

A KEY WORD recurs in these verses eight times. It is the word “testify” or “testimony.” We are entering in these verses into the courtroom. In this passage court is in session as John summons witnesses to the witness box to testify to the truth that Jesus is the Son of God and the only way of salvation. Through the magic of time travel, you and I are members of the jury. “Hear ye, hear ye, court is now in session!”

As the courtroom comes to order, our eyes are riveted on an aged man who stands and approaches the front of the court. A former fisherman, he is now famous worldwide as the only surviving member of the original twelve disciples who followed Jesus. His name is John. Some of us are amazed that he can even stand up, much less walk, since he seems so old! Though he appears to be at least an octogenarian, there is still something of a twinkle in his eye and a spring in his step.

Testimony of the Water and the Blood (v. 6)

With a firm voice he speaks: “I call the water to the witness stand.” Never in the history of the court has there been such an unusual witness! The “water” John is calling to testify is the water that was used by John the Baptist to baptize Jesus at the initiation of his earthly ministry as recorded in the Gospels. “Water of Jordan, do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?” “I do,” replies the water. “You were there that day Jesus was baptized; please tell us what you saw.” “Yes,” answers the water. “I was there. Jesus walked down until he was about waist-deep in my waters where John the Baptist was standing. John immersed him and raised him up. I saw something very unusual occur after that. At first there was Jesus standing in me, but I also saw the heavens open, and there was a visual sign of a dove that descended on him. I heard a voice speak from Heaven, and it said, ‘This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.’ As clear as a bell I remember that voice as it called Jesus ‘my beloved Son’ and told him, ‘with you I am well pleased.’” “Thank you, water. I have no further questions. You may be dismissed from the witness stand,” John says.

John continues, “I call the blood to the witness stand.” Eyes widen in the courtroom. Just when we thought we had heard from the strangest witness ever, John calls another witness even more peculiar than the water! He has called the blood of Jesus shed on the cross of Calvary to the stand to bear testimony. “Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?” “I do,” responds the blood. “Blood, you were there that day Jesus was crucified. You were in his body.” “Yes, I can testify that at his trial before Pilate, Jesus was scourged with a cat of nine tails. The punishment left his back a bloody mess. The crown of thorns caused me to stream down his face. The nails were driven into his hands and feet. And then when he was placed on the cross I ran down from his head, hands, and feet. ‘See from his head, his hands, his feet, sorrow and love flow mingled down! Did e’er such love and sorrow meet, or thorns compose so rich a crown?’” For a brief moment there is a hushed silence in the courtroom. Then John continues, “Can you tell us if Jesus actually died on that cross?” “Yes,” said the blood. “I can verify that he actually died. As the blood of Jesus, I bear testimony that Jesus is the Son of the living God.” John replies, “Thank you, blood of Jesus, you may step down from the witness box.”³

The Testimony of the Holy Spirit (vv. 7, 8)

John turns to the jury and says, “Before I call my third witness to the stand, I wish to point out to the jury that in verse 5 of chapter 5 in my letter called 1 John, I refer to Jesus as ‘the Son of God.’ And in verse 6, I speak of Jesus as ‘Christ.’ This subtle shift is significant. Jesus, the Son of God, is no less than God’s ‘Anointed One,’ the Messiah. This Messiah is the one who ‘came’ to the earth to be the Messiah not only for the Jewish people but for all people. He is the ‘Christ,’ the ‘Anointed One’ who fulfilled God’s purpose by dying on the cross for the sins of the world.”

Following a brief pause, John says, “To verify this claim, I call a third witness to the stand: the Holy Spirit.”⁴ A holy hush falls over the courtroom as the Holy Spirit moves to the witness stand. “Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth?” John queries. “Yes, I am the Spirit of truth,” replies the Holy Spirit. “Before I question this witness,” John continued, “I would like to remind the jury that I have spoken about this

witness, the Holy Spirit, in my Gospel. Just before his crucifixion Jesus taught us about the Holy Spirit, telling us that when the Holy Spirit comes upon us, he will testify concerning Jesus. Jesus said that one of the primary purposes of the Holy Spirit is to point people to Jesus as Savior. Jesus further taught us that the Holy Spirit will not magnify himself but rather will magnify the Lord Jesus.”

