

Is There Enough Evidence?

1 John 5:6–12

The most publicized criminal case in American history involved a former professional football star and actor. He was on trial for two counts of murder after his ex-wife Nicole Brown Simpson and her male “friend” Ronald Goldman were found dead in June of 1994. The rest of that year and the entirety of the next year, Americans became infatuated with this case.

Newspapers, the evening news, and talk shows made this case the story of the year in 1995.

When I was 8 or 9 years old, I remember watching the soon-to-be defendant drive a white Bronco down the Los Angeles Freeway, leading police in a “slow speed” chase. I did not know it at the time, but ninety million other people were also watching this SUV chase.

At that moment, many Americans became crazed with this story. When the verdict was finally handed down over 130 days later, more than 150 million people watched with anticipation.

I have not said the defendant’s name, but you all know who he is: O. J. Simpson.

I am not interested in opening any old wounds, but I am interested in connecting this story with what we find in our text. Here is a long story short. OJ went on trial. The whole case was emotionally driven because of race issues. One of the most famous days in the trial was the day that Simpson was asked to try on a glove that was found at the scene of the crime. The defense believed the police had planted the bloody glove. As the country watched, Simpson tried on the glove and found it to be too small.

Later, in his closing statements, the defense attorney hammered home the point by saying over and over again, “If it doesn’t fit, you must acquit.”

The Verdict

The world watched as the verdict was read. Los Angeles County believed they had a solid case built upon evidence. The jury arrived at the verdict after only four hours of deliberation. When the verdict was finally read, so much work stopped around America that it cost an estimated \$480 million in lost productivity. “We find the defendant OJ Simpson NOT guilty.” You could hear the audible cries of the victim’s family members in the courtroom.

After the verdict was given, polls revealed that sixty-six percent of Americans said Simpson was guilty. Today, that number has increased to eighty-three percent.

A few of the jurors believed that OJ did commit the murders, but the prosecution failed to give the evidence. Time and time again, the jurors said they were just lacking enough evidence to convict.

That is the same reason a multitude of people say they do not believe that God exists or that Jesus is God. Evidence is a big thing. It is all we have to go on to make a decision. Is there any evidence that shows Jesus is God? Some of His contemporaries called Him a liar and a deceiver (Matthew 27:63). Others suggested He was a religious fanatic or a Jewish patriot who was sincere but sadly mistaken.¹

Would a jury be able to look at the evidence in this text and unanimously agree that Jesus is God? There is something intriguing about watching a trial unfold. Whether it's the trial of the year in 2005 or the trial in 1 John 5, it catches our attention.

John places on the stand five witnesses who have different, but comprehensive testimonies. John builds a powerful case that open, free-minded people should consider before giving their verdict.²

In these verses a courtroom setting is easily imagined. Some form of the Greek word *martus*, translated “testify,” “testimony,” “witness,” or “give testimony,” occurs no less than ten times. *Martus* is where we get our word *martyr*. You may ask, how do we get from martyr to testimony? Easily—when people would give testimony to Christ, they were martyred.

Transition: There are numerous evidences in the Scripture and five witnesses in the passage that we are looking at this morning. Here is . . .

1. Witness #1 – The Baptism of Jesus (verses 6–8)

Notice how many times the word *water* is mentioned in verses 6–8 (four times). To what does the water refer?

¹ Warren Wiersbe, *Be Real: Turning from Hypocrisy to Truth* (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 1972), 172.

² Daniel Akin, *Christ-Centered Exposition: Exalting Jesus in 1, 2, & 3 John* (Nashville: B & H Publishings, 2014), 130.

Augustine said it was the blood and water that poured from Jesus' side on the cross after they speared Him to see if He was dead. I do not think it refers to that event because any human could have produced that physical evidence. Any human enduring hypovolemic shock could have had the sac around the heart and lungs to burst and produce blood and water. Besides, it is given in opposite order in 1 John 5: water, then blood. On the cross, it is blood, then water.

I agree with most of the scholars I have read that this is referring to the baptism of Jesus. What happened at Jesus' baptism? There was a divine witness. It is so important that it is given in all four Gospel Records. This was a baptism of repentance, and Jesus had nothing to repent of. Why was He baptized. He did not belong in those waters. True; He no more belongs at a baptism of repentance than He does a cross for sinners. In both events, He identifies Himself with sinners He came to save.³ At Jesus' baptism . . .

