

## GOD'S THREE WITNESSES OF CHRIST

1 John 5:6-13

By Raymond White

God's law demands two or more witnesses to establish a matter.

*Deuteronomy 19:15* One witness shall not rise up against a man for any iniquity, or for any sin, in any sin that he sinneth: at the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall a matter be established.

This is, of course, common sense. In criminal or civil law, anyone can accuse anyone of anything, and the only way to verify or falsify accusing testimony is put two accusers into separate rooms (which you can only do if there are two or more of them), ask them tricky questions, and trip them up with clever examination. Multiple witnesses, if they are true witnesses, will give the same report. But if they are lying, their reports will not reconcile. That's the theory anyway.

This common sense principle doesn't always work, as in —

*Mark 14:56* For many bare false witness against him [Jesus] but their witness agreed not.

Clearly they were lying. Didn't matter. The court was so zealous for a conviction, they convicted Jesus anyway. But still, the principle is right.

Now then. God wants us to believe in Jesus, and so he provides us three witnesses.

*1 John 5:6* This is he that came by water and blood even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth. ~~:7 For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one~~ *:8 And there are three that bear witness in earth, the spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one.*

For the record, the lined out words in the text above, which probably appear in your Bible, do not appear in any of the oldest manuscripts and therefore were just well meaning additions inserted by some well meaning scribe. They are not in the true Bible so ignore them.

So the three witnesses that God provides to us are: the water, the blood, and the spirit.

### [1] THE WATER

Jesus was baptized. Why? In his own words, *Matthew 3:16* ...to fulfill all righteousness. But what exactly does *that* mean? It almost sounds like he's just tidying up small details, but there was nothing small at all about his baptism and certainly not about "all righteousness." Whatever happened at his baptism, it was grand, even on a cosmic scale.

So, why was Jesus baptized? Here's what I think. His baptism was his witness of intent. That is exactly what our baptism is, isn't it? When we're baptized, it is our contract, as it were, with God. What does baptism witness to? The immersion is a symbol of the grave, of dying, so

when one is baptized one is giving witness that one is a sinner, guilty of death and in need of forgiveness. Baptism is a confession and a plea and a promise or declaration of intent. But Jesus was no sinner; so, what did his baptism signify? That the world was in the clutches of sin and there was only one way to expunge it; namely, his own death. Jesus' baptism was Jesus' signed, sealed, and delivered commitment that he would save the world even if by his own death. That was his witness of water.

God the Father and God the Spirit accepted that "contract" if you will, and in a sense notarized it in heaven. **Matthew 3:16** ...and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him :**17** And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

When you sign a contract such as a mortgage, your signature is your witness to the obligation you are agreeing to. But the notary sitting next to you is basically witnessing your witness, that it is you, for real, who is signing the contract. Jesus gave witness of his intent by being baptized, and God agreed. God was a witness to Jesus obligating himself by water. All of that is the witness of water, a public obligation like signing a mortgage.

## [2] THE BLOOD

Promising to do a thing is quite a different thing than actually doing it. Obligating yourself to pay on a contract, a mortgage for instance, is one thing. Actually paying it, is another thing entirely. That's why there are foreclosures. But, assuming a mortgage is paid in full, the payor receives a receipt. In California, when a mortgage is paid in full, the lien holder issues a "Reconveyance". A strange word (in other states it something else) that means that the lien holder is transferring full title back to the property owner, essentially divesting itself of all interest in the property. That's the receipt. But it's more than that, it is a public notification that payment-in-full has been received and that the lien holder's interest has been dissolved. The Reconveyance is recorded and become public record for all to see.

So, did Jesus fulfill his contract? Yes, he did. He died on the cross. His blood was the witness just like your final "paid-in-full" check that reduces your mortgage loan balance to zero. Did God give witness, essentially issuing a Reconveyance? He most certainly did, in every way imaginable. There was so much public declaration that even the centurion gave his own witness. **Matthew 27:54** Now when the centurion ... feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God. The earthquake, the storm, that darkness, the reports of returning dead, the rent veil (the veil meant no access to God, the rent veil meant access to God), and most importantly Jesus' own resurrection, all were God's witness that the debt had been paid, God had issued a reconveyance.

But the core witness in all that was Jesus' own witness: his blood, the proof that he died.

## [3] THE SPIRIT

So, God gave witness to Jesus at his baptism and at his death. Where there other times, other occasions when God gave a compelling public witness to his son? Yes, there were many, from his birth to his death and all along the way. And every witness that God gave of his son was always by the spirit.

**Matthew 1:20** ...for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost.

**John 3:34** ...for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him.

**Acts 10:38** ...God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil: for God was with him.

Jesus did what he did by the spirit, that is what the Bible is telling us. But it is telling us more than that. It is telling us that the spirit in him was conspicuous and on purpose. In other words, the spirit in Christ working miracles was God's public declaration, God's witness that Christ was who he said he was.

**Matthew 12:28** ...I cast out devils by the Spirit of God...

**John 5:31** There is another that beareth witness of me [meaning the miracles]

**John 10:38** ... though ye believe not me, believe the works...

The miracles, all works of the Spirit, were God's public witness of Jesus. They are as conspicuous as anything could possibly be — so conspicuous that Jesus declared: **Matthew 12:32** ...All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. In other words, God made his witness, the miracles, as conspicuous as he possibly could. Only the Spirit can do miracles. There is nothing else to do to persuade. If you will not believe the miracles which Jesus could only have done by the Spirit, what else can God possibly do for you? There's nothing left to convince you, nothing left to do. You're hopeless and you cannot be forgiven because God has nothing left to try. That's Jesus' point. You have to believe the obvious or there's nothing left for you.

Now, for those who do believe, the Holy Spirit goes one step further. In addition to the evidence of the eyes, the Spirit also gives evidence of the heart, and that is the third witness, the assurance that we all seek and need.

**1 John 5:10** He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself... **:11** And this is the record [public declaration] that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. **:12** He that hath the Son hath life... **:13** These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life...

In Summary: God really wants you to know that you have eternal life. And for that purpose he has provided to you three witnesses: the water, the blood, and the Spirit; that is, Jesus obligating himself to save you, evidenced by his baptism; Jesus completing the contract at his cross, evidenced by his blood; and the Spirit witnessing through his life and in you personally that it's all true and that he has accepted you. What else could you possibly need?