in mind, when we re-read the text, it seems fairly obvious, that what John is identifying, is the baptism and the crucifixion of Jesus. While they believed in the Baptism, they didn't accept the Crucifixion.

So let's read it again:

**This is the One who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ; not with the water only, but with the water and with the blood. (vs. 6a)**

I think that makes the most sense in the context. So the two witnesses that he's putting forth would be the baptism of Jesus and the crucifixion of Jesus. What happened in those events should have convinced people this was actually God in the flesh, that Jesus is the Son of God. The baptism of Jesus is recorded in the Gospels — for example Matthew, Chapter 3. There are several details that are helpful. The baptism of Jesus was not a private, secret affair done in a cave somewhere, but a very open public event. It also tells us in Matthew 3, that the Pharisees and the Sadducees were there, so the skeptics — those that were the opponents of Jesus — were there. And in that event, when Jesus was baptized, there was a literal voice from Heaven, from

God the Father, which said, “*This is My Son, in whom I am well pleased.*” At that moment, a dove came from the heavens that was the Spirit of God Himself, and landed on Jesus. You have God the Father, God the Son, God the Spirit. You have the fullness of the Trinity present in that event, which is one of the things that makes it such a remarkable event. It’s important to understand that Jesus wasn’t just trying to sneak around Earth. God wasn’t intending that people would have to somehow guess and figure this out. What could be more obvious than the Father saying, “*This is My Son!*”?

Now the skeptic would say, “Well, that’s just what the Bible says. How do we know that’s what really happened?” The Gospels are reliable records of history, written well within the lifetime of the eyewitnesses of the events recorded. If the events recorded were not true, there were thousands and thousands and thousands of people that could have said, “That’s not what happened. I was there.” Yet in the First Century, nobody discredited the historical records. There is no other record of history that comes close to the number of manuscripts, the quality of manuscripts, and the early dating of the manuscripts. So there is overwhelming evidence. One of the things that I think is interesting, is the false teachers simply could not say, “That didn’t happen”. The evidence must have been so strong, with the eyewitnesses still alive, that they had to somehow fit it into their theology. So they — even though they were false teachers — said, “Yes, we agree that *did* happen.” Their struggle, then, was to try to explain away the crucifixion, the burial and the resurrection of Jesus.

So, *the water* is the first witness that at Jesus’ baptism, there was credible evidence that Jesus is indeed the Son of God. So what about the Crucifixion? When we talk about the Crucifixion, it’s probably best to think about crucifixion, burial and resurrection — it’s all one package. We know for historical fact, that when Jesus hung on the cross, in the middle of the day, that darkness covered the land as if it was night, at least in the entire region. We also know for historical fact, that the moment Jesus died, there was an earthquake that shook the entire region. The historical record of the Gospels tells us this, but also, if we go outside the Gospels to extra-biblical historical records, they too confirm that these details are true. The only thing we’re left with, is an explanation for: if it wasn’t related to the crucifixion of Jesus, what *was* the cause?

We also know that at the moment of Jesus’ death, the veil in the temple was torn top to bottom — a remarkable event! Now sometimes, when people think about the veil, they have in their minds something like a shower curtain. This was a massive piece of fabric. If you took twenty of the strongest people, and put ten and ten on the two corners of it, you couldn’t even begin to tear this thing in half. It was a massive fabric. And yet history records, both in the historical documents of the Gospels and extra-biblical writing, that in that moment that veil split top to bottom. What is the explanation for that, if it isn’t related to the crucifixion of Jesus?

And then of course, there is the resurrection of Jesus, that He literally, bodily, physically rose from the dead and didn’t sneak back to Heaven, but rather appeared to witnesses, including over five hundred witnesses at one time. John would have been numbered among them. He saw the risen Christ; He talked to the risen Christ, touched the risen Christ, scrutinized the risen Christ, and bears witness that this is indeed true. John is saying these are two credible witnesses, and he’s presenting the witnesses well within the lifetime of those who observed these events. If the crucifixion and the resurrection of Jesus were not true, then how do we explain the explosion of Christianity out of Jerusalem that eventually spread around the world?

This wasn’t some big secret. God wasn’t sneaking around with this. For hundreds of years, the prophets prophesied: this is what’s going to happen, and this is exactly what the details will be.

And Jesus fulfilled every single one of those prophecies perfectly. The odds of this happening by chance are absolutely astronomical. How else do we explain that? The event was so dramatic, that a young teenage girl woke up one morning pregnant, without ever having known relations with a man. That's a pretty dramatic entry into the world! The night He was born, there was a magical star in the sky that extra-biblical records say existed. There were angels that announced the birth to the shepherds on the hill. There were *magi* that came from the East, whose story was so convincing to Herod the King that he slaughtered the babies to try to somehow eliminate this rival king — again, events that can be documented outside of the Biblical records. We know that He lived a public life and did miracle after miracle after miracle, and then you have the miraculous events on the cross and then with the resurrection of Jesus.

-----

So again, the question would be: based on the historical records, based on the facts, based on all these facts that were made available well within the lifetime of the eyewitnesses to these events, what would be the basis by which we could just summarily say, "That didn't happen"? How could everyone in the First Century be so mistaken, and two thousand years later *we* have it right? What sense does it make? How much of a leap of faith is that? But John goes on and presents a third witness.

