

1 John 5:6 Commentary

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FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD AND HIS CHILDREN

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Charts from [Jensen's Survey of the NT](#) - used by permission
Another Overview Chart - [1 John](#) - Charles Swindoll!

BASIS OF FELLOWSHIP		BEHAVIOR OF FELLOWSHIP	
Conditions of Fellowship	Cautions of Fellowship	Fellowship Characteristics	Fellowship Consequences
Meaning of Fellowship 1 Jn 1:1-2:27		Manifestations of Fellowship 1 Jn 2:28-5:21	
Abiding in God's Light		Abiding in God's Love	
Written in Ephesus			
circa 90 AD			
From Talk Thru the Bible			

1 John 5:6 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:

Greek - Houtos estin (3SPAI) o elthon (AAP) di hudatos kai haimatos Iesous Christos ouk en to hudati monon all en to hudati kai en to haimati kai to pneuma estin (3SPAI) to marturoun (PAP) hoti to pneuma estin (3SPAI) e aletheia:

Amplified - This is He Who came by (with) water and blood His baptism and His death], Jesus Christ (the

Messiah)—not by (in) the water only, but by (in) the water and the blood. And it is the [Holy] Spirit Who bears witness, because the [Holy] Spirit is the Truth.

Wuest - This is the One who came through water and blood, Jesus Christ; not in the sphere of the water only, but in the sphere of the water and the blood. And the Spirit is the One who is constantly bearing witness, because the Spirit is the truth.

Technical Note: If you use the older version of the NAS (1977), you should be aware that the new version (1995) has a change in 1Jn 5:6-7. The newer version shifts verse 7 in the 1977 version (*And it is the Spirit who bears witness, because the Spirit is the truth*) to the end of verse 8.

- **is he:** John 19:34,35
- **by water and:** Isa 45:3,4 Eze 36:25 Joh 1:31-33 3:5 4:10,14 7:38,39 Ac 8:36 Eph 5:25-27 Titus 3:5 1Pe 3:21
- **blood:** 1Jn 1:7 4:10 Lev 17:11 Zec 9:11 Mt 26:28 Mk 14:24 Lu 22:20 Joh 6:55 Ro 3:25 Eph 1:7 Col 1:4 Heb 9:7,14 10:29 12:24 13:20 1Pe 1:2 Rev 1:5 5:9 7:14
- **the Spirit that:** 1Jn 5:7,8 Joh 14:17 15:26 1Ti 3:16
- **is truth:** Joh 14:6 16:13
- [1 John 5 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

A TRIAD OF WITNESSES OF JESUS CHRIST

John has just mentioned **Jesus the Son of God** (1Jn 5:5-note) and now describes the historical appearance of **Jesus Christ** in this next section (1Jn 5:6-9). Recall that the major point of attack by the anti-Christ (as it is in **EVERY** cult!) is on the Person of Jesus Christ, fully God, fully Man.

Westcott - The victory of Faith has been shown to lie in the confession of **Jesus** as the **Son of God** (1Jn 5:5). John now goes on to unfold the character (1Jn 5:6-8), and the effectiveness (1Jn 5:9-12), of the witness by which this confession is sustained and justified. ([Commentary](#))

In 1Jn 5:6-8 we encounter John's teaching on a **triad of witnesses**, three witnesses who (water and blood appear to be personified in 1Jn 5:8 by their association with the Person of the Spirit) state that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. John appears to base his argument on the fact that the validity of personal testimony in the OT was linked to a specific number of credible witnesses, Moses declaring that "two or three witnesses" were necessary to establish guilt or innocence on criminal charges (Dt 19:15) and only on this basis could a person be sentenced to death (Dt 17:6). Jesus applied the principle of "**two or three witnesses**" to His instructions for resolving disputes in the church (Mt 18:15-16). Paul used this standard to determine whether an accusation could be sustained against an elder (1Ti 5:19). In his second letter to the Corinthians, Paul sees his thrice repeated testimony alone, whether in person or by letter, as satisfying the requirement of two or three witnesses" (2Cor 13:1-3). The writer of the book of Hebrews alludes to this pattern writing that "Anyone who has set aside the Law of Moses dies without mercy on [the testimony of] **two or three witnesses**. How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled under foot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace?" (Heb 10:28-29-note) In this passage the writer points out the "greater testimony" of two witnesses, **the Son of God** and **the Spirit of grace**.

Witness (or testify, noun and verb) is a **key word** in 1Jn 5:6-11. As **Williamson** explains "John places enormous significance upon faithful witness as he nears the conclusion of his letter. This theme recalls the opening statement, "The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it" (1Jn 1:2-note). In chapter 5 John employs forms of "witness" and "testimony" ten times in five verses (1Jn 5:6, 7, four times in 1Jn 5:9, three times in 1Jn 5:10, and 1Jn 5:11). ([1, 2, & 3 John- A Commentary in the Wesleyan Tradition - New Beacon Bible Commentary](#))