John continues, “God the Holy Spirit reveals the significance of the coming of Jesus into this world. It’s God the Holy Spirit who first dealt with your heart when you were lost in your sin. You cannot be saved unless God the Holy Spirit draws you to salvation. The work of the Holy Spirit in your salvation is so important that you can’t be saved apart from him. God the Holy Spirit draws you to Jesus and teaches you the spiritual truth of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. It’s his job to press to your heart the truth of these things.”

“The witness of the Holy Spirit reveals the significance of Jesus’ coming,”⁵ John continues. “He testifies in our hearts and minds the truth of these things, drawing men and women to salvation. He enables men to preach the gospel and empowers people to live out the gospel. In this sense the Holy Spirit is the first witness to testify to Jesus and his salvation.”

Then John turns to the Holy Spirit and begins his questioning. “Holy Spirit, were you present at the earthly ministry of Jesus?” “Yes. I was present at his birth, I was present at his baptism, I was present during his earthly life, and I was present at his crucifixion, his resurrection, and his ascension. I was present with him in Heaven in eternity past before the incarnation, and I will be present with him as the third member of the Trinity for all eternity.” “Holy Spirit, is it your testimony that Jesus Christ is the Son of the living God?” John asks. “I bear witness that Jesus Christ is the Son of the living God,” replies the Holy Spirit. “Thank you, Holy Spirit; you may step down,” says John.

The Testimony of God the Father (v. 9)

After such powerful testimony, I fully expected John to move to his closing argument, but he surprises us all by calling a fourth witness to the stand. “I call God the Father to testify.” Another holy hush falls over the courtroom. Heads are bowed as God the Father enters the witness box. With all the reverence one can imagine, yet with all the confidence of one who knows the Father in an intimate fashion, John proceeds to swear in the witness. “Heavenly Father, do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you you?” “I do,” says the Father with a voice that rings like a bell. John begins the questioning. “Heavenly Father, do you recognize this man Jesus? Is he indeed your Son whom you sent to this earth?” “Yes,” replies the Father. “He is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.” With a firm voice John queries, “Do you testify that he and he alone is your Son and the only way of salvation?” “Yes. From the very beginning, even before I created Adam and Eve and before they sinned causing all of humanity to be plunged into sin, I had a plan of salvation. My plan was for Jesus my Son, my only-begotten, to come to earth and pay the penalty of humanity’s sin through his death on the cross. I foretold his coming through my prophets. I sent John the Baptist as his forerunner. I sent an angel to Mary to announce to her that she was my choice to be the human mother of my Son Jesus. Though Jesus existed one with me throughout eternity as the third person of the Trinity, yet he became man. The night of his birth my angels sang about it. I sent shepherds to witness it. Wise men came to observe it and pay homage to him. As a man Jesus entered his ministry and was baptized, as has already been testified. The heavens opened, and I spoke and said, ‘This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.’ The night before his crucifixion, he called out to me, ‘Father, if it can be your will let this cup pass.’ But it was not my will. And I turned over my only Son to evil men to crucify. But I did it for a purpose, and he did it willingly. This purpose was to make an atonement for your sins. My Son Jesus was crucified and buried, but three days later I raised him from the dead. Forty days later he ascended to Heaven where today he sits at my right hand. One day I will determine the time has come, and my Son will come again to this earth. I give eternal life as a gift, and this eternal life is in my Son, Jesus. So say I, God the Father.” After a pause that seems to last an eternity, John speaks with reverent softness. “Thank you, Father. You may step down from the witness box.”

Excerpt taken from: *1-3 John: Fellowship in God’s Family* by David Allen. Chapter 18 – A Tale of Three Witnesses.