

“The Testimony of God”

(1 John 5:6-12 ~ Part 1)

Introduction

➤ I have a confession to make. I have already started listening to Christmas music. Now, I know there is an unwritten rule that we should not listen to Christmas music until after Thanksgiving, but I cannot help myself – well, I can but I don’t want to. And I am certain that I am not alone.

For the Christmas story is simply amazing – it truly cannot be overplayed or overtold, and the truths within the Christmas story simply cannot be exhausted. The true Christmas story is about the birth of God’s one and only Son; Jesus Christ. It is God’s account of the supernatural incarnation of God’s Son – God sending His Son to be conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary – fully God and fully man (see Matt.1:18-25; Jn.1:1-3, 14; Gal.4:4-5; Col.1:19; 2:9).

Furthermore, the story of the birth of Jesus Christ runs throughout all of Scripture. It is not relegated to the Gospels, or even to the New Testament. Simply put, the Old Testament proclaims that Christ is coming, and the New Testament declares that Christ has come (and Revelation proclaims that Christ is coming again!).

In fact, the Christmas story – the birth of Christ – appears in the passage before us this morning.

➤ As we have seen now many times, in writing the book of “1 John” (words inspired by the Holy Spirit of God; 2Tim.3:16; 2Pet.1:21), the apostle John encouraged his readers to believe in Jesus Christ as the one and only Son of God and one and only Savior from God.

1 John 1:1-3 ~ “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life – ²the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us – ³that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.”

1 John 2:22 ~ “Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, he who denies the Father and the Son.”

1 John 3:23 ~ “And this is his commandment, that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ ...”

1 John 4:2 ~ “By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God”

1 John 5:1 ~ “Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God ...”

1 John 5:20 ~ “And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true; and we are in him who is true, in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life.”

➤ This reoccurring – all important – theme is repeated (in a different and unique way) in 1 John 5:6-12:

1 John 5:6-12 ~ “This is he who came by water and blood – Jesus Christ; not by the water only but by the water and the blood. And the Spirit is the one who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth. ⁷For there are three that testify: ⁸the Spirit and the water and the blood; and these three agree. ⁹If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater, for this is the testimony of God that he has borne concerning his Son. ¹⁰Whoever believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself. Whoever does not believe God has made him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has borne concerning his Son. ¹¹And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. ¹²Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.”

- These verses can be divided into two main sections, each centered upon the fact that Jesus is indeed the Christ, the Son of God.

1. The Truth: Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God (vs.6-9)

- This passage begins with John reiterating the truth that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God: *“This is he who came by water and blood – Jesus Christ”* (vs.6). Implicit in this verse is the coming of Jesus Christ (*“he who came”*, vs.6; i.e.): *“Jesus Christ has come in the flesh”* (1Jn.4:2); *“God sent His only Son into the world”* (1Jn.4:9); *“[God] loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins”* (1Jn.4:10); *“the Father has sent His Son to be the Savior of the world”* (1Jn.4:14); *“we know that the Son of God has come”* (1Jn.5:20).
- This truth affirms that Jesus is infinitely more than “a good moral teacher” (infinitely greater than some 1st century Gandhi or Mother Teresa). It teaches that although Jesus was fully man – conceived by the Holy Spirit through the virgin Mary – He was also fully God (see Col.1:19; 2:9). This is essential doctrine and indelibly tied to truth of the Gospel.

John 1:1-3, 14 ~ “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was in the beginning with God. ³All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. ... ¹⁴And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.”

John 3:16-18 ~ “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. ¹⁸Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.”

Gal 4:4-5 ~ “But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, ⁵to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.”

2 John 7 ~ “For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not confess the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh. Such a one is the deceiver and the antichrist.”

- To further prove this essential Christian doctrine, the apostle John showed – as if he were in a courtroom – how various witnesses testify to the fact that Jesus is the Christ, the one and only Son of God. In fact, John used variations of a Greek word (*marturia/martureo*) translated “testimony” ten times in this seven-verse passage. The word, from which our English word “martyr” is derived, refers to someone who acts as a witness (“martyr”), giving testimony to what they believe (or know) to be true.