Steven Cole introduces this section noting that "Skeptics frequently allege that Christian conversion is merely a psychological phenomenon that can be explained in purely naturalistic terms. In this view, conversion to Christ is a purely subjective experience. It's nice if it works for you, but you shouldn't try to impose it on everyone else or say that those who do not believe as you do are wrong. If you say that Jesus Christ changed your life, the skeptic will reply, "That's great for you, but it doesn't prove that Christianity is true for everyone else. Buddhism changed Richard Gere's life. Scientology changed Tom Cruise's life. Cabalistic Judaism seems to have changed Madonna's life. So if you want to look at changed lives, there is plenty of evidence that Christianity is not the only religious truth out there." How do you counter such arguments? There is value in subjective, inner assurance of the truth of the gospel for believers. But we need a more sure foundation for our faith than our subjective experience alone provides. Throughout First John, the apostle has been addressing the matter of authentic Christianity. False teachers had caused confusion in the church and had left, taking a number of people with them. They claimed to have secret knowledge about Jesus Christ, but their teaching contradicted the apostolic witness to Christ. John repeatedly shows that authentic Christians believe the truth about Jesus Christ, they obey God's commandments, and they love one another. He began the letter by affirming the certainty of what the apostles

knew about Jesus Christ (1Jn 1:1-3-note). John wasn't relaying some inner, subjective vision or philosophy. He was telling about his objective experience with Jesus Christ. **You can't get much more objective than seeing, hearing, and touching!** Jesus Christ is God's witness to us through the apostles who spent three years with Him. In our text, John comes back to this objective witness with which he opened this letter. He wants us to have a sure foundation for our faith. Authentic Christian faith rests on God's testimony to the person of Jesus Christ. In 1Jn 5:6-9, John shows that God has given a trustworthy three-fold witness to His Son. Then in 1Jn 5:10-13-note, he shows that believing God's witness to His Son gives us a sure foundation for our faith, with the aim (1Jn 5:13-note) "that you may know that you have eternal life."([1 John 5:5-13 Is Christianity Merely Psychological?](#)) (Bolding added)

Martyn Lloyd-Jones states "Now there can be no question at all but that these three verses are not only the most difficult verses in this epistle, but I think ... that they are the three most difficult verses, in a sense, in the entire Bible!" ([Life in Christ - includes Volume 5 = "Life in God"](#))

Cole goes on to address the two difficulties in this section - **The Textual Problem**: The textual problem is that the **New King James Version** (and the **KJV**) reads as follows (1Jn 5:7-8): "*For there are three who 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; and these three agree as one.*" It is certain that the phrase beginning with "in heaven" (1Jn 5:7) through "on earth" are not a part of John's original letter and should be omitted. There are no Greek manuscripts with this additional phrase before the 15th century. It comes from a marginal comment that was incorporated into the text of an Old Latin 5th century manuscript. ([The Epistles of John- Introduction, Exposition, and Notes- Frederick Fyvie Bruce](#), pp. 129-130 gives a full account of this.) The original text is accurately represented in the New American Standard Bible, the English Standard Version, and the New International Version.

THE LONG EXPECTED ONE

This (houtos) - This demonstrative pronoun refers back to **Jesus the Son of God** in 1Jn 5:5-note. What John is saying is that the eternal Son of God is one and the same person with the historic Jesus.

The is the One Who came... Jesus Christ - John makes a clear statement of the historical appearance of the long expected Messiah "being made in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man" (Php 2:7-8+). The verb **came** is in the **aoist tense** indicating a past event, a historical event, indeed, a monumental, life changing, earth shaking event (cf Mt 27:51). The Son of God of eternity "invaded" time to redeem the world from bondage to sin and Satan. And John wants to remind us that His coming in history was not without clear, irrefutable evidence, and so like a good lawyer he calls to the stand two reliable witnesses named "**water**" and "**blood**," in a sense personifying them. Indeed all of his children of all the ages since have prayed unceasingly the words of Charles Wesley's timeless hymn...

[Come Thou Long-Expected Jesus](#)

Born to set Thy people free; (Ro 8:2, Gal 5:1)
From our fears and sins release us, (He 2:15)
Let us find our rest in Thee. (Mt 11:28-30)
Israel's Strength and Consolation, (Lk 2:25KJV)
Hope of all the earth Thou art; (1Ti 1:1b)
Dear Desire of every nation, (Hag 2:7KJV)
Joy of every longing heart. (1Th 1:6b)

Born Thy people to deliver,
Born a child and yet a King,
Born to reign in us forever,
Now Thy gracious kingdom bring.
By Thine own eternal Spirit
Rule in all our hearts alone;
By Thine all sufficient merit,
Raise us to Thy glorious throne.

Indeed...

Maranatha!

Came (2064)(**erchomai**) means that Jesus entered into humanity, the aorist tense signifying that His entrance was a definite historical event. In short this is a description of His First Coming. From the context this reference is not to Jesus' birth but rather a reference to His public appearance as the Messiah, the Anointed One. After He was baptized by John, He was led into the wilderness, after which He began His ministry in the synagogue at Nazareth reading from Isaiah 61:1-2a+ "THE SPIRIT OF THE

LORD IS UPON ME, BECAUSE HE **ANOINTED** (**chrío** root verb of **Christos** = **Messiah - Anointed One**) ME TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO THE POOR. (Lk 4:18+) and declaring "**Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing**," (Lk 4:21+), in effect stating that He was the fulfillment of this OT **Messianic Prophecy!** You could have heard a pin drop in the Jewish synagogue that day (cp Lk 4:20+)!

