

Witnesses You Can Trust 1 John 5:6-12
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“Wild Leprechauns have moved into Seattle and are responsible for thousands of vicious attacks.” Folks, that was the lead story in the March 17th online version of *The Weekly World News*. Ten years ago, I was a little disappointed when the print edition of this tabloid ended publication, because I could no longer look at it while standing in line at the grocery store. I always found it amusing to read how nine United States Senators are really space aliens or how a World War 2 fighter plane lost in 1945 had landed sixty years later. Now, I doubt leprechauns are really attacking people in Seattle or...another recent headline...that Minnie Mouse is marrying Kim-Jung-Un. *The Weekly World News*, whether in print or online, is blatantly fake news. It is not a credible source or trustworthy witness of the truth. Only a fool believes something simply because he read it in *The Weekly World News*.

Friends, there are folks who think Christianity and the biblical story are not any more likely to be true than wild leprechauns in Seattle. In fact, they view the Bible as an ancient version of *The WWN* or maybe *The National Enquirer*. When they read the accounts of Jesus’ great miracles, of His resurrection from the dead, and of His promised return to earth, they say, “That it is totally incredible. I don’t think I can believe that. What is the evidence Christianity is true?”

Now, I am aware that most skeptics and doubters don’t show up at church on Sunday mornings. My guess, however, is that at some time each of us has asked, in our minds—if not out loud, “How do I know it is true? How do I know God really exists? How do I know Jesus is God? How do I know Islam is not the way to salvation instead of Christianity?” These doubts often become most agonizing at times of personal tragedy. If someone close to me is killed in an accident, or if I find out I have a serious illness, I don’t really care if some United States Senators are space aliens. I do, however, want to know the answers to certain questions: Is there really a heaven? Or do we simply live, die and decay? Is faith in Jesus Christ really the path to eternal life? Friend, if you have

ever asked questions like that, there are two important truths God has revealed in the Bible which we should remember.

First, God does not condemn us for asking questions. Matthew 11 tells us about how John the Baptist had been put in prison. He sends his friends to Jesus to ask, “Jesus, are you really the Messiah?” Remember, this is the man who baptized Jesus, and now he is having doubts that Jesus was actually who He claimed to be, the Messiah. We might expect Jesus to respond, “John, don’t be stupid. Of course I am the Messiah. How can you ask a question like that? Where is your faith?” Jesus instead says, “Go report to John the evidence that I am indeed the Messiah. Tell him how the blind can see, the lame can walk, Lepers are clean, the deaf can hear, and dead people are raised to life.” And then—Jesus turns to the crowd and says, “What an idiot that John the Baptist is!” No, he doesn’t. Rather he says, “Among those born of women (a rather inclusive category) there is no one greater than John the Baptist.” For Jesus, there is no such thing as a stupid question as long as the question is sincere. He does not condemn us for having doubts.

Second, when someone has doubts, and the Lord presents evidence, He expects belief. John the Baptist, Thomas and others, learned that doubt is not sin, but unbelief is. It is wrong to not believe the truth, when the evidence is presented. The evidence indeed shows that Jesus is the Messiah, the Eternal Son of God. To refuse to believe that is not only a failure of intellect, but is morally wrong.

Friends, as we continue our journey through 1 John we come to chapter 5:6-12. In this text, John, not the Baptist, but the apostle, gives us evidence that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God. Rather than struggling with doubt, He wants us to put our trust in Him and believe Christianity is true. He wants us to know that no matter what crisis we face, we can be confident that everyone who trusts in the Lord Jesus is indeed a child of God. Let’s pause and pray the Lord would use His word to encourage and strengthen our faith today.

So, let's look at the evidence John presents. Today I want you to pretend you are a jury. Some of you have experience as jurors, but even those of you who are rookies will do just fine. Each of us should ask ourselves: Is the evidence John presents persuasive? Is it interesting in his argument for Christianity, John does not use theistic proofs or philosophic arguments. Rather his focus is upon Jesus.

The first witness John calls is none other than God Himself. **1 John 5:9** *If we accept the testimony of men, God's testimony is greater, because it is God's testimony that He has given about His Son.* This is the ultimate expert of witnesses of all time. The credibility and credentials of a witness are important. At a murder trial, both sides will often call brilliant, somewhat eccentric scientists, as expert witnesses to sort through the DNA evidence. Yet, no witness could possibly have better credentials and be more credible than God. If we believe human testimony, we must certainly believe God's testimony.

Yet, ladies and gentlemen of the jury, it is not just the credibility of a witness that is important. The number of witnesses also matters. If one person told me they heard a weather report that it was going to snow in Chisholm tomorrow, I would think that individual might have been dreaming. If three people told me they heard that weather report, I would tend to believe it is what the weather person said, though I might still be skeptical that it was really going to snow. In the Old Testament, if someone was to be convicted of a crime, one witness was not enough. There had to be at least two or three witnesses.