- The Son was baptized.
- The Father gave His audible approval.
- The Holy Spirit descended as a dove would descend.
- Both the Holy Spirit and the Father say this is not a mere man. The baptism event of Jesus as a whole says, "This man is God wrapped in human flesh."

Transition: Witness #1, please step down from the stand. I would like to call Witness #2.

2. Witness #2 – The Crucifixion of Jesus (verses 6–8)

Notice how many times the word *blood* occurs in verses 6–8 (three times).

Martin Luther and John Calvin said John referred to the ordinances of the church: Baptism and the Lord's Supper.⁴ Those are really pictures of what took place and not the actual substance. That is a human witness, not a divine witness. I do not believe the blood refers to the Lord's Table because the juice we drink is not the actual blood. It pictures grapes metaphorically giving themselves to be crushed to produce sweet juice. It is an amazing picture, but that does

³ Akin, *Christ-Centered Exposition*, 131.

⁴ Stephen Davey, "Without a Doubt: Water, Blood and Spirit," Colonial Baptist Church, accessed June 1, 2016, <http://media.colonial.org/2013/09/29/am>.

not give a divine witness. That is a church witness—confessing before men.⁵

The word *blood* in 1 John 5 is referring to the crucifixion of Christ. There is nothing more bloody than the cross of Christ. Christianity is a bloody religion.

Notice the language of Scripture: “not by the water only but by the water and the blood.” This is not a divine stutter. This is on purpose. Why would God repeat Himself?

Do you think God repeated Himself because one day people would say Jesus was God at the baptism, but not God at the cross? That’s actually why. This answers Cerinthus’ heresy that says Jesus was God’s Son at baptism but not at His cross. It teaches that God descended on Jesus at the baptism, but departed at the cross. Someone has even said, “Christ sat on a hill and watched Jesus die as an ordinary man.”

God is dismantling this false doctrine before it even comes into the church. If Jesus Christ did not take His divine nature to the cross, then He could not purchase our salvation.⁶

Rome was infatuated with crucifixion. Josephus said tens of thousands of people were crucified. He also said a thousand people died the same year on the same hill. What made this crucifixion different? Because He was the only man to die as God. Look at Matthew 26–28 to just see some of the miraculous events that happened at the crucifixion.

His death was no accident or act of martyrdom; it was a divine substitution.⁷

Transition: Witness #2, you may step down off the stand. Witness #3, you may take the stand.

3. Witness #3 – The Spirit of God (verses 6–8)

The Spirit of God was involved at every aspect of the Lord’s ministry from conception to baptism to preaching to crucifixion.

The first two witnesses give external evidence, but this witness gives an internal evidence. This witness was alive when Jesus walked the earth and is alive in us today. He provides a historical and contemporary witness that God is real and that Jesus is God.

⁵ John MacArthur, “The Witness of God, Part 1,” recorded August 31, 2003, streaming audio, accessed June 1, 2016, <https://www.gty.org/resources/sermons/62-38/the-witness-of-god-part-1>.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Akin, *Christ-Centered Exposition*, 132.

Deuteronomy 19:15 states, “A single witness shall not suffice against a person for any crime or for any wrong in connection with any offense that he has committed. Only on the evidence of two witnesses or of three witnesses shall a charge be established.” In the Old Testament, a case needed more than one witness to be settled. John provides the minimum number of witnesses—three—to prove his case.

Transition: Witness #3, you may step down off the stand. Witness #4, you may take the stand. Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth? This witness only knows truth. He is the God of truth.

4. Witness #4 – The Witness of God (verse 9)

Historically, the courts would not allow anyone to testify who had a criminal record or money problems, and perjury was punishable by death. This helped to cut down on the false witnesses.

How clean of a witness could you possibly get when God Himself takes the stand? He has never lied. Notice the lesser to greater argument: “You trust man who can lie; how much more can you trust God who cannot lie.” You trust the mortal, so you can trust the immortal.⁸

Verse 9 speaks of “the testimony of God that he has borne concerning his Son.” God has placed Himself permanently on record. By denying that Jesus is God, you’re walking up to God on the stand and saying, “You are a liar.”

Bertrand Russell lived from 1872-1970. He was a well-known atheistic philosopher in the 20th century. He authored more than 100 books, wrote a 3-volume autobiography and was awarded the Noble Prize for Literature in 1950. One of his most well known books was *Why I Am Not a Christian* (1927). In it he argued that all organized religions are the residue of the barbaric past that dwindle to mere hypocritical superstitions and have no basis in reality. On one occasion Russell was asked what he would say to God if he found himself standing before God. His answer: “I should reproach Him for not giving us enough evidence.”