1 John 5:6-12 ~ “This is he who came by water and blood – Jesus Christ; not by the water only but by the water and the blood. And the Spirit is the one who testifies [vb., *martureō*], because the Spirit is the truth. ⁷For there are three that testify [vb., *martureō*]: ⁸the Spirit and the water and the blood; and these three agree. ⁹If we receive the testimony [n., *marturia*] of men, the testimony [n., *marturia*] of God is greater, for this is the testimony [n., *marturia*] of God that he has borne [vb., *martureō*] concerning his Son. ¹⁰Whoever believes in the Son of God has the testimony [n., *marturia*] in himself. Whoever does not believe God has made him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony [n., *marturia*] that God has borne [vb., *martureō*] concerning his Son. ¹¹And this is the testimony [n., *marturia*], that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. ¹²Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.”

- First, John declared the “three witnesses” that testify to the truth that Jesus is the Christ, and then he presented the one Witness that is greater than all.

A. The three witnesses (vs.6-8)

➤ However, as John reiterates this truth (in 1Jn.5:6-8) it admittedly gets a little confusing:

1 John 5:6-8 ~ “This is he who came by water and blood – Jesus Christ; not by the water only but by the water and the blood. And the Spirit is the one who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth. ⁷For there are three that testify: ⁸the Spirit and the water and the blood; and these three agree.”

➤ As we read these verses, one question typically rises to the surface: “What is meant by *“the water”* and *“the blood”* and *“the Spirit”* (vs.6, 8)? While we need not be dogmatic on our interpretation of these, I think the simplest explanation is probably the best.

♦ *“water”* (vs.6^{3x}, 8) ~ While some think *“the water”* refers to the sacrament (ordinance) of Christian baptism, or the water that poured out when (after His crucifixion) the soldier pierced Jesus’ side with a spear (Jn.19:34), it seems best to interpret it as the water of Jesus’ baptism. For it was at His baptism that God audibly confirmed that Jesus is the Christ, His Son:

Matt 3:13-17 ~ “Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him. ¹⁴John would have prevented him, saying, ‘I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?’ ¹⁵But Jesus answered him, ‘Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.’ Then he consented. ¹⁶And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; ¹⁷and behold, a voice from heaven said, ‘This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.’”

Mark 1:9-11 ~ “In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. ¹⁰And when he came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. ¹¹And a voice came from heaven, ‘You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.’”

♦ *“blood”* (vs.6^{2x}, 8) ~ Again, the simplest interpretation seems best as this most likely refers to the blood Jesus shed when He was crucified. That is, the atoning sacrifice – substitutionary atonement of – Christ’s crucifixion. As we will see later, He did during Christ’s baptism, God the Father gave indisputable evidence that Jesus’ crucifixion was no normal death.

In the New Testament, we see clearly that Jesus Christ – and the blood He shed during His crucifixion – is our perfect, eternal, all-sufficient sacrificial Lamb. Unlike the sacrificial offerings in the Old Testament (which were an illustration of the need for a “once-for-all” Savior), the sacrificial blood of Jesus truly (fully and eternally) cleanses the believer from all sin.

1 John 1:7 ~ “But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.” (see Rom.5:9; Eph.1:7; 1Pet.1:19)

Heb 9:18-22 ~ “Therefore not even the first covenant was inaugurated without blood. ¹⁹For when every commandment of the law had been declared by Moses to all the people, he took the blood of calves and goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, ²⁰saying, ‘This is the blood of the covenant that God commanded for you.’ ²¹And in the same way he sprinkled with the blood both the tent and all the vessels used in worship. ²²Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.”

