

The First Epistle of John

...so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ (1John 1:3)

1John 5:6-8

Review

Where is John writing from?

What heresy was he addressing?

What flavor of Gnosticism was John specifically dealing with?

What did the heretics teach?

How does John deal with this false teaching?

1John 1:6-10

Someone else read vv5:1-12

John has just concluded an argument and brought it full circle. To summarize:

Christian believers are God's children

Believers are born from where? Above.

God's children are loved by all who love ... God

Those who love God also keep His commandments

By keeping His commandments, they overcome ... the world

And His commandments are not hard to keep - they are not burdensome

They overcome the world because they are Christian believers,

They overcome because they are born of God

One way to unravel this argument is not to think in terms of a circle, but of a line with obedience (or righteousness) at the center. The two ends are: Belief in God and Overcoming the world. These have the effect of detaching us from the world and attaching us to God. The result in each case is keeping His commandments.

Let's take a closer look at v6:

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. It is the Spirit who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth. (1 John 5:6 NASB)

This is the one who came (Greek: *houtos ho elthwn*) – Who is John referring to here? And what is he referring to? Where did He come from? And why did He come?

“by” (Greek *dia*) = literally, through. Metaphorically, it can be translated by or by means of.

So, what does “water and blood” signify?

These were probably understood by John’s readers, but they are difficult for us to grasp.

Robert Thomas lists 6 views, of which we will consider the 4 most likely:

1. They refer to Christ’s baptism and atoning sacrificial death – the bookends of His public ministry
2. Water = The Incarnation – humans are born shortly after a mother’s what breaks?
Blood = His Death
3. See Jn 19:34-35. Symbolic of His death
4. They signify our baptism and the wine of the Eucharist

Each view has its scholarly advocates. We can dismiss #4 right away – the context does not focus on us, it focuses on Christ. This was the view of Calvin and Luther, among others.

We can dismiss #3, because it says “not with water only” – seems like John has a particular contrast in mind (which I will address in a second). Interestingly, Robert Thomas comes down on this option.

He has grammatical reasons for deciding on the option – the fact that the two nouns both lack the article, and thus must be viewed as a unit. He says the only other place these two terms occur in the same context is Jn 19:34. Barnes and other agree with this option. As a counter to the noun lacking the article, see v6b.

This leaves us with Option #1 and Option #2. It is difficult to choose between them.

John has a contrast in mind – I just said that. Recall one of John’s primary purposes in writing this letter was to refute what Heresy? And what specific ‘flavor’ of Gnosticism was he writing against?

What did the Docetists teach about the Incarnation? What did they teach regarding his death?

Look at GJohn 1:14. Now look at 1Jn 4:2. These are a broadsides leveled vs the Docetists. I find it hard to believe that John would *agree* with his Docetic opponents in any way, shape, or form. He would *avoid* giving any appearance of doing so.

So, though I usually agree with Stott, Hiebert, Bruce, and Marshall, I shall depart from them on this point and agree with that imminent Bible scholar, Brian Nicks (my instructor in TBB1), who basically agrees with Option #2. I could perhaps be persuaded otherwise, but for now at least, that’s my position.

“The spirit is truth”

See GJn 14:17, 15:26, 16:13

So, the Spirit’s testimony is what?

Notice that of these three witnesses, two are impersonal – water and blood. To these, John adds the Holy Spirit as a personal witness. These three present consistent testimony that Jesus came “through” water, blood, and Spirit; He was Incarnate, He suffered and died, and left His Spirit to permanently take up residence in our hearts. It is as much an inward conviction (subjective) as it is outward experience (objective).

Our faith must be based on both!

Let’s move onto the next verse. Somebody read v7.

The testimony of one person alone is not to be taken at face value. But what about the testimony of two? How about three?

Deut 19:15 (general principal); Mat 18:16 ; 1 Tim 5:19 (principle applied to church discipline); 2 Cor 13:1ff (Paul applies this principal to himself communicating on three occasions with the Church in Corinth); The author of the book of Hebrews cites this principal as a warning to those who don’t obey the Law of Moses(Heb 10:26-28).

So, John refers to a well-established Biblical concept: The testimony of three witnesses is certain and can be trusted.

Now, does someone have v7 in the KJV or NKJV?

