

God's Case for Christ

1 John 5:6-12 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... ⁸ the Spirit, the water, and the blood; and these three agree as one. 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; 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.

Christianity is different from all other religions, precisely because it makes an all-or-nothing claim about Jesus Christ. It says that Jesus Christ alone is the way of salvation. It says that Jesus is the exclusive way to know God, and all other ways are false and misleading. Moslems claim to believe in God. Orthodox Jews claim to believe in God. But Christianity comes along and says you cannot believe in God except you believe on Him through Jesus. Christianity says there is no believing in God without believing in Jesus.

Those are bold claims. Those are extreme claims. Those are claims that make Christianity unpopular in a pluralistic world. In a world where everyone has their own personal spirituality and no one's more right or correct than the other; in a world where religions really all mean the same thing, being simply different paths up the same mountain - claims like Christianity's sound intolerant. They sound like hate speech. They sound like extremist views. They sound like religious terrorists, a kind of fanaticism that, to the world, isn't very different from people who strap bombs to their bodies and blow up buses or planes, or fly them into buildings.

So now, just like in the times of the Roman Empire, Christianity is looking more and more like an obstruction to sane, secular living, more and more like the religion of madmen. It may come again to the place where Christians are tried on false charges, and made out to be criminals and trouble-makers.

If you're going to take up biblical Christianity, your whole life is at stake. You will possibly lose your reputation, your good standing, maybe your lifestyle, and eventually, even your life. Even if you don't, to choose biblical Christianity is to stake everything on one man. It is about building your life now, and trusting for all of eternity on one Person – Jesus Christ. To be a Christian is to make Christ your life now, and your hope for the next life.

That's a lot of trust in one Person. In fact, that's placing all your trust in one Person. All your eggs are in one basket, so to speak, if you're a Christian. No back-up plans, safety nets, alternative solutions if Jesus fails. Everything is riding on the identity of Jesus Christ. Just like He has divided our calendar into B.C. and A.D., so He divides people into believers in Him and non-believers in Him.

Why should anyone believe that Jesus is the Son of God? Why should anyone believe that Jesus is the Christ – the chosen one of God, the anointed Messiah who reconciles us to God? Why should we believe that Jesus alone is the way, truth and the life, and that no one comes to the Father but by Him?

Well, God cares about that. God made us in His image, part of which means we are reasoning people. We want reasons. We want truth. We want to make our choices based on what is true and

reasonable. You will find from the very beginning of the Bible, God reasons with men. God asks people questions, and answers theirs. God persuades people, and reasons with them.

So when it comes to the biggest decision of all: who is God, and who is His chosen One, God is going to reason with us. This passage is God reasoning with us about the identity of Jesus Christ. John has been telling us that true believers believe in Jesus Christ, and overcome by their faith in Him. But why should we believe in Jesus Christ? In fact, God reasons with us as if this were a trial, a court-case, where the identity of Jesus Christ was on trial. God argues the case that Jesus Christ is His Son, the Christ, and the only one in whom eternal life exists.

God argues the case, and it is we who must decide if we believe His case for Jesus Christ, or not. The difference in this court case is this: the decision we make will not change anything about Jesus Christ, but it will determine whether we have eternal life or not. The verdict we come to will be a verdict on ourselves.

So in this passage, we will see three parts of God's case for Christ. We'll see the witnesses that God calls to the stand, we'll see the reasons God gives for believing, and we'll see the results God promises for believing.

I. God's Three Witnesses to Jesus Christ

1 John 5:6 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.

Look at verse 8

1 John 5:8 ⁸ And there are three that bear witness on earth: the Spirit, the water, and the blood; and these three agree as one.

When John says – “This is He who came”, he's reminding us of language that speaks of Messiah.

How did Jesus come? He came by water and by blood and John is emphatic – not by water only, but also by blood. Now what do these mean, and how do they witness of Jesus Christ? Well, what two events in the life of Jesus spoke especially loudly of the Father's testimony of His Son? What two events marked Jesus out as Messiah?

Well, the first was His baptism.

Matthew 3:16 - 4:1 When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. ¹⁷ And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

The baptism of Jesus was the inauguration of His ministry as Messiah. It was at His baptism that He was set apart by the Father and filled with the Spirit. In fact, John the Baptist added his testimony by saying that he saw that.