He says:

**It is the Spirit who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth.** (Vs. 6b)

It's not just that the Spirit *tells* the truth; it's the Spirit *is* the truth. So you have two *external* witnesses — what happened at His baptism, what happened at His crucifixion and resurrection. The third witness is what you might term an *internal* witness. It's the witness of the Spirit of God who *is* truth, and says, "This is true". In other words, God's promise is: you take one step in My direction, and believe I tell the truth, and I will meet you there, and I will confirm in your heart this is indeed true. That's why Christians have such a strong sense that this is true. We look at the facts on the table and this is overwhelmingly true. This is why for two thousand years, millions and millions of Christians have been willing to die for their faith. There's something deep within them that says, "This is absolutely true and I will die for it." It's the Spirit of truth. But think about this: God isn't playing some game. This cost God the very life of His Son. There's nothing He wants more than for people to understand and believe what's true — and that is the role of His Spirit.

Now the question is not so much, "What's true?" It's, "Am I willing to surrender my life to Jesus?" That's now not a head thing—that's a heart thing. Sometimes along the way, people very sincerely get lost as to whether this has become a head thing or a heart thing. One of the ways you can sort that out, is to believe that God tells the truth, when He says, "I've sent the Spirit of truth to help you understand the truth." If you sincerely want to know what's true; if you really do want to sort it out with the belief that, if the story of Jesus is true, "I will surrender myself, because that's what I'm looking for. I'm looking for the truth"; if that's really what's in your heart, I would encourage you to pray, and say, "God, if You're real, and if this is true, and if there really is a Spirit of truth, I'm asking You to guide me to that which is true," with the understanding that if God answers that prayer, if He meets you there, you will surrender to that truth. If in your heart you say, "Okay, that sounds reasonable. I'm going to do that," that would indicate that this is a very sincere journey for you.

But if you get to the point where you say, “I don’t think I want to do that,” that would tell me then, at this point, that it’s no longer about the intellect, that it’s just become kind of a distraction - that’s a bit of a dodge. This has now become an issue of the heart, and you’re not really sure that you want to surrender your life to Jesus — so you’re not ready to enter into a prayer like that. At the end of the day, it has to go from my head into my heart to say, “Okay, I do think this is true; now I have to *do something* with this.” And **the *do something* is to surrender to Jesus as my Savior.**

Verse 7:

**For there are three that testify: the Spirit and the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement. (Vs. 7-8)**

Verse 9:

**If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater; for the testimony of God is this, that He has testified concerning His Son. The one who believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself; the one who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has given concerning His Son. (Vs. 9-10)**

The evidence was so overwhelming, that what John is saying is: the only option you have is to say, “Okay, I believe the witness of the Baptism, the witness of the Crucifixion, and the witness of the Spirit — therefore, Jesus is the Son of God. God tells the truth.” And then, moving to the Crucifixion, he is saying, “Yes, there are thousands of witnesses who could say, ‘Yes, that is what happened.’” Therefore, the only conclusion we could arrive at, is that somehow God is playing some sick, deceitful game and He’s doing all that — with the earthquake, and the darkness, and the Temple, and even the Resurrection — it’s some sort of a parlor trick, in order to pull one over on us, because God ultimately is a liar. And God was so determined to play His little game, He was willing to torture His Son to death in order to have His little fun. How much faith does it take to believe *that’s* really what happened, versus believing that the historical record is accurate.

Verses 11 and 12 pull it all together in very sobering fashion:

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

In a culture of pluralism, these words are very sobering. This isn’t a game to God. This was God’s plan that cost His Son His life, and He says very clearly, **He who has the Son has the life, but he who does not have the Son does not have the life.** There’s nothing unclear about that. There’s nothing confusing about that. You’re left with one of two options: either God tells the truth and I’m going to receive His gift, or I’ve concluded that God is a liar.

There’s one more piece of evidence from the First Century, that I find so compelling that I saved it until the end. One of the historical facts that simply is not disputed by anyone credible, is that within two months of the death, burial, resurrection and ascension of Jesus, over ten thousand people, in Jerusalem alone, abandoned their religion and converted to Christianity. How do you explain that? We know as a historical fact, both from the Biblical record and the extra-biblical

record, that that included Pharisees, Sadducees, priests and skeptics. These people put their very life at risk, in the very hometown where these events actually were recorded to have taken place. Now again, these details are not disputed. The only dispute has to do with: what was the cause? If the events recorded and proclaimed are not true, what is the credible explanation, for why over ten thousand people in sixty days converted to Christianity, and started a movement that took over the Roman Empire and eventually spread to the world?

It seems to me, by faith we believe that God tells the truth, but, by a wild, unreasonable leap of faith, we would say, "I think God is a liar." **He who has the Son has the life, but he who does not have the Son does not have the life.**

-----

As a pastor, I get into conversations with people often who are struggling to understand and believe the claims of the Gospel. Many of them are genuinely trying to figure out what's true. That's why they're coming to me, but others are just looking for an argument. Today, there are so many resources that can help people who are genuinely seeking the truth. The core message of our Christian faith is the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. It's a historical fact that can be investigated and researched, but there's others who just really aren't interested in the truth. They aren't really seeking. They are determined to be their own god, and they want to run their own lives, and they don't want God interfering. I think it's important, but fairly easy, to discern the difference. Those who are truly seeking, they will listen to credible evidence. They will follow through on resources that are offered. Those who are not truly seeking are unfazed by credible evidence. They just shift from one argument to the next. They're not interested in helpful resources. There's no point in continuing to argue with someone, who really doesn't want to know the truth. At that point, it's a heart problem, not a head problem. **Love them.** Be their friend and wait for God to soften their hearts. **There are answers for those who truly want to know the truth.**