Heb 10:3-4 ~ “But in these sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year. ⁴For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.” (see Heb.10:12-14)

John 19:32-35 ~ “So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first, and of the other who had been crucified with him. ³³But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. ³⁴But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out

blood and water. ³⁵He who saw it has borne witness – his testimony is true, and he knows that he is telling the truth – that you also may believe.” (see Jn.20:20, 25-27)

- ♦ **“Spirit”** (vs.6^{2x}, 8) ~ We know that *“the Spirit”* here refers to the Holy Spirit, as John also stated that *“the Spirit is the truth”* (vs.6; cf. Jn.14:17; 15:26; 16:13; 1Jn.4:6). As we have seen, the Spirit literally bore witness to Jesus as the Christ at His baptism:

John 1:29-34 ~ “The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, ‘Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! ³⁰This is he of whom I said, ‘After me comes a man who ranks before me, because he was before me.’ ³¹I myself did not know him, but for this purpose I came baptizing with water, that he might be revealed to Israel.’

³²And John bore witness: ‘I saw the Spirit descend from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him.

³³I myself did not know him, but he who sent me to baptize with water said to me, ‘He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.’ ³⁴And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God.’”

The Spirit of God involved at Jesus’ conception (Matt.1:18, 20; Lk.1:35), His temptation (Matt.4:1; Lk.4:1), all throughout His earthly ministry, and beyond:

John 15:26 ~ “But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me.”

- It is important to note that the affirmation of these testimonies concerning Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God, is not merely hearsay or speculation. The OT law required “the testimony of two or three witnesses” to establish the truth of a particular matter (Deut.17:6; 19:15; cf. Jn.8:17, 18; 1Tim.5:19). Through *“the water”* and *“the blood”* and *“the Spirit”*, the testimony that Jesus is the Christ was undeniably confirmed. Jesus’ baptism and His crucifixion were bookends of His public ministry, and in both of them the Father testified concerning the fact that He is the Christ the Son of God.

B. The divine Witness (vs.9)

- Thankfully, while the “three witnesses” (vs.6-8) may be a bit confounding to us, the “divine Witness” (vs.9) is absolutely not. In 1 John 5:6-8, we saw that *“the Spirit and the water and the blood”* (vs.8) all three testified (vs.7), and their testimony agreed (vs.8), that Jesus is the Christ who has come from God. Now, in verse nine, we that God also testifies to the truth that Jesus is the Christ!

1 John 5:9 ~ “If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater, for this is the testimony of God that he has borne concerning his Son.”

- At various times, and in various ways, God testified to the fact that Jesus is the Christ, His one and only Son. As we have already seen, God audibly confirmed that Jesus is His Son when Jesus was baptized (Matt.3:13-17; Mk.1:9-11). But this was not the only time God spoke from heaven testifying to the truth that Jesus is the Christ, His Son. God the Father also gave this audible (unmistakable) testimony when Christ was transfigured.

Matt 17:1-8 ~ “And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James, and John his brother, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. ²And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light. ³And behold, there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him. ⁴And Peter said to Jesus, ‘Lord, it is good that we are here. If you wish, I will make three tents here, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah.’ ⁵He was still speaking when, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, ‘This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him.’ ⁶When the disciples heard this, they fell on their faces and were terrified. ⁷But Jesus came and touched them, saying, ‘Rise, and have no fear.’ ⁸And when they lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only.”

➤ The word “transfigured” literally means to be transformed or to change from one form to another. It comes from the Greek word (*metamorphoo*) from which our English word metamorphosis is derived. It is important to note that Jesus’ glorious appearance did not originate from some radiant external force shining upon Him, but from an internal divine illumination. That is to say, there was no heavenly spotlight shining on Jesus (as when Moses’ face shone from seeing a glimpse of God’s glory; cf. Ex.34:33-35). Rather, Jesus was incandescent with divine glory!