Hiebert - The expression rendered "**He that came**" (*ho elthōn*) suggests the varied Gospel references to the **Messiah** as "he that cometh" (*ho erchomenos*; cf. Mt. 11:3 and Lk 7:19 both refer to the "Expected One"; Jn 1:15, Jn 1:27; Jn 6:14; Jn 11:27; Jn 12:13 - see verses below); ([The Epistles of John- An Expository Commentary](#) or see his excellent article [An Exposition of 1 John 5:1-12](#))

(Mt 11:3+) and said to Him, "Are You the **Expected One** (*ho erchomenos* = literally "the one who is to come"), or shall we look for someone else (Greek = *heteros* = basically = another of a different kind)?"

(Lk 7:19+) And summoning two of his disciples, John sent them to the Lord, saying, "**Are You the Expected One**, or do we look for someone else?"

(Jn 1:15+) John *bore witness of Him, and cried out, saying, "This was He of whom I said, **He Who comes** after me has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me."

(Jn 1:27+) "[It is] **He who comes** after me, the thong of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie."

(Jn 6:14) When therefore the people saw the sign which He had performed, they said, "This is of a truth the Prophet **Who is to come** into the world."

(Jn 11:27) She *said to Him, "Yes, Lord; I have believed that You are the Christ, the Son of God, [even]**He who comes** into the world."

(Jn 12:13) took the branches of the palm trees, and went out to meet Him, and [began] to cry out, "Hosanna! BLESSED IS **HE WHO COMES** IN THE NAME OF THE LORD, even the King of Israel."

THE WATER AND THE BLOOD

By water and blood - To what do these refer? Plummer observes that "This is the most perplexing passage in the Epistle and one of the most perplexing in NT."

Hiebert comments that "The oldest and most natural view understands '**water**' as a reference to Christ's baptism, with the attendant witnesses to His identity, at the commencement of His ministry (Mt. 3:13–17; Mk 1:9–11; Jn 1:31–34) and '**blood**' to the consummation of His saving ministry on the cross. This view is supported by the fact that "the context dictates that here **water and blood** must validate the manner of Jesus' coming." The two terms serve to sum up Christ's redemptive mission. As **Plummer** ([Cambridge Commentary](#)) notes, "Christ's Baptism, with the Divine proclamation of Him as the Son of God and the Divine outpouring of the Spirit upon Him, is not merely the opening but the explanation of the whole of His Ministry. The bloody death upon the Cross is not merely the close but the explanation of His Passion."" ([The Epistles of John- An Expository Commentary](#) or see his excellent article [An Exposition of 1 John 5:1-12](#))

By (*dia*) is a preposition which is used to describe intermediate agency. **Wuest** adds that this preposition speaks "of *accompaniment* and *instrumentality*. His coming to make an atonement for sin was **accompanied by** and made **effective through** water and blood."

BY WATER: JESUS' BAPTISM

At the beginning of the ministry of Jesus the Father testified of His Son when He was baptized by John.

Mt. 3:13-17+ - Then Jesus *arrived from Galilee at the Jordan [coming] to John, to be baptized by him. But John tried to prevent Him, saying, "I have need to be baptized by You, and do You come to me?" But Jesus answering said to him, "Permit [it] at this time; for in this way it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he *permitted Him. And after being baptized, Jesus went up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove, [and] coming upon Him, and behold, a voice out of the heavens, saying, "**This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased.**"

John MacArthur explains - John the Baptist knew that as the spotless "Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29), Jesus had no sin to repent of and hence no need to be baptized. Therefore "John tried to prevent Him, saying, 'I have need to be baptized by You, and do You come to me?'" (Mt. 3:14). John was shocked by the reversal of what he knew to be true. He was the sinner, Jesus the sinless one; he was the lesser, Jesus the greater (cf. John 1:27; 3:30). Although He was without sin (2Cor 5:21;

Heb. 4:15; 7:26; 1Per 2:22; cf. Jn 8:46), it was still necessary for Jesus to be baptized. By doing so, He publicly identified with sinners. Therefore He told John, "Permit it at this time; for in this way it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Mt. 3:15). Jesus always performed what God required of His people; He claimed no exemption here, just as He claimed no exemption from paying the temple tax (Mt 17:24-27). His perfect obedience (cf. John 4:34; 8:29; 14:31; 15:10) made Him the sinless sacrifice whose death made atonement for sin. (See [The MacArthur New Testament Commentary](#))

Mk 1:9-11+ - And it came about in those days that Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee, and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And immediately coming up out of the water, He saw the heavens opening, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon Him; and a voice came out of the heavens: "**Thou art My beloved Son, in Thee I am well-pleased.**"

Jn 1:31-34+ "And I did not recognize Him, but in order that He might be manifested to Israel, I came baptizing in water." And John bore witness saying, "I have beheld the Spirit descending as a dove out of heaven, and He remained upon Him. "And I did not recognize Him, but He who sent me to baptize in water said to me, 'He upon whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining upon Him, this is the one who baptizes in the Holy Spirit.' "And I have seen, and have borne witness that this is the Son of God."

Comment - The physical manifestation of the Holy Spirit's presence provided visible evidence of the Father's testimony to the Son.

Peter associates the beginning of Jesus' ministry with His **baptism in water** writing "you yourselves know **the thing which took place throughout all Judea, starting from Galilee, after the baptism** which John proclaimed. "[You know of] Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power, and [how] He went about doing good, and healing all who were oppressed by the devil; for God was with Him." (Acts 10:37-38) The point of "**you yourselves know**" indicates that this Jesus' water baptism was something even the Gentiles (Cornelius a God fearing Gentile was with his relatives and close friends - Acts 10:22, 24) aware and with therefore served as a clear testimony (witness) of the beginning of His ministry.

