

1 John 5:5-13

Taking God At His Word

Decisions—that's how everything gets done. I decided to get out of bed this morning. All of us decided to worship together today. We make decisions everyday on almost everything we do. Some decisions are simple and some are complicated. But there are a few times in life when you stand at a cross road that is critical. You know that after you make your decision everything will change. There will be a before and an after. And once the decision is made your life will be measured by that decision.

Life's biggest decision is what you do with Jesus Christ. And this is because what you decide about Jesus Christ determines your destiny. In Matthew 7, Jesus told a story about two builders. One man built his house on the solid foundation of rock. The other made the decision to build his house on sand. Both houses faced rain and floods and wind. But the house built on sand collapsed, while the house built on the rock stood firm.

When you make the decision to trust in Jesus Christ for salvation, when you make him your Lord, your life is built on solid rock. And you can overcome whatever the world throws at you. Let's read how the apostle John states this in verse 5.

Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?
(1 John 5:5)

Faith in Jesus Christ and the dedication of your life to him makes you more than a conqueror in all of life.¹ But our faith in Jesus Christ must be rooted in reality. It must be focused on a real person. Our belief must be in the man who God calls the Christ, in the one who God calls His Son. We are warned in Scripture that there will be "false Christs...who will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect."²

So how do we decide who the real Savior is? The answer is that we must trust in the testimony or the Word of God concerning the person of Jesus Christ. And God's testimony about who Christ is was preserved and written down and taught by the apostles. If you'll remember, John began his letter by telling us

¹ Romans 8:35-39

² Matthew 24:24

that the apostles had heard Jesus Christ, they had seen him, they touched him. He was real.³

In John's day false teachers asserted that Jesus of Nazareth was not the Christ. The Christ was an eternal spirit being who came upon Jesus at his baptism, but left before the crucifixion. This so called divine Christ would not and could not suffer the pain of the cross. It could not be involved in such a material and evil event.

The apostle John called this a lie. And he proclaimed the truth that Jesus Christ is one person. He is the Son of God who was conceived by the power of God's Spirit in the womb of a young woman named Mary.⁴ And it was this same man, Jesus Christ, who died on the cross for our sins. This is John's point in verse 6.

Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God? ⁶ 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 who⁵ bears witness, because the Spirit is truth.
(1 John 5:5, 6)

What does John mean when he says that Jesus Christ came by “water and blood”? These verses are controversial with many interpretations. I won't bore you with the details here and now⁶. But in the context of John's day and time and the false teachings about Christ, I believe that the apostle wants to make it clear that the Jesus Christ he presents is a real, material, flesh and blood man.

The true Jesus Christ is not the phantom Jesus taught by the Gnostic teachers. Therefore, the “water” speaks of Jesus Christ's birth, being born through the waters of the womb. The real man Jesus was the Christ when he was born. On the night that Jesus was born an angel proclaimed,

Then the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. ¹¹ For there is born to you this

³ 1 John 1:1-4

⁴ Luke 1:30-38

⁵ The Greek pronoun translated “who” is neuter. The Spirit is not a person but the power of God.

⁶ Over the years there have been many ideas as to what water and blood signify. It has been believed that they stood for the sacraments of baptism and communion. Or the water and blood that came from Jesus Christ's side when he was pierced or even his own baptism and crucifixion. But from the context and especially in light the false teachers that denied that Jesus is the Christ it seems best to understand water as the waters that break from the womb during birth and the blood to represent Christ's death on the cross.

day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.
(Luke 2:10, 11)

For Jon, the water referred to Christ's birth and his blood speaks of Christ's death on the cross. In Acts 2:31 the apostle Peter spoke of the "resurrection of the Christ, that His soul [life] was not left in Hades [the grave]." Jesus Christ was born a man and died a man and was raised up from the dead a glorified man. And it is the Spirit of God that makes this truth real to us through the written Word of God.

Now, verses 7 and 8 are even more controversial. This is because most of the words in these words in these verses. This is because most of the words in these verses are not a part of the original Greek text. They were added in the 16th century to obscure the truth about who the Son of God is.⁷ Therefore you can scratch out all the words beginning with "in heaven" in verse 7 to "on earth" in verse 8. None of the more modern versions of the Bible, like the New International Version" or the New American Standard Version or The English Standard version have those scratched out words in the translations. Verses 7 and 8 should therefore read:

⁷ For there are three that bear witness, ⁸ the Spirit,
the water, and the blood; and these three agree
as one.

So, what John is saying is this: we know who the real Jesus Christ is. He is the one who was born a man and died a man and was raised up from the dead as a glorified man. And the Spirit of God reveals the reality of this to us as we read or hear the written Word of God. But why is it so important for us to understand that

⁷ In all ancient translations - Syriac, Arabic, Ethiopian, Coptic, Sahidic, Armenian, Slavonian, and so forth, this disputed passage is not included. Only in the Latin Vulgate does it appear. It is probably best to regard these words as the work of an over-zealous copyist who thought that the New Testament needed a little help with the doctrine of the Trinity. In the year 1520, a great scholar named Erasmus produced a new, accurate edition of the Bible in ancient Greek. When people studied Erasmus' Bible, and compared it to the Latin version, they noticed he left out this passage, and they criticized him for it. When he was criticized, Erasmus said, "You won't find these words in any ancient Greek manuscript. If you find me one Greek manuscript with these words in them, I'll include it in my next printing." Someone "discovered" a manuscript with the words in them, but it wasn't an ancient manuscript at all. Erasmus knew this, but had already promised to add the words if someone found a manuscript with the words, so he reluctantly added the words in his 1522 edition. However, he also added a footnote, saying he thought that the new Greek manuscript had been written on purpose, just to embarrass him. That manuscript (*Codex Montfortii*) is on display in the library of Trinity College, Dublin.