From within Himself, before these three disciples, Christ manifested His radiant splendor as God. Prior to His transfiguration, Christ’s divine glory was visibly concealed by His human flesh (the incarnate Christ always and simultaneously both fully God and fully man; cf. Col.2:9). In many ways, Christ’s transfigured appearance simply defies human expression. It is, in a sense, inexplicable. Yet, all three synoptic Gospels give a detailed description of what Jesus looked like in His glorified transfigured state (see Matt.17:2; Mk.9:3; Lk.9:29).

As the glory of God emanated from Christ’s body, they now saw Him glorified right before their very eyes. This radiance of divine glory caused Christ’s clothes to glow exceedingly “white as light” (Matt.17:2), as intensely as a flash of lightning. In other words, there is nothing on earth that could make Jesus’ clothes as white (let alone whiter) than they were at that moment. His transfigured appearance was completely beyond human replication. In addition, Matthew records for us that Jesus’ “*face shone like the sun*” (Matt.17:2). Truly, this was an awesome sight to behold!

Although we read that Peter “*did not know what to say*” (Mk.9:6), and Luke records that Peter did not know “*what he said*” (Lk.9:33), we also read that Peter unfortunately decided to say something anyway. Matthew tells us exactly what Peter said in the moment: “*Lord, it is good that we are here. If you wish, I will make three tents here, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah*” (Matt.17:4). While, at first glance, Peter’s words may sound harmless they were in fact quite inappropriate. For Peter makes the grievous mistake of equating Moses and Elijah with Jesus, and in doing so completely failed to understand the significance of Christ’s transfiguration. That is, Moses and Elijah appeared as a testimony to the fact that Jesus Christ is God’s one and only Son, and our one and only Savior. Moses and Elijah did not appear to be honored with Jesus, but in honor of Jesus!

The fact that Moses and Elijah appeared with Jesus likely illustrates Jesus as the fulfillment of both the law (in Moses) and the prophets (in Elijah) as Jesus stated in Matthew 5:17. Moses and Elijah were not ghosts nor resurrected humans, but appearing with Jesus in glorious splendor as having come from the presence of God. In addition, Jesus is the perfect and final Deliverer of God’s people; whereas Moses and Elijah were imperfect and temporal deliverers of God’s people. Both Moses and Elijah prefigured the coming of Jesus the Christ (see Deut.18:15; Mal.4:4-6). They were talking with Jesus, as Luke records, about “*his departure*” (Lk.9:31; i.e. His imminent death, resurrection, and ascension).

➤ Lest we, like Peter, miss the point. God’s verbal testimony of Christ needs to be highlighted:

Matt 17:5 ~ “He was still speaking when, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, ‘This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him.’”

Mark 9:7 ~ “And a cloud overshadowed them, and a voice came out of the cloud, “This is my beloved Son; listen to him.””

➤ God the Father also gave visible testimony concerning the truth that Jesus is the Christ. At Christ’s crucifixion, God executed several supernatural events that prove Jesus’ death was anything but a normal human death.

Matt 27:45-54 ~ “Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour. ⁴⁶And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, ‘Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?’ that is, ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’ ⁴⁷And some of the bystanders, hearing it, said, ‘This man is calling Elijah.’ ⁴⁸And one of them at once ran and took a sponge, filled it with sour wine, and put it on a reed and gave it to him to drink. ⁴⁹But the others said, ‘Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to save him.’ ⁵⁰And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and yielded up his spirit.

⁵¹And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. And the earth shook, and the rocks were split. ⁵²The tombs also were opened. And many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised, ⁵³and coming out of the tombs after his resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many. ⁵⁴When the centurion and those who were with him, keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were filled with awe and said, ‘Truly this was the Son of God!’”

Mark 15:37-39 ~ “And Jesus uttered a loud cry and breathed his last. ³⁸And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. ³⁹And when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said, ‘Truly this man was the Son of God!’”