BY BLOOD: JESUS' CRUCIFIXION

At the termination of the earthly ministry of Jesus the Father testified of His Son in several miraculous events. While the Father did not literally speak He did act and these miracles associated with the crucifixion gave clear testimony that Jesus was the Son of God (e.g., in Mt 27:54 There was an unbelieving roman soldier at the cross when Christ died who said, "Truly this was the Son of God." The cross witnessed to the deity of Jesus Christ.), the Messiah about whom the OT prophesied that He must suffer and die (see Isaiah 53:2-9).

Matt 27:45-46 Now from the sixth hour darkness fell upon all the land until the ninth hour. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "ELI, ELI, LAMA SABACHTHANI?" that is, "MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAST THOU FORSAKEN ME?"

Comment - This supernatural darkness in the middle of the day came symbolized the Father's forsaking of the Son as bore the sins of the world. As a result, Jesus cried out quoting Ps 22:1.n.

Matt 27:51 And behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom, and the earth shook; and the rocks were split,

Comment - The tearing of the veil symbolized the Father's acceptance of His Son's atoning sacrifice, and the opening of the way into His (the Father's) very presence, the tearing of His Son's flesh symbolizing by the tearing of the veil (Heb 10:19-20).

Matt 27:51-53 And behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom, and the earth shook; and the rocks were split, and the tombs were opened; and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; and coming out of the tombs after His resurrection they entered the holy city and appeared to many.

MacArthur - Their appearance in bodily form testified to Christ's resurrection as the "first fruits of those who are asleep" (1Cor. 15:20). So overwhelming was God's miraculous testimony to Jesus that a battle-hardened Roman centurion who witnessed it cried out in terror, "**Truly this was the Son of God!**" (Mt 27:54; cf. Mk 15:39). (See [1-3 John MacArthur New Testament Commentary](#))

Marvin Vincent on **blood and water** - **Water** refers to Christ's baptism at the beginning of His Messianic work, through which He declared His purpose to fulfill all righteousness (Mt. 3:15). **Blood** refers to His bloody death upon the Cross for the sin of the world."

A T Robertson agrees "These two incidents in the Incarnation are singled out because at the **baptism** Jesus was formally set apart to His Messianic work by the coming of the Holy Spirit upon Him and by the Father's audible witness, and because at the **Cross** His

work reached its culmination ('It is finished,' Jesus said [See [tetelestai - It is Finished! Paid in Full!](#)])."

Luke seems to concur with Robertson's reasoning describing the beginning of Jesus' ministry -- "you yourselves know the thing which took place throughout all Judea, starting from Galilee, after the **baptism** which John proclaimed. "[You know of] Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power, and [how] He went about doing good, and healing all who were oppressed by the devil; for God was with Him." (Acts 10:37-38)

In summary Jesus' baptism (**water**) marked the inception of His ministry and the crucifixion (**blood**) marked the accomplishment of His ministry. While this is the interpretation I favor, the reader needs to be aware that the interpretation of water and blood is not straightforward. For a more detailed discussion of some of the interpretative views [read Steven Cole's note below](#).

Wuest comments on **Jesus Christ** - The combination "**Jesus Christ**," used together by John to designate one individual, is a refutation of the Cerinthian Gnostic heresy ([Cerinthus](#)) to the effect that Jesus was the person, only human, not deity, and that the Christ or divine element came upon Him at His baptism and left Him before His death on the Cross. ([Word Studies from the Greek New Testament](#))

Hiebert comments on **Jesus Christ** - the appositional identification "**Jesus Christ**" marks His historical identity as Jesus of Nazareth but associates Him with His messianic office. ([The Epistles of John- An Expository Commentary](#) or see his excellent article [An Exposition of 1 John 5:1-12](#))

Jesus ([2424](#))(**Iesous**) is a [transliteration](#) of the Greek Iesous, which in turn is the transliteration of the Hebrew name [Jehoshua](#) ([Yehoshua](#)) or [Jeshua](#) ([Yeshua](#)) which mean *Jehovah is help* or *Jehovah is salvation*. Stated another way the Greek **Iesous** corresponds to the OT [Jehoshua](#) ([Yehoshua](#)) which is contracted as [Jeshua](#) ([Yeshua](#)).

NET Note on **Jesus** - The Greek form of the name Iēsous, which was translated into Latin as Jesus, is the same as the Hebrew Yeshua (Joshua), which means "Yahweh saves" (Yahweh is typically rendered as "LORD" in the OT). ([NET Note](#))

Christ ([5547](#))(**Christos** from **chrīo** = to rub or anoint, consecrate to an office) means one who has been anointed, symbolizing appointment to a task. The majority of the NT uses refer to Jesus (exceptions = "false Christs" - Mt 24:24, Mk 13:22).

Christos is translated in the **NAS 1995** edition as Christ (516x), Christ's (11x) and Messiah (4x - Mt 1:1, 16, 17, 2:4). The **NIV** and **ESV** never translate Christos as Messiah, but always as Christ. The **Holman** (HCSB) has an interesting approach and translates **Christos** as **Messiah** many times depending on the context ([see explanatory note](#)) The NLT paraphrase translates **Christos** as Messiah over 80 times. The **NET** translates Christos as Messiah in Jn 4:29, Acts 3:20, Eph 2:12. Many interpreters over the ages have commented on a possible wordplay between the Greek words for good (**chrestos**) and Christ (**Christos**), which as you note differ by only a single Greek letter. Whether a wordplay is intended or not, every believer can personally attest to the truth that **Christos** is **chrestos**!

