

The Testimony of the Lord is Sure
I John 5:6-11

September 9, 2007

A. Introduction:

1. how does this passage fit in with what went ahead?
2. what note, if any, does my Bible have on verse 7?

B. The Questions Raised

1. Q1. Does this mean the Bible is not inspired?
2. Q2. Did the Holy Spirit through John write the words in question?
 - a. the manuscripts
 - b. the doctrine of the Trinity (a controversy until 381 AD)
 - c. the context
3. Q3. Does this omission deny the teaching of the Trinity?
4. my own thoughts and considerations on these questions are ...

C. It is a Triune Testimony

1. testimony by the Son is found in two historical facts
 - a. fact 1: Matthew 3:13-17 (& other gospels) His _____
 - b. fact 2: Matthew 27:45-54 (and other gospels, Galatians 4:4-5)
His _____
 - c. which are confirmed today by
2. testimony by the Holy Spirit (some references to consider: John 14:17, 16:13, Ephesians 3:5, Romans 8:16)
3. testimony by the Father is found

D. It is a Tremendous Testimony

1. because it is greater ...
2. because it is of (see Hebrews 2:3-4) ...

E. It is a Truthful Testimony

1. because, Hebrews 6:17
2. because the Triune God is, as shown in (John 14:6, 16; Heb. 6:17),
3. to doubt the testimony of God is

A. Introduction

1. The context

- a. verse 3: the coming of the Son of God as Jesus Christ, has removed the burden in keeping His commands
- b. but now, how can we be sure that the incarnation is a fact?
- c. so, the theme of our passage and message of 1 John 5:6-11 is this: God has given a sure testimony on earth to believers that they have eternal life in His Incarnate Son

2. Scripture reading: 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. For there are three that 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. 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. 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. And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. — (NKJV)

3. Did you notice this version of verse 7 is somewhat longer than most modern versions? Perhaps your Bible has a note on this:

- a. The King James in the Scofield notes edition has this in the margin: 'It is generally agreed that verse 7 has no real authority, and has been inserted.'
- b. The New American Standard, this footnote: 'a few late mss add ... in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit, and these three are one. And there are three that testify on earth, the Spirit' ... and so on.
- c. The New International, this footnote: '7, 8 Late manuscripts of the Vulgate [Latin translation ...] testify in heaven: the Father, the Word and the Holy Spirit, and these three are one. 8 And there are three that testify on earth: the (not found in any Greek manuscript before the sixteenth century).' etc.

4. now, coming across such notes in our Bibles raises questions:
 - a. Does this mean the Bible is not inspired?
 - b. Did John, by the Holy Spirit, write these words?
 - c. Does this omission weaken the teaching of the Trinity?
 - d. before we look this passage (remember its theme? It is
 - (A) God has given a sure testimony on earth to believers that they have eternal life in His Incarnate Son
 - (B) let us seek to answer these questions

B. The Questions Raised

1. Does this mean the Bible is not inspired? — No!
 - a. our church Statement of Faith is that which the Fellowship of Evangelical Baptist Churches in Canada adopted at its inception some 60 years ago; it makes this statement,
 - b. **We believe the Bible to be the complete Word of God; that the sixty-six Books, as originally written, comprising the Old and New Testaments were verbally inspired by the Spirit of God and were entirely free from error; that the Bible is the final authority in all matters of faith and practice and the true basis of Christian union.**
 - c. the Bible is the final authority of our faith
 - d. therefore, it important that we determine, as closely as humanly possible, what its writers originally wrote
 - e. If we fail to do this, then our claim of the Bible's inspiration is a mere prattle, simply a spouting of words
 - f. recognizing an unwarranted insertion into the Scripture does not deny, but affirms our commitment to inspiration
2. Did John, by the Holy Spirit, write these words? — Likely not.
 - a. One: consider factual, manuscript evidence
 - (A) similar words are found in Latin writers of the late 4th through 6th centuries, being symbolic and mystical interpretations of this passage in John.
 - (B) as a Bible insertion, the words first appear, perhaps as a marginal note, in an 8th century Latin manuscript of the Vulgate

- (C) as the NIV footnote states they are not found in any Greek manuscript prior to the 16th century
 - (1) in the 1500's they appear as an addition to a copy made of a manuscript from the 11th century
 - (2) about 1510 they were included in the Greek section of a manuscript as accompanying the Latin vulgate, clearly being translated FROM the Latin
 - (D) Erasmus, compiling a complete Greek New Testament, rashly promised he would add these words if found in a Greek manuscript; he had to do so in 1521 when the Roman church produced the 1510 manuscript
 - (E) So, this was included in the Textus Receptus used in the translation of the King James Bible, 80 years later
 - (F) but Martin Luther rejected them, and Rachel's German Bible, which he translated, has them only in a footnote
- b. Two: the historical evidence of the doctrine of the Trinity
- (A) it took almost 300 years before this teaching was satisfactorily put into words, and accepted by the church as a whole, first at the council of Nicea (325) and then at that of Constantinople (381).
 - (1) why so long? ... a story to explain:
 - (2) Augustine [who lived then], while puzzling over the doctrine of the Trinity, was walking along the beach one day when he observed a young boy with a bucket, running back and forth to pour water into a little hole. Augustine asked, "What are you doing?" The boy replied, "I'm trying to put the ocean into this hole." Then Augustine realized that he had been trying to put an infinite God into his finite mind. ^{—{2}}.
 - (3) so, don't be too critical of people who cannot express this teaching as clearly as you can!
 - (B) Tertullian first used the word 'Trinity'. He and Origen lived in the 2nd and 3rd centuries. They were at the forefront of defending the Trinity against heretics
 - (C) Both of them knew and quoted from 1 John; but neither of them, or any of the other church fathers, quoted the words in the King James in the Trinitarian controversy with the Arian and other heretics
 - (D) In fact, Tertullian quoted this passage, omitting them
 - (E) if this verse had existed, both Origen and Tertullian would have avoided some severe Trinitarian errors