John says, I have three witnesses and they are all in agreement. **5:7, 8** *For there are three that testify: the Spirit, the water, and the blood—and these three are in agreement.* The Spirit, the water and the blood. Almost everyone agrees that the Spirit is the Holy Spirit, but what about the water and the blood? Augustine suggested John is referring to the water and blood which flowed from Jesus' side, so this verse is speaking of the crucifixion. Luther and Calvin said the water and blood are Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Others say the water is Jesus' birth, the blood is His death. I am convinced the water refers to Jesus' Baptism,

the blood His death, and yes, the Spirit, to the Holy Spirit.

Now, I realize there may be a little confusion at this point if you are reading the KJV or NKJV. In verses **5:7, 8** the NKJV says, *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.* Almost all other English Bibles make no mention of the Triune heavenly witnesses, the Father, the Word and the Holy Spirit. Now, let me assure you that I certainly believe in the Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. I believe God is three persons in one being. Most Bible translators believe that as well. The New Testament clearly teaches the Trinity without this text. The reason why almost all the modern versions of the Bible do not include the heavenly witnesses is because the evidence is strong that John did not write that sentence in his letter, which NKJV admits in a footnote. It was most likely added by a fifth century writer to a Latin text and then in the sixteenth century included by Erasmus when he compiled the Greek text used to translate the KJV. Yet, not having this sentence in the Bible in no way changes the New Testament teaching about the Triune God nor does it weaken John's case for believing in Jesus Christ.

So, is Jesus really God's Son? Is He really the Messiah and Lord? John says, consider this 3-fold testimony. When Jesus was baptized in water, there was a voice from heaven which said, (Matthew 3:17) "This is my beloved Son." Clearly this is testimony that Jesus is God's Son. When Jesus died on the cross and shed His blood, darkness covered the earth and the veil of the temple was ripped in two. The Roman centurion, a pagan, said, "Surely, this man is the Son of God." Again, this is clear evidence that Jesus is truly the Messiah. Then, three, we have the Holy Spirit who Jesus says in John 16:13, "will guide the disciples into all truth." The Holy Spirit inspired the apostles to write the gospels and proclaim the death and resurrection of Jesus. He testifies that Jesus is truly the Messiah, the Son of God. Through two historical events, and the testimony of the Holy Spirit, God's proclamation is loud and clear. "This is my Son! This is Messiah! He is the Savior!

He is Lord! Turn to Him! Put your trust in Him! Believe the gospel, the great news of Jesus Christ!”

At this point, John might say, “Ladies and gentlemen of the jury. Note that I have not asked you to blindly believe that Jesus is the Son of God. I have not asked you to leap off a cliff and hope there is a ledge three feet below on which to land. No, if I am asking you to take a leap of faith, it is because God has told and shown us that there is indeed a ledge three feet below. The testimony God has given concerning Jesus Christ is sufficient reason to believe. Ladies and gentlemen, you must make your choice. Do you believe Jesus is God’s Son and our Savior?” Friends, as we make that decision we must decide whether or not we believe God’s testimony concerning Jesus. The way we as human beings make these decisions is interesting. If a professor tells you there are 581,678,434,341 stars in the universe, many of you would believe him. Yet, if someone puts up a sign which says, “Wet paint,” most of you would have to test it for yourselves. So, John highlights the importance of the decision we need to make, by focusing on the consequences of choosing not to believe Jesus is the Messiah. **5:10b** *The one who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony God has given about His Son.*

Now, many people think they are good folks, even though they don’t believe in Jesus. They might even claim to obey God’s commands, but they don’t believe Jesus is God’s Son. Yet, that is like saying, “My watch runs perfectly, it just doesn’t tell the right time.” Not believing in Jesus offends God in the most basic way by calling Him a liar. I remember the media uproar a few years ago when Congressman Joe Wilson called President Obama a liar. According to Louis L’Amour it was okay to call someone all sorts of nasty names in the old West, but if you called him a liar, that would be just cause for that person to pull out a gun and shoot you. Few things are more painful than having someone you love and care about, tell you that he or she doesn’t believe you. Friends, we offend God if we call Him a liar.

As a result, refusing to believe God’s testimony has very serious consequences. **5:12** *The one who has the Son has life. The one who doesn’t have the Son of God does not have life.* Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, this is not a threat, it is a

fact. If we refuse to believe Jesus is God’s Son, we will not have life. Oh yes, we will continue to breathe air, drink water and eat food. But we will be a spiritual corpse. We can work hard, play hard, party hard, have lots of fun, but we will be spiritually dead. For now, that means we are alienated from God and don’t have a relationship with Him. We might believe God is there, but we cannot really relate to Him as our Father except through Jesus Christ. Worst of all, being spiritually dead has terrible eternal consequences. Those who don’t have the Son of God, who refuse to believe in Him, will suffer eternal hell. Some of you might object, “Pastor Dan, you make it sound so black and white.” Friends, I remind you that “I” am not making it sound that way. This is the Apostle John’s statement. It is what God says in His word.