John 1:29-34 The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! ³⁰ "This is He of whom I said, 'After me comes a Man who is preferred before me, for He was before me.' ³¹ "I did not know Him; but that He should be revealed to Israel, therefore I came baptizing with water." ³² And John bore witness, saying, "I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and He remained upon Him. ³³ "I did not know Him, but He who sent me to baptize with

water said to me, 'Upon whom you see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, this is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.' ³⁴ "And I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God."

At the baptism of Jesus, God testified that this was His Son, and that He was the Christ. He came by water.

But He did not only come by water. He came by blood. One of the early heresies circulating in the church was the teaching that the Christ came upon Jesus at His baptism, but left Him before the crucifixion. But John wants us to know that Jesus Christ – the God-Man, the Son of God not only lived and was baptised, but died; He died a bloody death.

How did God testify of Jesus in His death?

Matthew 27:50-54 And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit. 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. 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 if that were not enough, God testified of Jesus in His resurrection. The resurrection was God's testimony that Jesus was no mere sinner, no mere prophet who deserved death like us all, but a sinless man – the God-Man who died for sin, not because of sin.

Acts 17:31 "because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead."

God testified of His Son at His baptism, and at His death. The third witness that Jesus is the Christ is the Spirit of God Himself.

John 15:26 "But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me."

After Jesus had died and ascended, one of the most significant events in religious history occurred.

Acts 2:2 And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. ³ Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. ⁴ And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

What was going on here? The Spirit of God came on the day of Pentecost, and He came to indwell believers permanently. He came as the proof that God was indwelling believers in His Son. He came as a seal, proof, a down-payment that God was indeed in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself.

The testimony of Jesus' baptism, the testimony of His death and resurrection, and the testimony of His sent Spirit.

Now let me take a moment to explain something that you may have noticed. If you are using the ESV, NIV or most other modern translations, you'll find that the words 'three that bear witness in heaven, the Father, the Word and the Holy Spirit, and these three are one' are either missing, or are in a footnote. Now the reason for that is that different Bible translations have relied on different

collections of Greek manuscripts. There are over 5000 Greek manuscripts of the New Testament, and some versions follow older families, some versions follow the bigger families. In this particular case, the KJV and NKJV have followed something which very few Greek manuscripts contain, less than seven, and most of them quite late. What probably happened is that a scribe was sitting with the text, and noticed how this passage mentions the Spirit, Christ and God all testifying. So he probably wrote these words in the margin, as a comment, a meditation. At some point, someone perhaps thought that those words belonged in the text, and so a very few manuscripts included. The text family that the KJV and NKJV used included them to be on the extra safe-side, but they are probably not original. What we know, is what they say is true, it's taught in many other places – 2 Cor 13:14, Matthew 28:19-20, John 10:30 and other places. No Bible translation is perfect. The Word of God as it was given by God to His apostles and prophets is perfect. Our translations are excellent translations of the perfect Word of God.

The train of thought which John has here is all about these three witnesses – the Spirit, the water and the blood. We see it again in verse 8.

1 John 5:8 And there are three that bear witness on earth: the Spirit, the water, and the blood; and these three agree as one.

These three witnesses agree. They concur. They say the same thing: Jesus is the Christ. Jesus is the chosen one. Jesus is the Son of God. When Jesus was put on trial, the false witnesses did not agree with each other.

Mark 14:56 For many bore false witness against Him, but their testimonies did not agree.

But here, God's three witnesses agree. According to God's Word how many witnesses did you need to establish something?

Deuteronomy 19:15 ¹⁵ ¶ " One witness shall not rise against a man concerning any iniquity or any sin that he commits; by the mouth of two or three witnesses the matter shall be established.

God has called three witnesses to the stand, and no one can deny those three. It is irrefutable that Jesus Christ came by water, by blood and that the Spirit's presence in the world and in believer's lives testifies that Jesus has indeed come and is the Christ, the Son of God.

But now that God has fulfilled the need for three witnesses, He is going to turn to persuasion. He is now going to give us reasons why believing His testimony is essential.