Christos is used 55x in 54v in the Gospels not as Jesus' personal name but as an official designation for the One Whom the Jews were expecting (Mt 2:4, Lk 3:15). Over time as the human Jesus came to be recognized and accepted as the personal Messiah, the definite article ("the") was dropped and the designation Christ came to be used as a personal name.

NIDNTT - **Christ** is derived via the Latin *Christus* from the Greek **Christos**, which in the **Septuagint** and the NT is the Greek equivalent of the Aramaic mešīha'. This in turn corresponds to the Hebrew **mashiach/masiah** and denotes someone who has been ceremonially anointed for an office. The Greek transliteration of mešīhā' is Messias, which like Iēsous is made declinable by the added -s. ([New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology](#))

Related Resources:

- [Messiah - Anointed One](#)
- [Summary of Messianic Prophecies](#)
- [How a Jewish man Michael Goldstone met Messiah](#)
- [How to Recognize the Messiah as "More Than A Carpenter"](#)
- [Jewish Tradition of Two Messiahs](#)
- [Questions Skeptics Ask About Messianic Prophecy](#)

Not with the water only but with the water and with the blood - At first reading this seems to be redundant but as John MacArthur points out this phrase "is not redundant, but addresses an important theological point. The Father did not, as the false teachers whom John was combating insisted, affirm Jesus at His baptism, but not at His death. Those heretics, purveyors of an incipient form of Gnosticism, taught that the "Christ spirit" descended on the man Jesus at His baptism, making Him the anointed One of God. According to this heresy, Jesus, under the control of the "Christ spirit," gave valuable ethical teachings during His

ministry. But the Christ spirit left Him before the crucifixion and, the false teachers further claimed, He died as a mere man, not the God-man whose sacrificial death atoned for the sins of all who would ever be justified. Like any teaching that denies the efficacy of Christ's substitutionary atonement, that teaching was a satanic lie, since "Jesus Christ the righteous... is the propitiation for our sins" (1Jn 2:1-2; cf. 1Jn 4:10; Ro 3:25; Heb 2:17). If He did not possess His divine nature on the cross, Jesus could not and did not conquer sin and death for believers. But the glorious truth is that "He... who knew no sin [became] sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2Cor. 5:21+).

A TRUE WITNESS: THE SPIRIT OF TRUTH

It is the Spirit who testifies (martureo) - The Spirit continually (**present tense**) gives evidence, affirming the truth that **Jesus is the Messiah** (1Jn 5:1HCSB), the **Son of God** (1Jn 5:5). He continually, supernaturally brings the truth about Jesus to the light, with a testimony based not on opinion but based upon historical facts. His testimony can be believed beloved! But remember Paul's words in 1Cor 2:14+ that

a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.

Because the Spirit is the truth (cf "Spirit of truth" = Jn 14:17, 15:26, 16:13, 1Jn 4:6) - The **because** is a **term of explanation** which always begs the question "What is being explained?" In this case the reason that the Spirit is a witness and a trustworthy one is because **the Spirit is (present tense - continually) the truth (aletheia)**. **Aletheia** is that which is seen or expressed as it really is. In other words **truth** is the correspondence between a reality (of Jesus) and the Spirit's descriptive declaration about Him. To say it another way, words inspired by the Spirit in the Scripture (2Pe 1:21+, 2Ti 3:16+) about Jesus are true because they correspond with objective reality of the Person of Jesus.

Everything the **Spirit** says is **truth**. No exceptions! And all spiritual truth is from Him (2Pe 1:21+, 2Ti 3:16+). It is only as He teaches us that we come to know truth (Ps 143:10+, Lk 12:12+, Jn 14:26). When He testifies or bears witness about Jesus, what He says is true and we do well to receive this truth and live by it! God has given us the witness of His Spirit of Truth to guide us through the treacherous paths of this world's lies and darkness!

Lead me in Thy truth and teach me,
For Thou art the God of my salvation;
For Thee I wait all the day.
Ps 25:5+

In John's Gospel Jesus repeatedly tells His disciples that the Holy Spirit is "**the Spirit of truth**." (Jn 14:17). Later Jesus declares ""When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, **He will bear witness (martureo)** of Me, 27 and you will **bear witness (martureo)** also (Exactly what John is doing in the First Epistle of John!), because you have been with Me from the beginning." (Jn 15:26-27) In Jn 16:13 Jesus explains why what the Spirit says is truthful declaring that "when He, the **Spirit of truth**, comes, **He will guide you into all the truth**; for (**term of explanation**) He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears (Who does He hear? The Father Who is the essence of truth, cp 1Jn 5:20), He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come." Furthermore, the Holy Spirit is the source and revealer of divine truth (1Peter 1:12; cf. Acts 1:16; 28:25; Heb. 3:7; 10:15-17),

The Holy Spirit "is the **Spirit of truth** (Jn 14:17, 15:26, 16:13, 1Jn 4:6) in that he is the source of truth and communicates the truth to his own (Jn 14:26; 16:12-15). Apart from Him, people cannot know God's truth (1Cor 2:12-16+; 1John 2:20, 27+)." (MacArthur)

Vine makes an interesting observation that with the statement **the Spirit is truth** John basically confirms "the deity of the Holy Spirit. (David writes) "God is true" (Ps. 31:5). Christ is "the truth" (John 14:16). and "the Spirit is the truth." He is one in divine nature with the Father and the Son."