At some trials, the very life of the defendant hangs on the decision of the jury. Today, John says, the life of the jury hangs on the decision it makes about Jesus Christ. What happens if you choose to believe in Jesus? John would answer, “I remind you that if you choose to believe in Jesus Christ it is only because God in His grace enables you to do so. If left on our own, we would all choose to call God a liar. Yet, if by God’s grace we choose to believe, we will have eternal life.” **5:11** *And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son.* Folks, having eternal life includes the promise and hope of heaven. It means dwelling in the new heaven and earth described in Revelation 21 and 22. This life never ends. “When we have been there ten thousand years, we’ve no less days to sing God’s praise, than when we had first begun.” That is a wonderful promise, a hope that we should never take for granted.

Yet, if we are a believer in Jesus Christ, that eternal life begins right now. It goes into effect immediately. Belief in Jesus changes the quantity and quality of our lives. We are now able to live in fellowship with God. Life can have purpose, hope and joy. **5:10a** *The one who believes in the Son of God has this testimony within him.* Those of us who believe in Jesus Christ have security. God gives us internal confidence that everything He has said is true. This will enable us to overcome our struggle with doubt. If we choose to believe, the Lord will show us the gospel is true.

John Calvin put it this way: when a person who is not a Christian looks at the evidence for Christianity it appears kind of blurry, fuzzy and probably not real compelling. Yet, when by God's grace that person chooses to believe, he has put on the spectacles of faith and is then able to see clearly. She then knows that Christianity is true, he knows that Jesus is indeed God's Son and Savior. To use a courtroom analogy, a non-Christian can see that the preponderance of the evidence points to the truth of Christianity. Yet, when that person believes, he will be able to see that the evidence shows Christianity is true beyond reasonable doubt. A 51% certainty becomes a 99% certainty. We then know what God has said is true.

Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, your responsibility is to render a verdict about Jesus Christ. Is He the Eternal Son of God? Is He the Messiah? Is He worthy of your trust and confidence? Should each of us seek to honor and obey Him in every aspect of our lives? Now, most of us in this room answer those questions with a resounding "Yes!" If that is your response, praise God. I would simply urge you to share the reasons why you believe in Jesus with other people. You believe the witnesses and testimony that God has given about Jesus. Thus, it is now your turn to take the witness stand and testify to others that the gospel, the great news of Jesus is true. It is your turn to tell others that Jesus is the source of meaning, joy and salvation.

Now, I know the idea of talking to other people about our Christian faith makes many of us uncomfortable. We don't want to be like the Jehovah Witnesses, or some religious fanatic. But, I am not suggesting you do anything weird. Just be honest with others about your belief in Jesus Christ. Be willing to tell your family, other relatives, friends, neighbors, people at work and school, what trusting Jesus means in your life. Friends, if you are a believer in Jesus, I want you to pray now and ask God to give you the opportunity this week to testify the truth about Jesus with someone who is not a Christian. I want you to just ask God for the opportunity, and then when He provides the opportunity, strive to be bold, but gentle as you testify about Jesus Christ.

Now, I suspect some of you here, are still uncertain what verdict you would choose. You are

not sure whether Jesus is really the Son of God, really is the Savior and Lord. You have not decided whether you should put your trust in Him. Friends, if that is the boat you are in, I would challenge you to carefully consider the evidence. Now, I realize that some of you are so busy with your job, education, family activities, hobbies and sports, that you really have not taken time to think about who Jesus is and what He has done. In fact, you might be almost intentionally keeping yourself busy focusing on other things, just so you don't have to think about Jesus and about the ultimate questions of life, questions like why am I here? Where am I going? But folks, life is more than jobs, education, family activities, hobbies and sports. Those other questions are important. Sometime our life on this planet will come to an end. That is a cold hard fact. Yet, this life is not all there is, and nothing is more important than our eternal destiny. The truth is, no matter who you are, no matter what you have done, no matter how good of a person you have been, or how rotten of a person you have been, each of us needs the eternal salvation God offers freely to those who turn to Jesus Christ. You might not realize it, but that is reality.

So, friend, what is your verdict on Jesus? Do you believe He is the Eternal Son of God? Do you believe He is the Savior and Lord? If so, I urge you, by God's grace, to turn to Him, place your trust in Him, by faith receive and experience His amazing and saving grace. If you are not sure what that means, or still not sure about who Jesus is, please give me a call and we can talk more. Because in the end each of us has to decide about Jesus. May the Lord help us to reach the right verdict.