

1 JOHN 5:6-12

INTRODUCTION

In our last sermon in this series we saw that the faith that overcomes the world is a specific belief that Jesus is the Son of God (v 5). This was precisely what the other false teachers were denying when they insisted that Jesus was the natural son of Joseph and Mary. He was human but not divine was at the heart of their message. But to do away with the divinity of Christ is to do away with the only way that we as human beings can come into fellowship with God (3:23-24).

But the false teaching did not stop there for they claimed that Jesus became the Messiah at his baptism and he ceased to be the Messiah or Christ on the cross. In others words the divine Christ joined with Jesus at his baptism but left him at the cross so that it was the human Jesus and not the divine Christ that died on the cross. For these false teachers Jesus was a great man a good teacher and a wonderful example but he was not the eternal Son of God.

The divine Christ came upon him and empowered him, which was why Jesus was able to do all his miracles but he left him just before his death so that on the cross Jesus dies as an ordinary man. It is the issue of the deity of Christ that John contests in these verses that we are looking at this time. He begins his defence by stating that Jesus is the one who came into the world, that is a historical fact (v 6). The Greek form of this sentence tells us that this coming is a once for all historical fact, so this Jesus is a real man who really lived in time and space but it is also a technical way of saying that he who comes is the fulfilment of the promised Messiah. So John right at the start of his argument is asserting the historicity of the incarnation as the foundation stone of his defence of Christ's deity.

Having made that clear he now gives clear evidence for the deity of Jesus.

1. THERE ARE THREE CLEAR WITNESSES (vs. 7-8).

Now I have to say that if you have an older translation such as the A.V you will have additional sentences in verse 7-8. The additional sentences talk about three heavenly witnesses but it has to be said that the textual support for these sentences is very weak indeed. The teaching is clearly biblical, God is indeed triune but these words are found in only a **few late** manuscripts and the way we deal with manuscripts is that the earlier the manuscript the more reliable they are.

So if it does not appear in earlier manuscripts but does appear in late manuscripts then the assumption has to be that it was added at a later date. Probably it was a note made by a scribe that someone else took as being in the text. We do have to be fair, I did criticise the NIV before for changing the word propitiation but the NIV has it right here and the older versions I believe are mistaken by including it. So I will only deal with the text as it is found in the NIV because I believe it is more reliable.

Another reason for doing so and perhaps the strongest evidence for not including these sentences in the text is that they are not quoted in any of the writings of the early church Fathers who in their battles with the heretics of their day over the issue

of the Trinity would surely have gladly used such a clear biblical testimony of the Trinity if it had of existed in their day. Now Let's get back to the text.

So what the text does say is that there are three witnesses, these are the water, the blood and the Holy Spirit.

These three witnesses agree in testifying to the truth of Jesus Christ; that is Jesus being the Christ. Now three witnesses were important within Jewish law for according to the Old Testament something could only be established by two or three witnesses. So in a court of law you could only convict someone if you had two or three witnesses, one witness was not sufficient (Deuteronomy 19:15). But we still have other problems in this text that we need to solve before we can understand what John means here.

One question we need to consider is what does he mean by the water, blood and Spirit? Now when you raise a question like that you can expect to have lots of different answers and down through the centuries there have been many different interpretations to this passage. Some have believed that it refers to the water at baptism and the blood is the Lord's supper, but that cannot be right for apart from anything else blood only symbolises half of the Lord's supper.

Others say it is referring to the cross and the water and blood that flowed from Jesus side thus testifying that Jesus is the Christ. Others say that the water refers to the Scriptures but I can't see where they get that one from at all.

Let me give you the right understanding of these verses. I am only joking, but I do feel it is the most reasonable one and in general most modern commentators that I read on this passage hold this view. This view says that the water refers to Jesus baptism while the blood refers to Jesus death. So what John is saying is that the whole of Jesus public ministry shows that Jesus is the Christ. This of course goes against the false teachers who believed as I said that Jesus ceased to be the Christ on the cross.

But John is affirming that Jesus is the Christ. During his entire life Jesus was the Christ, the Messiah the promised Saviour. So what John is saying is that at his baptism Jesus' identity as the divine Son of God was being testified too. The Spirit descended upon Jesus and God affirmed that Jesus was his beloved Son (Mark 1:9-11). But what was true of Jesus at his baptism was true of him at his death and this is where the false teachers had real problems.

But John proclaims that Jesus death on the cross proclaims him to be the Christ just as he was the Christ at his birth and at his baptism. The one who died was not just a human being but was fully God and man in one person. As a result the reason why he came was fulfilled; he came to be our propitiation for our sins and as a result he is now our advocate (2:1-2). Take away his deity and we have no salvation no forgiveness and no access to God.

The third witness that is mentioned is the Spirit. The Spirit is clearly the Holy Spirit and this witness is our internal witness. He testifies with the water and the blood. Jesus himself said that when the Holy Spirit came he would testify of Christ (John

15:26). We have the outward evidences of Christ in his baptism and in his death as well of course as his teachings, miracles and so on. But without the inwards testimony of the Spirit, we would not believe these things; they would remain foreign to us.

One person hears the gospel of Christ and is moved convicted and convinced by the work of the Spirit. However another person can hear the same message and can hardly wait till it finishes so that he can go home and turn on the TV. The nineteenth-century evangelical politician and campaigner against slavery William Wilberforce once brought his friend William Pitt (the youngest man ever to be the Prime Minister of Britain) to hear Richard Cecil preach.