HOW DOES THE SPIRIT TESTIFY?

So how did the Spirit bear witness that Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of God? Here are a few of the manifold ways the Spirit gave a true testimony of Jesus.

(1) The Spirit bore witness of Jesus at His baptism when Jesus willingly identified with sinners, although He Himself did not need to be cleansed.

Now when all the people were baptized, Jesus was also baptized, and while He was praying, heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in bodily form like a dove, and a voice came out of heaven, "You are My beloved Son, in You I am well-pleased." (Lk 3:21-22+, cp Mt 3:16-17+)

John testified saying, "I have seen the Spirit descending as a dove out of heaven, and He remained upon Him. "I did not recognize Him, but He who sent me to baptize in water said to me, 'He upon whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining upon Him, this is the One who baptizes in the Holy Spirit.' "I myself have seen, and have testified that this is the Son of God." (Jn 1:32-34+)

(2) The Spirit bore witness of Jesus throughout His earthly ministry, through Spirit empowered ministry, miracles, teaching, and obedience.

And Jesus, **full of the Holy Spirit**, (full of = controlled by) returned from the Jordan and was **led about by the Spirit** (implying willing submission and surrender) in the wilderness. (Lk 4:1+)

And Jesus returned to Galilee in the **power of the Spirit**; and news about Him spread through all the surrounding district. (Lk 4:14+)

Comment: Jesus always did the will of the Father in the power of the Spirit. And beloved this is the ONLY WAY we can do the will of our Father in Heaven - energized and empowered by the same Holy Spirit Who enabled Jesus! Amazing truth! Amazing grace! (See [The Holy Spirit-Walking Like Jesus Walked!](#))

THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME, BECAUSE HE ANOINTED ME TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO THE POOR. HE HAS SENT ME TO PROCLAIM RELEASE TO THE CAPTIVES, AND RECOVERY OF SIGHT TO THE BLIND, TO SET FREE THOSE WHO ARE DOWNTRODDEN, TO PROCLAIM THE FAVORABLE YEAR OF THE LORD." (Lk 4:18-19+)

"But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. (Mt 12:28)

Peter declared "You know of Jesus of Nazareth, how God **anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power**, and how He went about doing good and healing (His miracles) all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him." (Acts 10:38+)

MacArthur comments - The Holy Spirit remained fixed on Christ and **controlled His human nature**. When Jesus--God in human flesh-- came into the world, He did not cease to be God, but restricted the use of His divine powers to what the Holy Spirit wanted to accomplish. He simply became a Son, a servant through whom the Holy Spirit worked. Jesus restricted the use of His divine powers and became a living illustration of obedience through which the Holy Spirit took control. ([The Witness of God](#))

(3) He bore witness to Jesus as the Lamb of God initially through John the Baptist's Spirit filled witness (Lk 1:15+).

The next day he (John the Baptist) saw Jesus coming to him, and *said, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! (John 1:29+)

Again the next day John was standing with two of his disciples, 36 and he looked at Jesus as He walked, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God!" (Jn 1:35-36+) (How did John know Jesus was the Lamb of God? Read Jn 1:32-34+).

(4) He bore witness to Jesus was the satisfactory sacrifice for sins on the Cross by resurrecting Him from the dead.

Paul writes He was "declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord." (Ro 1:4+)

(5) The Spirit bore witness to Jesus' promise to send another Helper, the Holy Spirit.

"And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another (not heteros but allos = just like Him) Helper, that He may be with you forever; (Jn 14:16)

"And there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance. He descended on the church at the Day of Pentecost. (Acts 2:3-4+)

(6) The Spirit further affirmed the witness to Jesus through the apostles' bold preaching and teaching through miracles He did through them and supremely in the written testimony they were inspired to write, the New Testament.

Saul (Paul) "**filled with the Holy Spirit**" (Acts 9:17+)... began to proclaim Jesus in the synagogues, saying, "**He is the Son of God**" (Acts 9:20+)... increasing in strength and confounding the Jews who lived at Damascus by **proving that this Jesus is the Messiah** (Acts 9:22HCSB+).

"Peter, **filled with the Holy Spirit**, said to them, "Rulers and elders of the people... let it be known to all of

you, and to all the people of Israel, that by the **Name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene**, Whom you crucified, Whom God raised from the dead-- by this Name this man stands here before you in good health. He (Jesus) is the **STONE WHICH WAS REJECTED** by you, **THE BUILDERS**, but **WHICH BECAME THE VERY CORNER stone** (quoting the **Messianic Prophecies** in the Scriptures [= Old Testament] - Ps 118:22-23, Isa 28:16). And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved." (Acts 4:8-12, 13+)

"No prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but **men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God**" (2Pe 1:21-note)

"But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper shall not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you." (Jn 16:7)

Comment: The testimony of the first disciples was enabled by the Spirit (cp Acts 4:31+, Acts 6:8-10+) sent to them by the "**absent**," though **present**, Jesus. Indeed, the Spirit has continued to testify throughout this present evil age (Gal 1:4+) through the witness of His Spirit filled disciples (that is us beloved) for we have the absent Jesus' sure promise "lo I am with you always, even to the end of the age." (Mt 28:20, cp our charge in Mt 28:18-19+).