The apostle John would disagree with Russell when it comes to the issue of not enough evidence. As an eyewitness of the life, passion and resurrection of Jesus, the last living apostle would testify that there is abundant and overwhelming evidence that Jesus is the Son of God and therefore God exists.⁹

⁸ This truth was brought out in Davey’s and MacArthur’s sermons.

⁹ Akin, *Christ-Centered Exposition*, 129.

Unlike with the Simpson case, the problem is not with the evidence. The problem is with the sinful and unbelieving heart.

Transition: Witness #4, you may step down off the stand. I would like to call my final witness. Witness #5, you may take the stand.

5. Witness #5 – Possession of Eternal Life

Do you know what is so interesting about the O. J. Simpson case? There was more evidence than what was permitted to the jury. For example:

- A knife salesman provided store receipts indicating that Simpson had purchased a 12-inch stiletto knife six weeks before the murders. The prosecution did not present this evidence at trial after discovering that store employees had sold their story to *The National Enquirer* for \$12,500.
- One woman testified to the 1994 grand jury that she saw a white Ford Bronco speeding away in such a hurry that it almost collided with another car at an intersection. She talked to the television show *Hard Copy* for \$5,000, after which prosecutors declined to use her testimony at trial.
- Former NFL player and pastor Rosey Grier visited Simpson at the Los Angeles County Jail in the days following the murders. A jailhouse guard testified to the judge that at one point Simpson yelled to Grier that he “didn’t mean to do it,” after which Grier had urged Simpson to come clean.

If all this evidence had been presented, who knows what the jury would have decided. No one will know because evidence was left on the table. I want to be sure not to leave any evidence on the table. There is one more witness in this passage, and it is the Witness of Eternal Life.

This is an amazing witness for those who have struggled with assurance of their salvation. Some people struggle to remember the exact words they prayed, or the exact time they prayed, or the exact amount of guilt they felt. John is not asking you to look to the past. He wants you to look to the present.

- Are you trusting in Jesus only for your salvation right now?
- Do you believe that Jesus is the Son of God right now?
- Right now, are you accepting the sacrifice of Christ at Calvary?

A past experience can be helpful, but a present day testimony that provides confidence and assurance is what God wants you to have. The Holy Spirit in you—the Jesus in you—testifies that God is real. All this evidence is simply different ways to lead you to the same truth.

You have this witness of eternal life inside of you. You are not waiting to get eternal life; you are waiting to get an eternal body. You already have an eternal life.

Conclusion

Charles Spurgeon says it well,

Christianity puts forth very lofty claims. She claims to be the true faith, and the only true one. She avows her teachings to be divine, and therefore infallible; while for her great Teacher, the Son of God, she demands divine worship, and the unreserved confidence and obedience of men. Her commands are issued to every creature, and though at present her authority is rejected by millions of mankind, she confidently looks forward to a time when truth shall obtain universal dominion, and Jesus the Lord shall take unto himself his great power and reign.

Now, to justify such high claims, the gospel ought to produce strong evidence, and it does so. It does not lack for external evidences, these are abundant . . . (“The Three Witnesses,” MTP, Aug. 9, 1874, p.445).¹⁰

Inspired evidence leads us to a verdict. How do we respond to these witnesses? Accept them. With all the evidence and witnesses presented, only one verdict will be acceptable in the ears of God: “I find Jesus Christ to be everything He said He was and trust Him for my soul’s salvation.”

¹⁰ Charles Spurgeon, “The Three Witnesses,” The Spurgeon Archive, accessed June 1, 2016, <http://www.spurgeon.org/sermons/1187.php>.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Akin, Daniel. *Christ-Centered Exposition: Exalting Jesus in 1, 2, & 3 John*. Nashville: B & H Publishings, 2014.
- Davey, Stephen. "Without a Doubt: Water, Blood and Spirit." Colonial Baptist Church. Accessed June 1, 2016. <http://media.colonial.org/2013/09/29/am>.
- MacArthur, John. "The Witness of God, Part 1." Recorded August 31, 2003. Streaming audio. Accessed June 1, 2016. <https://www.gty.org/resources/sermons/62-38/the-witness-of-god-part-1>.
- Spurgeon, Charles. "The Three Witnesses." The Spurgeon Archive. Accessed June 1, 2016. <http://www.spurgeon.org/sermons/1187.php>.
- Wiersbe, Warren. *Be Real: Turning from Hypocrisy to Truth*. Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 1972.