- c. Three: the inclusion of the omitted words does nothing to strengthen John's point that
 - (A) God has given a sure testimony on earth to believers that they have eternal life in His Incarnate Son
 - (B) rather, they form a diversion which weakens it
 - (C) because John is not talking about a witness in heaven, where there is no need for a witness, but rather a witness on earth to us as believers living on earth
- d. So, the manuscript, historical and contextual evidence all support the omission of these words from the Bible

3. Does this omission deny the teaching of the Trinity? – No!

- a. this passage still teaches the truth of the Trinity
- b. even without these words, the Church was able to come to a unity in the faith on the matter of the Trinity
 - (A) avoiding the peril of tri-theism (the belief in 3 gods)
 - (B) avoiding the subordination of any of Father, Son and Holy Spirit to represent any as being less than God

4. I am sorry to have taken so long, but these are questions that must be answered, for such notes do not diminish the truth that is taught in the Bible. Now, let us look at this passage and its theme, God has given a sure testimony on earth to believers that they have eternal life in His Incarnate Son, using an outline that I have 'borrowed' from Dr. James A. McCullen: ⁻⁽³⁾.

- a. It is a Triune Testimony
- b. It is a Tremendous Testimony
- c. It is a Truthful Testimony

C. It is a Triune Testimony

1. by the Son – how do we know the Incarnation is true?

- a. by two historical facts the Son bears witness that it is true: by His baptism, and by His death
- b. fact 1: His baptism, verse 6: **This is the One who came by water ..., Jesus Christ** — (NAS) – from Matthew 3

- (A) vv 13-15; John confessed that Jesus' perfection; Jesus had no need to come for the baptism of repentance
 - (B) v 16: the sign of the Holy Spirit seen as a dove
 - (C) v 17: the audible sign of the Father's words, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased'
- c. fact 2: His death, verse 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. — (NAS)
- (A) there are those who will readily admit that
 - (1) there was a baby born in Bethlehem
 - (2) that He grew up, was baptized, did good deeds
 - (3) and will consider that He set us an example of how to live so that God would accept us
 - (4) but this totally misunderstands the incarnation: Galatians 4:4–5, But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. — (NAS)
 - (B) if you are going to recognize & realize the incarnation you must connect the crib and the cross
 - (C) the cross – the blood of Christ shed for our sins – is an undeniable historic truth and with it there were facts, concrete, Matthew 27 recounts certain facts testifying that Jesus Christ is God the Son in human form:
 - (1) verse 45: Now from the sixth hour darkness fell upon all the land until the ninth hour. — (NAS) – not an eclipse, but a miraculous sign in the heavens
 - (2) verse 51a: And behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; ... — (NAS) – the inviolate holy of holies, was opened by God as a sign for all to see
 - (3) verse 51b: ... and the earth shook and the rocks were split. — (NAS) – signs in the earth beneath
 - (4) verses 52-53: 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. — (NAS) – extraordinary spiritual signs
 - (5) verse 54: Now the centurion, and those who were with him keeping guard over Jesus, when they saw the earthquake and the things that were happening, became very frightened and

said, 'Truly this was the Son of God!' — signs in the confession of these hard-bitten, 'indifferent to it all,' Roman soldiers

- (D) to which we may add, if we had but time, all of the evidences of the resurrection of Christ that followed
 - d. and, in the ordinances Christ gave to His church
 - (A) which have been observed over the past two millennia
 - (B) with the baptism of every believer
 - (C) with the partaking of the Lord's Supper
 - (D) the objective truth that Jesus Christ has come in water and in blood are repeatedly confirmed by His church
2. in addition to the testimony by God the Son in His baptism and His death on the cross, there is that God the Holy Spirit
- a. who provides to every believe a subjective testimony
 - b. v 6: ... It is the Spirit who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth. — (NAS)
 - c. V8: the Spirit and the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement. — (NAS)
 - d. the Holy Spirit takes the objective truth recorded in the Bible He has inspired, applying it to the individual believer
 - (A) the Holy Spirit is called the Spirit of truth (as Jn 14:17)
 - (B) the Holy Spirit guides into all truth (John 16:13)
 - (C) the Holy Spirit reveals truth (Ephesians 3:5)
 - (D) the Holy Spirit testifies to our spirit (Romans 8:16)
 - (E) and this Holy Spirit indwells us so that we find in verse 10a that, The one who believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself ... — (NAS)
 - e. summarizing comments by Spurgeon, the believer does not need a parish priest to pronounce 'I absolve you', he does not need a new revelation, he does not need to wait till the day of judgement; he has this witness in himself.' —^{4}.
3. but, not only by the Son and by the Spirit, but by the Father
- a. verse 9 (also following verses): ... for the testimony of God is this, that He has testified concerning