Vine adds that the Holy Spirit "**bears witness** through the Holy Scriptures, which are God-breathed (2Ti 3:16), and through testimony in accordance with them the Scriptures constitute the truth because "the Spirit is the truth."

Ray Pritchard on the **Spirit is the truth**, the Spirit of truth - Here is a title pregnant with meaning. To call the Holy Spirit the **Spirit of truth** is to say that His very essence and character is grounded in the Truth. The Holy Spirit speaks only the truth about the Father, the Son, God's will, sin, and salvation. There are other spirits in the world—evil spirits, lying spirits, spirits of confusion and deception. These spirits (which are really demons) mislead many people by masquerading as the Spirit of God. In 1John 4:1-4, we find a very practical way to "test the spirits." We are instructed to ask them what they believe about Jesus Christ. Is He really the Son of God? Is He really "the Word made flesh"? Do they believe in the Incarnation? If the answers are no, or if the spirits equivocate, they are not the **Spirit of truth**. What the Holy Spirit says and does is always in perfect accordance with the Word of God. For that matter, if someone comes to us and claims to have a revelation from God, but the revelation contains falsehoods or untruths of any kind, we can reject it immediately. It did not come from the **Spirit of truth**. There is another fascinating side of this name. Jesus said that "**the world cannot accept Him**" because the world neither sees nor knows Him. The Holy Spirit does not operate on the world's wave-length. That is why many try so hard to explain away the Christian faith. The world doesn't know God the Father, Jesus Christ, or the Holy Spirit! Perhaps that also gives an insight into the strange mysticism of these days. When men turn away from God's truth, they will believe any lie—reincarnation, voodoo, spiritualism, or warmed-over, "all religions are basically the same" propaganda. The Holy Spirit is not involved in any of those untruths. He is the **Spirit of truth** who teaches no error.

Strange things are often done and said in the name of the Holy Spirit. Yet the **Spirit of truth** never leads anyone to say or do anything that is contrary to the Word of God. God does not contradict Himself. **His Word is truth, the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth**. These two must always be held together. One other emphasis should be noted. Since in John's Gospel, truth is always wrapped up in Jesus Christ, the name "Spirit of truth" points to the Holy Spirit's role in bearing witness to Jesus. John 16:14 explicitly tells us that the Spirit will bring glory to Christ, not to Himself. The Spirit of truth points people to Jesus. Those who follow the Spirit's leading will do the same thing. We won't just argue doctrine or answer hard questions. When the Spirit fills a believer, that person will bear witness to Jesus. **Spirit of truth, ground me in the Word of truth that I may bear witness to Jesus Christ who is the Truth**. Amen. (Borrow [Names of the Holy Spirit](#))

Spirit blest, Who art adored
With the Father and the Word,
One eternal God and Lord—
Hear us, Holy Spirit.

Spirit guiding to the right,
Spirit making darkness light,
Spirit of resistless might—
Hear us, Holy Spirit.

-T B Pollock

Steven Cole goes into considerable detail on the interpretative problems in this section of First John -

The more difficult problem is to determine what John means by his reference to “the water and the blood” (1Jn 5:6) and to “the Spirit and the water and the blood” (1Jn 5:8). It is certain that John is establishing the historical factualness of the incarnation and earthly ministry of Jesus Christ and citing God’s testimony to substantiate it. In Jewish thought, a point is confirmed in a court of law by the testimony of two or three witnesses. John here brings forth three witnesses that agree that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. He also seems to be refuting the false teachers by using expressions that were already familiar to his readers, but which are not so readily understood by us. Hence the difficulty of interpreting these verses. **There have been four main interpretations** (On views 1, 2, & 4, I’m following John Stott, *The Epistles of John* [Eerdmans], pp. 177-178; I think he misrepresents Calvin’s view, as does James Boice, *The Epistles of John* [Zondervan], p. 163).

(1) Some understand the water and the blood as a symbolic reference to the sacraments of baptism and communion This was Luther’s view and several commentators say that it was Calvin’s view. But it is not Calvin’s view, which I will explain in a moment. This view is unlikely for two reasons. First, while water may well stand for baptism, blood would be an unusual symbol for the Lord’s Supper. John would not likely omit a reference to Christ’s body if he meant the Lord’s Supper. Second, John says that Jesus came by water and blood, which points to His past historical coming, not to any ongoing spiritual coming through the sacraments.

(2) Some link this passage with John 19:34-35, where John testifies to the blood and water that flowed from the spear wound in Jesus’ side. Augustine and some other ancient commentators held this view. At first glance it seems logical since John wrote both passages. Both texts emphasize the water and the blood, and both emphasize the idea of testimony. But the similarities are not so close upon further examination. In 1 John, Jesus came by water and blood, whereas in the Gospel, it was blood and water that came out of Jesus. In 1 John, the water and blood bear witness to Jesus, whereas in the Gospel, John bears witness to the blood and water. In 1 John, the water and blood seem to bear witness to Jesus’ divine-human person, whereas in the Gospel, the blood and water bear witness to Jesus’ human death, and perhaps to the salvation provided by it. **(3)**

(3) A third approach is that of John Calvin ([Calvin's Commentary](#)). C. H. Spurgeon seems to have followed Calvin here (**1 John 5:6 By Water and Blood**). Calvin viewed the terms as referring to the Old Testament rites of purification and blood sacrifice, which Jesus Christ fulfilled in His earthly ministry. Thus, as Spurgeon explains (**ibid**), “By the terms ‘water’ and ‘blood’ we understand the purifying and the pardoning effects of Christ’s work for his people.” While this is true on a secondary level, I do not think that it is John’s primary meaning. He is setting forth facts that establish God’s testimony to the person and work of Jesus Christ as historically revealed. While Jesus’ person and work do cleanse us from sin and pardon us, those are not the historic facts to which John is directing his readers in order to refute the heretics.