Cecil preached powerfully and William Wilberforce felt he was almost in heaven. At the conclusion of the service Wilberforce could hardly wait to ask his friend what he thought of it. Pitt said, "I didn't understand a word of what that man was talking about." What made the difference? The Holy Spirit was testifying to Wilberforce but not to Pitt. So here is the evidence that Jesus is the Christ. His baptism at the beginning of his public ministry testifies to it and so does his death and of course his resurrection.

But what about you? Have you had the third witness testify in your heart convincing and convicting you that Jesus is indeed the Christ, the promised Saviour of his people? If so then you are saved and can be assured of it if not then you are not saved and are in need of trusting this Jesus the Christ for salvation. For that to happen you need the internal work of the Spirit and for this you must pray and ask for God to be merciful to you. We all need to realise that although we can try to convince people through the Scriptures that Jesus is the Christ and Saviour it is only the Spirit who ultimately convinces anyone. The Spirit does it through the Scriptures, which is why we ought to use the scriptures to show people Jesus.

But even when we have shown people the importance of his birth, his baptism and the cross we still need the Spirit to work otherwise people will remain unmoved and largely unconvinced. We need to pray for the work of the Spirit.

2. THE RESPONSE TO THE TESTIMONY (vs. 9-10).

Verse 9 is saying what is generally true; we accept human testimony therefore we ought to accept the testimony of God which is greater. In a court of law we have witnesses who tell us what they see, they are cross-questioned and eventually the jury have to make a decision. Are the witnesses telling the true is their testimony reliable? If they conclude that it is then they will find the defendant guilty. Well this is what John is saying if we believe human witnesses then surely we ought to believe God's testimony, for his testimony is greater just by the very fact that he is God. God's testimony about his Son was heard at his baptism, it was heard again at his transfiguration (Matthew 17:5) and just before the crucifixion (John 12:27-28). Therefore surely God's testimony must be believed. But the false teachers were rejecting God's testimony about his Son and by rejecting God's testimony what they were really saying is made clear here in verse 10. By their rejection they were calling God a liar. The Father testifies to the truth of Christ, but the unbeliever dismisses it as not worth his time investigating.

But behind such an attitude of unbelief is a wilful and sinful unwillingness to investigate the claims of Christ to look at the evidence to listen to the witnesses. Unbelievers are willing to call murder or rape sin but they do not even consider unbelief to be in the same league. God declares 'this is my beloved Son listen to him' but the unbeliever says to God 'so what. Other things are more important in my life.'

O he may not say God you are a liar an unbeliever may not want to go that far especially if they are just a little bit religious but the very fact that they remain in an unbelieving state is saying God you are a liar. I don't believe your testimony about Christ is true therefore I am going about my own business and am not going to consider the claims of Christ for my life.

This is why we need to pray for unbelievers that we know in our families and in our community. They are not totally ignorant in the sense that there is no evidence God the Father has testified about his Son, he has proclaimed loud and clear that he is the Christ, the Saviour but unbelievers ignore the evidence choosing instead to call God a liar rather than repent. Who is going to stir them out of their unbelief? Only God can do so by the work of his Spirit.

We can't do it we can talk to them and witness to them and give them tapes and books to read but only God can so convince and convict them by his Holy Spirit. That's why we need to spend as much time praying as we do witnessing. I find it harder to pray for any length of time than I do to witness (and I don't find that easy). But unless we see the plight of the unbeliever we will not pray, as we should. Their situation is desperate, so pray for them.

3. JOHN'S CONCLUDING TESTIMONY (vs. 11-12)

All that John has been saying leads to his clear and simple conclusion. We cannot misunderstand such a clear statement about the spiritual condition of people. We either know Christ in which case we know life in abundance or we do not know Christ and do not have abundant life (John 10:10). It is no good thinking that we have made a success of our lives if we do not have Christ. It is no good thinking we are decent people if Christ has not saved us. Christianity is Christ; this is John's point, he is ours and we are his or else eternal death is ours forever. It is worth noting that each of the verbs in verse 12 is in the present tense. He who has the Son that is he who repents of sin and trusts in Christ now has life **now**. This means that a person trusting Christ possess eternal life **now** meaning a quality of life as well as a quantity of life.

However he who does not have the 'Son of God' he who is believing in something else or someone else now instead of believing in Christ does not have life as a result. That is they do not possess God's eternal life within them and this means that their destiny is hell unless they repent. It's not that one day they will end up in hell but now at this moment of time they are heading for hell on the road to hell and unless they repent they will end up there. This is exactly what John said in John 3:18.

Therefore everyone who reads this can be assured of your standing before God **now**. You don't have to wait till you die or you do not have to wait for the Lord's return you can know **now** and be assured **now** that either you belong to Christ and

have life or you do not belong to Christ and do not have life. It all boils down to this one person Jesus Christ. The false teachers did not believe upon Christ therefore they do not have life but the churches that John is writing too did believe and therefore do have life. He is assuring the church of their salvation. If you are unsure or if you have doubts about whether you are saved then ask yourself do you believe upon Christ. Are you trusting him alone to save you? If so then you have life. Eternal life both now and forever.

Therefore as I conclude let us look to Jesus Christ and him alone for our salvation Let us trust in him and be assured that trusting in him brings us life **now** and for all eternity and then let us go out from here and pray for those who do not have life and proclaim this wonderful message to others. Who knows the Lord may be merciful and bring many to true life in Christ through the work of the Holy Spirit.

Amen