II. God's Three Reasons to Believe His Witness

“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. “

The first reason God gives to believe Him *is that He is greater than men, and we believe men.*

God is greater than men, and when men have given us enough evidence, we believe them. How much more, ought we to believe God when He testifies concerning His Son?

Think about your own experience. Let's say someone tells you something apparently absurd, like the idea that our regular highways are going to become toll roads, and that we will have to prepay into accounts to keep driving on them. You'll probably be sceptical. Then a second person comes along and tells you about these toll roads which will bill your license automatically, and you'll have

to keep your account topped up. Now you're starting to think it's true. Now you go on the Internet, and do some checking, and there you find an article on one of the news websites which repeats everything the other two told you, with added information about when this system will begin. Are you still unconvinced? Chances are, after three witnesses, you believe.

In fact, with most things, you don't usually require that many. We believe people, unless we have a reason not to. When something is new or strange or unfamiliar, we want more verification. But two or three people will usually do it for us.

The Bible says, since we do that with men, we most certainly ought to do that with God. Men can lie, deceive, make mistakes, exaggerate or distort information. God is truth. God's truth reaches into the clouds. God has more integrity, honour and truthfulness than the worthiest people you have ever met. If three people are enough to convince you, God's testimony is enough. Indeed, God is three persons, and each of them has testified to Jesus Christ. The Spirit has testified. Jesus has testified to Himself, and the Father has testified.

John 8:17 "It is also written in your law that the testimony of two men is true." ¹⁸ "I am One who bears witness of Myself, and the Father who sent Me bears witness of Me." ¹⁹ Then they said to Him, "Where is Your Father?" Jesus answered, "You know neither Me nor My Father. If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also."

Acts 5:32 "And we are His witnesses to these things, and so also is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him."

This is the first reason: if you can trust men, you can trust God. Now he moves on to the second reason.

1 John 5:10 He who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself;

The second reason God gives for believing His testimony is *that believing brings the certainty you are looking for*. The one who believes, has the witness in himself. In other words, the evidence for Jesus being the Son of God moves from out there, to in here, from objective to subjective, from external to internal. The person who believes in Jesus immediately knows that it is true.

The Bible tells us that once we are truly born again, the Spirit dwells within us. With that, comes an internal witness telling us that it is all true.

Romans 8:16 The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,

God turns the tables on the world. The world says, seeing is believing. God say no, believing is seeing. The world says prove it to me, and I will believe. God says believe, and it will be proven to you.

Every one of us knows this to be true. While there are important evidences for the Christian faith, no one comes to faith, that is, no one believes because of evidence. People believe because of a heart change once exposed to the Word of God.

We've been somewhat indoctrinated by the world into thinking that we are all these neutral beings, weighing up evidence one way or another, and if we will just get enough evidence, we'll believe. But God says your unbelief is perverting all the evidence. Your refusal to believe will warp and distort all the information I give you.

Romans 1:18-19 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, ¹⁹ because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them.

Romans 1:25 who exchanged the truth of God for the lie,

Romans 1:28 And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge,

Unbelief is not a matter of can't, it's a matter of won't. God's existence is self-evident. Jesus Christ is clearly the most extraordinary man who has ever lived, and if He is not the ultimate candidate for the Son of God, then no one is. Unbelief is not honest.

God says, stop denying and suppressing and refusing to see - then you will see! Believe, and you will know. Believe and you will understand. Believe and you will be certain.

And that leads to the third reason that God gives for believing His testimony regarding Jesus Christ;

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.

Very simply, unbelief is slander. God has said something is true of Jesus Christ. He has made it very clear that He regards Jesus as His Son. Now, once God, who cannot lie and who is the truth, has said that much about Jesus Christ, there are only two options. Believe, in which case you say, "God is true", or disbelieve, in which case you say, "God is a liar". There is no neutral ground where you can say, well, that's God's opinion and He's entitled to it. No, if God says something, He is either telling the truth or lying. If He is telling the truth, you believe it, as any rational person would. If He is lying, you do not believe it, because no one knowingly believes a lie. So when we reject what God says, we are passing sentence on God. We are saying you are not fit to be trusted. We cannot take your Word on the matter. We reject your testimony as misleading, unreliable, and not worth staking our lives on.