(4) Thus the most satisfactory interpretation takes water as a reference to Jesus’ baptism (at the outset of His earthly ministry) and blood as a reference to His death on the cross. This was Tertullian’s view (circa 160/170 to circa 215/220). It is the best view because in the context, John is emphasizing the historical foundations of the faith. Both His baptism and the cross are historic experiences that bear witness to Jesus’ divine-human person. At each of these events, the Father intervened in a miraculous way to bear testimony to His Son. At Jesus’ baptism, the Spirit descended on Him as a dove and the voice from heaven declared (Mt. 3:17), “This is My beloved Son in whom I am well-pleased.” At His crucifixion, the sky was darkened, the earth quaked, numerous resurrections took place, and the veil in the Temple was torn from top to bottom (Mt. 27:51-53). This interpretation also fits with what we know of the historical setting of 1John. The Cerinthian Gnostics, whom John refutes throughout the letter, taught that Jesus was a mere man upon whom “**the Christ**” descended at His baptism and from whom “the Christ” departed before His death. These false teachers could not conceive of how a divine Savior could have died on the cross. To refute this serious heresy, John shows that Jesus was the **Christos** (God’s Anointed [Ed: See Anointed One - Messiah]) before His baptism, where that fact was authenticated by the Spirit. “**Came**” implies that He came to earth from heaven. Since the Gnostics agreed that Jesus was the Christ at His baptism, John adds (1Jn 5:6b), “not with the water only, but with the water and the blood.” This is to say that He was the Christ during and after His crucifixion. Then John adds (1Jn 5:6c-8): “It is the Spirit who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth. For there are three that testify: the Spirit and the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement.” As mentioned, the Holy Spirit bore witness to Jesus at His baptism and at His death.

Spurgeon (*ibid.*, [The Three Witnesses](#)) points out that in Leviticus 8 (**note**), when the priests were consecrated, they were washed with water, anointed with oil (a type of the Holy Spirit), and the blood of a sacrificial ram was applied to their ear, thumb, and toe. Even so, Jesus our great High Priest was washed with water at His baptism, anointed by the Spirit, and offered His own blood as the final and sufficient sacrifice for our sins.

John’s point here is that God has borne witness to His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. The Spirit of truth bore witness to Jesus at

His baptism, when He identified with sinners, although He Himself did not need to be cleansed. He testified of Jesus throughout His earthly ministry, through His miracles, His teaching, and His obedient life. He bore witness to Jesus as the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, initially through John the Baptist's witness (John 1:29), but supremely at the cross. He confirmed that witness through the bodily resurrection of Jesus from the dead (Rom. 1:4). The Spirit bore further witness when, in fulfillment of Jesus' promise, He descended on the church at the Day of Pentecost. He further affirmed the witness to Jesus through the miracles that the apostles performed. We have that witness in the New Testament.

Thus John's point is that God's threefold witness to His Son—the Spirit, the water, and the blood—is trustworthy In a court of law, truth is established when numerous witnesses say the same thing and when those witnesses are shown to have credible character. John shows us that the three witnesses all agree, and they are not just the testimony of men, but of God Himself. Thus John argues (1Jn 5:9), "If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater; for the testimony of God is this, that He has testified concerning His Son." Every day we trust the testimony of fallen men, who are fallible at best. We could not deposit money in a bank, ride in a car, buy food at the grocery store, take an aspirin for a headache, or do any of the many things we do in our daily lives if we did not trust the witness of men. John is saying, "If you trust in men every day, can't you trust what God has testified concerning His Son?"

If you're not familiar with God's testimony, you can read it in the New Testament. Be careful, though, to read it prayerfully and with a submissive, searching heart, asking God to open your eyes to His truth. If you come at it as a proud skeptic, demanding proof, you will come away empty, because God is not in the business of giving proof to proud sinners. If you come at it with preconceived notions of what the Savior should be like, you are likely to miss Him, because He is not a Jesus who fits your every desire and whim. You can't make up a Jesus of your own liking. You must accept God's testimony to the Jesus of the Bible.

The Jews of Jesus' day, including the disciples, couldn't conceive of a Messiah who would suffer and die, even though Isaiah 53:1-12 and Psalm 22:1-31 (Ed: For example see study of Ps 22:6 - [I Am A Worm and Not A Man - Psalm 22:6 - Speaks of the Messiah](#)), along with the entire Old Testament sacrificial system, clearly predicted such. (Ed: See also [The Jewish Tradition of Two Messiahs](#)) The risen Lord Jesus pointed out to the men on the Emmaus Road (Luke 24:25-26), "O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?" Luke adds (Lk 24:27), "Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures." The Scriptures give us God's clear testimony of His Son. What should we do with this testimony? Clearly, we must receive it or believe it personally. If we do not believe it, as John shows (1Jn 5:10), we make God a liar. If we do receive it, we have a sure foundation for our faith. ([1 John 5:5-13 Is Christianity Merely Psychological?](#))

1 John 5:5 Commentary <> 1 John 5:7 Commentary