➤ Specifically, God tore “*the curtain of the temple*” (Matt.27:51) – which was “an elaborately woven fabric of 72 twisted plaits of 24 threads each. It was 60 feet high and 30 feet wide” (*ESV Study Bible*; notes on Matt.27:51) – easier than you or I could tear a piece of paper. This curtain literally cordoned off “the most holy place” from within the temple (see Ex.26:33; Heb.9:3). Only the high priest could enter the most holy place, and even then, he could only enter once a year, on the Day of Atonement (Heb.9:2-7). Additionally, the fact that it was torn “*from top to bottom*” (Matt.27:51; Mk.25:38) symbolically indicates that it was God who tore the temple curtain in two.

The tearing of this curtain symbolized that Jesus Christ is now the (sole, supreme) intercessor and advocate between God and man (see Rom.8:34; 1Tim.2:5; Heb.7:24-25; 9:12, 24; 10:19-22; 1Jn.2:1).

➤ The testimony of God overrides, overrules, all other testimony. While “*the water*” and “*the blood*” and “*the Spirit*” fulfilled the requirements of the law, God’s testimony is infinitely superior in every way – “*the testimony of God is greater*” (1Jn.5:9). For God’s Word is inerrant (without error), infallible (without failing), and eternal. Scripture confirms to us that God does not lie, in fact God cannot lie. For if God lied, He would not be the holy God. God cannot cease to be God (2Tim.2:13).

Since there is no higher authority, no more reliable testimony, than God’s Word, we can know that all that God says is true and all of God’s promises are true. This, the author of Hebrews makes clear:

Heb 6:13-20 ~ “For when God made a promise to Abraham, since he had no one greater by whom to swear, he swore by himself, ¹⁴saying, ‘Surely I will bless you and multiply you.’ ¹⁵And thus Abraham, having patiently waited, obtained the promise. ¹⁶For people swear by something greater than themselves, and in all their disputes an oath is final for confirmation. ¹⁷So when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose, he guaranteed it with an oath, ¹⁸so that by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible [*adunatos*] for God to lie, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope set before us. ¹⁹We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain, ²⁰where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.” [“*God ... never lies*”, Tit.1:2; cf. Num.23:19; 2Tim.2:13]

1 John 5:9 ~ “If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater, for this is the testimony of God that he has borne concerning his Son.”

➤ Simply put, Jesus is God’s Son because God said so!

John 5:31-39 ~ “If I alone bear witness about myself, my testimony is not true. ³²There is another who bears witness about me, and I know that the testimony that he bears about me is true. ³³You sent to John, and he has borne witness to the truth. ³⁴Not that the testimony that I receive is from man, but I say these things so that you may be saved. ³⁵He was a burning and shining lamp, and you were willing to rejoice for a while in his light. ³⁶But the testimony that I have is greater than that of John. For the works that the Father has given me to accomplish, the very works that I am doing, bear witness about me that the Father has sent me. ³⁷And the Father who sent me has himself borne witness about me. His voice you have never heard, his form you have never seen, ³⁸and you do not have his word abiding in

you, for you do not believe the one whom he has sent. ³⁹You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me”

John 10:24-25 ~ “So the Jews gathered around him and said to him, ‘How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly.’ ²⁵Jesus answered them, ‘I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father’s name bear witness about me” (see Jn.10:37-38; 14:10-11)

➤ Understandably, Peter never forgot the time he (James and John) saw Jesus Christ transfigured before them. And he never forgot the audible voice of God he heard that day. However, as he made clear in the letter of “2 Peter”, the written (inspired) Word of God (Scripture) is every bit as reliable as the audible voice of God. For both are the Word of God.

2 Peter 1:16-21 ~ “For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. ¹⁷For when he received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, ‘This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased,’ ¹⁸we ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain.

¹⁹And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts,

²⁰knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone’s own interpretation.

²¹For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.”

Conclusion

➤ We know that Jesus is the Christ, the one and only Son of God and the one and only Savior from God. This is the perfect and authoritative testimony of God – *“that he has borne concerning his Son”* (1Jn.5:9) – which we, as believers, have as *“a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul”* (Heb.6:19).