Unbelief is not weakness; unbelief is arrogance. Unbelief is not because the person feels taxed intellectually, it's because the person feels intimidated morally. What is often said as "I can't believe" is actually "I won't believe" Unbelief accuses God of lying, but unbelief is actually a form of lying. It is lying to ourselves. It is pretending to not see what we do see. It is suppressing, screening out what will cause us to have to deal with God and His demands He makes on us. Indeed, what does Romans 3:4 say?

"Indeed, let God be true but every man a liar."

John 3:32 "And what He has seen and heard, that He testifies; and no one receives His testimony. ³³ "He who has received His testimony has certified that God is true.

Unbelief is not simply disbelief, it is criticism of God. It is regarding God as untrustworthy. This is why it is impossible to say you believe in God, but do not believe in Jesus. That's like claiming to trust me, but denying that I have a son. What kind of trust is that?

So in this court case, God has given us three powerful reasons to accept His testimony regarding His Son. Since we believe men, we ought to believe the Creator of men. When we believe, we know and understand. When we don't believe we call Him a liar, which actually means we're lying.

Now, God is going to drive the point home and give the strongest point of the argument: the result of believing in His Son.

III. God's Summary Statement

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.

Here is the testimony: here is the summary of what God has given us evidence for and proved beyond reasonable doubt: God has given eternal life, and this life is in His Son.

God has promised life to a dying race. He has come to us as a doctor comes to a terminal patient, with a total and absolute cure. He has come to us with a promise of life. Not just any life, but life far richer and more abundant and more full of joy than we have ever known it.

This is what man wants, does he not? He wants life! He wants the best possible life, and he wants that life to go on. People pursue what they think life is really for, and they want it to go on for the longest time possible.

God comes not with temporary good life, or long-lasting mediocre life – but eternal life. Real life - the fulfilment of life which lasts forever.

But the catch is the life is found in a person, that person is His Son Jesus.

1 John 5:20 ¶ And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us an understanding, that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.

1 John 1:1 ¶ That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life --² the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us --³ that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.

John 1:4 In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.

John 11:25 Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. ²⁶ "And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?"

John 14:6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.

And that's the catch. God isn't going to just enhance the life you have had up till now. God isn't going to spruce up your current life. God isn't going to energise and reinvigorate the life you've had apart from Jesus because as far as God is concerned, that's not living at all. In fact, it's dying. It's a life of walking away from your Creator.

Like a solar powered car driving away from the sun into deep shade and darkness, it will wind down and die. Like living creatures moving away from sources of water, so is human life lived apart from the true and living God - it's a living death. It's what Solomon called 'vanity' – emptiness, weightlessness. A life that becomes emptier and emptier, less and less significant, less and less alive, until finally, physical death just seals it.

The kind of life that God wants to give you is a new life altogether. It is the life of His Son. So the logic is simple: if you want life, then you want the Son. If you want the life God is offering,

then you want Jesus Christ as your new life. He that has the Son has life. He that does not have the Son does not have life.

This is why God has these witnesses – to point to Christ, and say – here is life. This is why He exhorts us to believe Him as we would men, to believe and so see, to no longer call Him a liar, but to taste and see that the Lord is good.

But to make way for the life of His Son, your old life must go.

John 12:24-25 ²⁴ "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain. ²⁵ "He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.

Before the life of God takes up residence, a person must first turn to Him. That turning means turning away from the old life. It means giving up on it, letting it die, giving up on your hopes to make life work your own way; giving up on trying to get pleasure from this world, turning away from sin and its pleasures, and surrendering totally to the person of Jesus Christ to forgive you of your old life, and to give you His new one.

You see, the strange irony of the universe is this – every man must in this life decide about Jesus, because in the next life Jesus will decide about every man. In this life, your greatest decision is to receive or reject God's testimony regarding His Son Jesus. But when you die, you will stand before God and Jesus said that the Father has committed all judgement to Him. So Jesus will judge every man. And His verdict on each person will be based upon what that person had decided about Jesus in his or her life. If you decided to reject God's testimony and ride on your own merits, then you do not have life, and will not have it on that day of judgement. If you received the Son by repenting and believing in him, then you have life now, and will have it then. Christ's righteousness is yours now, and will be yours then.

Today you must decide on what God has said about Jesus. One day, God will decide on what you have said about Jesus.