His Son. — (NAS)

- b. we have already remarked on incidents at the baptism and the death of Jesus Christ, God the Father gave testimony in words or in deeds to His Son
- c. indeed, the whole of the Bible really has a single message: it is God revealing Himself in a love letter to mankind and that revelation is made through Jesus Christ the Son of God

D. It is a Tremendous Testimony

1. it is greater than man's testimony

- a. v 9: *If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater ...* — (NAS)
- b. every day, in all sorts of ways, we receive and accept as true the testimony of men: turn on the radio
 - (A) we accept the time of day as fact
 - (B) we accept the news report as fact
 - (C) we accept the weather report ... well, maybe not!
 - (D) but at home, at school, at work, at play, when we are told something by other people, we accept it as fact unless we have some prior reason to reject it
- c. the Lord God Almighty is Supreme Fact – the Bible begins with that as a given: *'In the beginning, God ...'*
- d. and because God is unchangeable, faithful, infinite, loving, and powerful, his testimony is irrefutable; tremendous!

2. it is a testimony of eternal importance

- a. Illustration: my court testimony of little long-term impact
- b. but, verse 11, *And the testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, ...*—(NAS) ... we'll return to this next week
- c. this testimony has not simply long-term impact, but eternal and everlasting impact ... it is forever, and ever, and ever
- d. no wonder the writer of Hebrews after discussing in chapter one the character of God's testimony and messenger to man, exclaims in 2:3-4 – *how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard, 4 God also testifying with them both by signs and wonders, and by various miracles and gifts of the Holy Spirit*

according to His own will. — (NAS) – this is a tremendous testimony!

E. It is a Truthful Testimony

1. When you testify in court, you are required to affirm that you are going to speak the truth – or else there are penalties
 - a. but experience tells us that lies are often told in our courts
 - b. but when God speaks, this is not the case: Hebrews 6:17-18 : *In the same way God, desiring even more to show to the heirs of the promise the unchangeableness of His purpose, interposed with an oath, so that by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, ...* (NAS)
 - c. and, the Triune God is supremely a God of truth: the Spirit is truth, the Son is truth, the Father is truth

2. what then is the result if we doubt this testimony
 - a. v 10b: *... the one who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has given concerning His Son.* — (NAS)
 - b. this, says John, is unthinkable: it is a truthful testimony!

F. Conclusion

1. God has given a sure testimony on earth to believers that they have eternal life in His Incarnate Son
 - a. all of us doubt from time to time
 - b. but, do we deny this which is God's testimony?
 - c. John says that for a believer to do so is tantamount to calling God a liar
 - d. God wants us to rest in the assurance he has provided

2. this is why we preach the gospel
 - a. so that men, women, boys, girls can come in saving faith to Jesus Christ, to know Him as Saviour, to know the joy of sins forgiven, to know that they have eternal life
 - b. are you seeking God's will – this is God's will
 - c. John continues on this theme in the following verses and so will we as next week we look at 'Confidence'

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Various English versions of the Holy Bible are used in this sermon. Some (for example, the AV, ASV, and NAS) seek to be strictly translations, while others (and especially PHIL) contain paraphrasing which involves a certain amount of subjective interpretation. Nevertheless, there is little material difference in meaning among these. Some prove slightly clearer on some verses than others. Looking at more than one version sometimes sheds additional light on any particular verse. Explanatory additions to the Bible text are shown in {braces}. The versions are identified as:

ASV	American Standard Version of 1901
AV	Authorized (King James) Version
ERV	The Revised Version of 1885
NAS	New American Standard version © 1960, 1995 The Lockman Foundation
NIV	New International Version © 1984 by the International Bible Society
NKJV	New King James Version © 1979 Thomas Nelson Inc., Publishers
NLT	1996 New Living Translation © 1996 by Tyndale Charitable Trust
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version © 1989 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U. S. A.
PHIL	New Testament Translation © 1972 by J. B. Phillips
RSV	Revised Standard Version © 1946, 1952 by the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U. S. A.
WEY	The New Testament in Modern Speech © 1902, 1912 R. F. Weymouth

Further sermons and illustrations may be found at the web-site, www.holwick.com. Materials in this sermon from Rev. David Holwick’s database are identified by “Kerux” followed by a sermon or illustration number.

2. Michael Green in Rev. Brett Blair’s Illustrations – Kerux illustrations #19227
3. “When God Testifies” by Dr. James A. McCullen – Kerux sermons #8053
4. “The Priest Dispensed With,” Spurgeon’s Sermons, volume 10, Baker Books