

WITNESSES TO THE INCARNATION

Request: Could you explain what it means that Jesus came by water and blood in 1 John?

You have picked a passage that Plummer called, “one of the most perplexing.”

However, the interpretation of the meaning of it is simple – “Jesus Christ is the incarnate Son of God.”

This lesson will study SEVEN aspects of four Witnesses to the Incarnation of Jesus Christ

1. There are four primary interpretations of what John meant by the witnesses of water and blood.

Some like Luther and Calvin interpreted them to refer to the sacraments of baptism and Eucharist.

Others like Augustine interpreted them to refer to water and blood of crucifixion based on John 19:34-35.

The most popular interpretation was by Tertullian who referred them to Jesus’ baptism and death (NIV footnotes).

Some like Plummer and Thieme interpreted them to refer to Levitical shadow Christology. The water was associated with OT purification and the blood was associated with OT redemption (John 5:46-47).

The last two interpretations are similar and emphasize the Incarnation of Jesus Christ as the Son of God.

2. The OT law required 2 or 3 witnesses to establish a fact as true (Deut.17: 6; 19:15; John 8:17-18).

How many witnesses did John give in our passage? _____

All the witnesses are in agreement because of the word of God – “You search the Scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is these that bear witness of Me.” (John 5:39)

These witnesses could be considered - Q.E.D (quod erat demonstrandum/ that which stands for truth).

3. 1 John 5:7 is found in the KJV but not in reliable Greek manuscripts until 1522 – "For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one."

“It occurred first in a poorly attested Latin text of Priscillian, a Spanish heretic, in A.D 385. It was included in the KJV because that version was based on the Textus Receptus, a 16th century traditional Greek text which included the verse.” (Letters by John by Wm. Hendricks, pg.117)

“It found its way in the AV because Erasmus reluctantly included them in the third edition of his text.” (Tyndale Comm. of Epistles of John, pg.180)

The concept is not incorrect, but the question is “was it part of John’s original thought?”

4. The Holy Spirit becomes the third witness to declare that Jesus Christ is the incarnate Son of God – “And it is the Spirit who bears witness, because the Spirit is the truth.” (5:7, NAS)

The Holy Spirit is called the Spirit of truth (John 15:26; 16:13; 1 John 4:6). Jesus is also called the truth (John 14:6). They are God’s essence of veracity.

Believer's know god's truth because of the indwelling ministry of Holy Spirit (1 John 2:20, 27; 3:24; 4:1-6, 13-15, 5:13, 20).

“For there are three that bear witness, the Spirit and the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement (idiom: hoi treis eimi / p.a.ind / eis to hen) (These three are in one accord on the incarnation of Jesus Christ as the Son of God).” (1 John 5:8)

These three witnesses are called the witness of God – “If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater; for the witness of God is this, that He has borne witness concerning His Son.” (5:9)

These three witnesses agree regarding the incarnation of Jesus Christ as God's Son because God is the source. [Note that the 3 witnesses of 5:6-8 have become the witness of God in 5:10-13.]

5. Everyone who believes in the Son of God receives the witness of God and becomes the fourth witness to the incarnation of Jesus Christ – “The one who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself.” (5:10)

The object of saving faith is a person and not just a historical fact. What must I believe about Jesus Christ in order to be saved? (1 Cor.15:3-4; Rom.1:16; Eph.2:8-9; James 2:19; Matt.8:29)

“And we have beheld and bear witness that the Father has sent the Son to be the Savior of the world.” (4:14)

6. The fourth witness has the witness to the incarnation of Jesus Christ residing inside – “And the witness is this, that God has given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son.” (5:11)

As a Sons of God, we have the life of the incarnate Son of God living inside us (John 1:12-13; 7:38-39; Rom.8:9-17)

7. Those who reject God's witnesses to the incarnation of Jesus Christ, “made Him a liar, because he has not believed in the witness that God has borne concerning His Son.” (5:10)

“He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life.” (5:12)

“These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, in order that you may know that you have eternal life.” (5:13) (John 10:28-30; 17:1-3)