Jesus Christ is a man and not God or a demi-god? The answer is in the book of Hebrews, chapter 2.⁸

Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil,¹⁵ and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

¹⁶ For indeed He does not give aid to angels, but He does give aid to the seed of Abraham.

¹⁷ Therefore, in all things He had to be made like *His* brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things *pertaining* to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.

¹⁸ For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted.
(Hebrews 2:12-18)

Jesus Christ was flesh and blood just as we are. The only difference is that he came into existence by a direct act of God's power just like the first man, Adam. And just as Adam, a real man, was tempted, Jesus Christ, a real man, was tempted. But Jesus Christ overcame the temptation to sin through love and obedience to God. He then offered his righteous and sinless life to atone for our sins and he died on the cross.

But because Jesus Christ was righteous and sinless death was not final for him. God raised Jesus Christ up from the dead to live forever. And now, through Christ, we are forgiven of our sins, strengthened to not sin and we receive the gracious gift of everlasting life through him. If Jesus Christ was God or a demi-god then his temptation to sin is a mockery of our own temptations and trials and his righteousness is not a proven one. Let's return to 1 John 5.

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.¹⁰ 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

⁸ Romans 5:12-19 also provides an answer comparing the sins of the first man, Adam and the consequences and the righteousness of the man Jesus Christ and the blessings that followed.

not believed the testimony that God has given of His Son.
(1 John 5:9, 10)

In our world so many people have fallen hook, line and sinker⁹ for just about anything they hear, see or read. People make decisions all the time, sometimes life changing decisions based upon what other people say. Why do we elevate the word of man over the Word of God? People believe the word of men, at times even the most irreputable of men, but we question what God has said about His Son, Jesus Christ.

When we do not trust and believe in what God has said about His Son in the Bible, we call Him a liar. And that is a very dangerous place to be. Sometimes our disbelief steams from passive indifference, where we say, "I don't care." Sometimes disbelief comes from open rebellion; our own sin and hardness of heart. But at times disbelief can be from our ignorance; we just don't know. The cure for that is simple: come and learn.

Romans 10:17 tell us that faith comes by hearing the Word of God. Scripture tells us that "God is not a man, that He should lie."¹⁰ And so we need to receive the witness or testimony of God. We need to take Him at His Word. And if you are reading this message it is because God loves you. He desires to be your Father. He wants to have you as His child. And when you believe His Word about Jesus Christ, you will have the witness in your heart that God's Word and love to you are true.

We are told in Galatians 4:6, that when we believe what God has said about Jesus Christ he sends, "the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, Abba, Father." You and I can know for sure that God is your Father! When we take God at His Word about Jesus Christ we can know for sure that we are saved. In a changing, uncertain world it is wonderful to know that a decision we make will absolutely lead to our building the house of our life upon a rock.

And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. ¹² He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.
(1 John 5:11, 12)

Believe God, trust His Word and the uncertainties of you heart will turn to peace. We cannot be neutral about Jesus Christ. It is a matter of life and death—everlasting life and everlasting death.

⁹ This is a fishing idiom meaning that like a fish you have swallowed the "bait" and have been caught off guard.

¹⁰ Numbers 23:19

We live in a very polite and tolerant world where people say things like, “Well, you believe in Jesus Christ and that’s fine for you. But I believe something else.” The apostle John was not tolerant like that. Read verse 12 again.

He who has the Son has life; he who does not have
the Son of God does not have life.
(v. 12)

John is telling us that everlasting life, the life of the age to come, is in Jesus Christ. If you are going to gain everlasting life and not perish with this world, you will receive it only through faith in God’s Son. Everlasting life is not something we have on our own or that we can earn. It is God’s gift to us when we believe what He has said about Jesus Christ.

These things I have written to you who believe in the
name of the Son of God, that you may know that you
have eternal life, and that you may *continue* to believe
in the name of the Son of God.
(1 John 5:13)

God wants His children to have confidence that we have everlasting life. He doesn’t want us to have doubts or fears. Our Father wants us to be convinced that we made the right decision in trusting His Word. We can say in the words of Romans 8, “I am persuaded” that nothing “shall be able to separate” us “from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus”¹¹—nothing! In the words of 2 Timothy 1, we can boldly say, “I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed.”¹²

God has given us the certain testimony of His Word that we might believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and in believing receive everlasting life. Such confidence is possible for us. And confidence in God’s Word equals joy! Do not trust in a Jesus Christ of your imagination. Do not trust in the Jesus Christ of philosophy or false religion. Trust in the Jesus Christ whom God reveals in His Word. Do not be neutral about Jesus Christ. Make a decision to trust him and to dedicate your life to him.

¹¹ Romans 8:38, 39

¹² 2 Timothy 1:12