For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. (1 John 5:7 KJV)

Where did the additional words come from? Does this clear evidence of the Trinity belong in Scripture?

This is the famous – or infamous – Johannine Comma.

comma

1586, "short phrase," from L. comma, from Gk. komma "clause in a sentence," lit. "piece which is cut off," from koptein "to cut off," from PIE base *(s)kep- "to cut, split." Like colon, period, a Gk. rhetorical term for part of a sentence which has been transferred to the punctuation mark that identifies it. Used as such in Eng. as a L. word from 1530; nativized by 1599.

It apparently was a scribal gloss to the original text, and does not appear in any Greek MSS prior the 15th century. Erasmus omitted it from his first and second editions of the

GNT, but reluctantly agreed to include it his third ed. It passed into the TR, which in turn was the GNT used for the KJV. He apparently announced he would only include it, if he was shown a Greek MS that contained it, and lo and behold, one – ONLY ONE! - was produced.

Though various anti-Trinitarian groups – such as the JWs – are quite willing to cite this as an example of Trinitarian Bias, the fact is that this Comma has been recognized as almost certainly bogus from the early days of the KJV, and it was Trinitarians who published editions of the newly discovered, older Greek MSS (Westcott and Hort).

Now, let's consider v8.

the Spirit and the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement. (1 John 5:8 NASB)

It's clear that the Spirit refers to the same Divine Person in v6 and here. But what of the water and the blood? Do they have the same referents?

Some commentators (e.g., Bultmann, Clarke, Gill) have suggested that though in v6, they refer to historical events, here they represent the ordinances of Christian baptism and the Lord's Supper. They cite the previous verse, which has the verb "testify" in the present tense.

What do you think?

The commentator Burdick notes: "A change of meaning here is rather arbitrary since there is nothing in the context to indicate it." Nowhere in the Bible can we find the word "blood" used alone for the Lord's Supper. Further, it is hard to see in what sense these two ordinances testify that Jesus is the incarnate Son of God.

The present tense need only point to the fact that the water (of Christ's human birth or baptism) and the blood (of His atoning sacrifice) continue to bear witness concerning who and what Jesus Christ really was.

John now adds: "and these three are in agreement." Literally, "and these three are in one."

This statement is in stark contrast to the false witnesses at Jesus' trial who could not agree on anything (Mat 26:59-61). But here, we have three witnesses agreeing with each other, providing testimony to the Incarnate One.

And, if it is not clear, I want to emphasize the Divine Nature of this threefold testimony. If we, on the basis of the Bible, must accept human testimony on the basis of three witnesses, we should all the more receive the witness of God, which because He is God, is greater than any man's. I like the way the NEB paraphrases this verse: "we accept human testimony, but surely divine testimony is stronger."

.

Jesus died for the sins of the world. The death of Jesus only makes sense as we see that it was for others. As the prophet Isaiah predicted,

He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was laid upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. (Isaiah 53:5 KJV)

John Newton, who wrote so many of our hymns, was, for many years of his life a reckless, dissolute reprobate, living the wildest sort of life, until he became, at last, a slave even to slaves. With his health ruined, he was on a voyage back to England from Africa when, in the midst of a storm, God spoke to his heart and he found the Christ he had long rejected. He became one of the outstanding spokesmen of the gospel of his day, and he put his own testimony in these simple words.

In evil long I took delight
Unawed by shame or fear
Until a new object met my sight
And stopped my wild career.

I saw One hanging on a tree
In agony and blood
Who fixed his languid eyes on me
As near His cross I stood.

Sure, never till my latest breath
Will I forget that look
It seemed to charge me with His death
Though not a word He spoke.

My conscience owned and felt my guilt
And plunged me in despair
I saw my sins His blood had spilt
And served to nail Him there.

A second look He gave
Which said, "I freely all forgive.
My blood was for thy ransom paid
I died that thou may'st live."

That is an internal, personal, present confirmation of the one great fact declared by the sinless life (the water), and the atoning death (the blood), of the Lord Jesus Christ. These three mighty witnesses agree in one. What do they agree to? That, "he who knew no sin [that is his sinless life] was made sin for you [that is his blood], in order that we might be made the righteousness of God in him [that is the testimony of the Spirit]," 2 Corinthians 5:21). There you have the gospel, resting upon these inescapable, historical events.