

~ 1 John ~

Lesson 34- The Witness of God (part 1) The Johannine Comma

We are continuing our study of 1 John, and today we will start another section that spans, **1 John 5:6-13**.

As we near the end of this book, John summarizes what we see as a main topic in his letter. And that is that Jesus Christ, who is the Word, who has existed eternally in heaven with the Father, has been sent to us in human flesh for the redemption and reconciliation of mankind. This is the witness: that God has given us Eternal Life and this Life is in His Son, 1 John 5:11. And He did this so that we might have Eternal Fellowship with Him. This is what John wants for his little children, that we might know and believe the witness of the Father concerning His Son. The witness is about knowing and having a relationship with the Father through the Son, and we have known and believe this witness through His Word that was sent to us.

And this is how verse 6 begins... he is telling us how the Word has come to us to bear witness of Eternal Life...

<p>6 This is He who came by water and blood—Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit who bears witness, because the Spirit is truth.</p>	<p>⁶ οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ ἐλθὼν δι’ ὕδατος καὶ αἵματος, Ἰησοῦς ὁ Χριστός· οὐκ ἐν τῷ ὕδατι μόνον, ἀλλ’ ἐν τῷ ὕδατι καὶ τῷ αἵματι καὶ τὸ Πνεῦμά ἐστι τὸ μαρτυροῦν, ὅτι τὸ Πνεῦμά ἐστιν ἡ ἀλήθεια.</p>
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This is He who came by water and blood- Jesus Christ... John has been telling us throughout this entire epistle that Jesus has come in the flesh, fully God and fully Man, to redeem us from our sins and bring us the Word of Life, **1 John 1:1-2**; 3:8; 4:2-3; 9-10, 14-15. This is the witness of God, that He has given us Eternal Life by sending His Son.

We know that from **John 1:14**, the Word, who is Jesus, became flesh. And now in verse 6, John tells us how Jesus became flesh... **by water and blood... not by water only, but by water and blood**. So what does John mean by water and blood? There are several conjectures on this. Some say this is the water baptism and the cross. Others say these are the sacraments of the church, as in water baptism and the wine of the eucharist symbolizing His blood, but when you look at the context of what John is saying, I don't think either of those are correct because he is telling us of how Jesus came into this world as the witness sent from the Father. The Word made flesh.

Therefore, I believe the water and the blood are describing the incarnation of God in human flesh- Jesus Christ. So how did Jesus come **“by water”**? This becomes clear in John's gospel. Notice how Jesus describes this in John 3:5-6-
⁵ *Jesus answered, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.* ⁶ *That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.*

To come “by water” means to come by means of the flesh.... it is being born of the flesh. This is the natural means by which every human being is born. Jesus came through the natural gate of the womb of the woman, through the water of the womb, and He came by flesh and blood.

This is what John is saying in verse 6, **He who came by water...“and blood”**. Jesus came as a flesh and blood man. A flesh and blood human being is born of blood. Look at how Paul describes a human being in **Hebrews 2:14**. So likewise, Jesus shared in the same, being born out from water and out from blood. He came by water and blood: flesh and blood. This blood John is describing is human blood, but it is not the blood of sinful man, this is the precious blood of Jesus. **Colossians 1:13-14** tells us that we have redemption through His blood. This is what John is describing, our redemption through His blood that is able to rescue us out from the bondage of sin.

John is describing Jesus' blood relation to Adam as our Kinsman Redeemer. This is the Law of Redemption, Lev 25:47-49; Ruth 2:20. Only a Kinsman can redeem someone from their bondage by paying their debt. Adam sold himself, and all of humanity, into the bondage of sin. Therefore, the only person who is able to redeem us is a Kinsman to Adam. Jesus is our Kinsman Redeemer because He was a flesh and blood man who was born of God, Heb 10:5, making Him a direct kinsman to Adam, which means He can legally redeem us from our slavery to sin and pay the price for our redemption. And what was the price for our redemption? The spotless blood of the Lamb of God, the precious

blood of Jesus. Scripture tells us that without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins, Heb 2:17; 7:27; 9:12, 22, 26; 10:10-12; Lev 17:11; 1 Pet 1:19-20; Ex 12:5; 1 Jn 2:1-2; 3:5, 8; 4:9-4:9-10. Therefore the blood of Jesus satisfied both qualifications for our redemption. He was a blood relative to Adam, making Him our Kinsman Redeemer, and He was the spotless Lamb of God to pay the Righteous price for sin. And He came legally into the world through the womb of the woman being born out from water in the flesh.

Notice in verse 6 how John repeats himself, “**not by water only, but by water and blood**”. He is emphasizing this to refute the Gnostic heresy because the Gnostics claim Jesus did not come in the flesh as God. As a rebuttal, John makes this point clear... Jesus has come in human flesh, but not just flesh, but also by the blood of God: Son of God and Son of Man; fully God and fully Man. The God Man who was fully flesh and blood, our Kinsman Redeemer able to redeem us from our sins.

Continuing in verse 6 John says, “... **And it is the Spirit who bears witness, because the Spirit is truth.** John uses this word martureo, μαρτυρέω, to bear witness or to testify, 11 times in these 8 verses. This is the main objective of the Holy Spirit, to bear witness of Jesus Christ. To testify that God has given us Eternal Life, and this Life is in His Son, 1 John 5:11. The Spirit is the testimony of the Words of Eternal Life that Jesus has given us. He is the Revealer of Truth, He is the Spirit of Truth that bears witness of Jesus Christ, who is the Truth, and our Eternal Life in Him, **John 15:26**; 16:12-15; Romans 8:16.

John continues into verses 7 and 8 speaking of the Heavenly and earthly witnesses...

7 For there are three that bear witness **in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one.**

8 **And there are three that bear witness on earth:** the Spirit, the water, and the blood; and these three agree as one.

⁷ ὅτι τρεῖς εἰσιν οἱ μαρτυροῦντες ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ, ὁ πατήρ, ὁ λόγος, καὶ τὸ Ἅγιον Πνεῦμα· καὶ οὗτοι οἱ τρεῖς ἓν εἰσι.

⁸ καὶ τρεῖς εἰσιν οἱ μαρτυροῦντες ἐν τῇ γῆ, τὸ Πνεῦμα, καὶ τὸ ὕδωρ, καὶ τὸ αἷμα· καὶ οἱ τρεῖς εἰς τὸ ἓν εἰσιν

Before we dive too deep into these two verses, I want to discuss the history of 1 John 5:7-8. This portion of Scripture, specifically the highlighted verses in 7-8, are probably the most debated verses in the entire Bible. The debate is: should they be there or not? The section in debate is called, “The Johannine Comma”, which is Latin for “a short clause by John”. But all modern translations have removed this statement from the Bible, so the most important question: did the Holy Spirit inspire these Words to be written? Are these the God-breathed Words of God written by the Apostle John? The short answer is YES, these are the Words of God. So why is there so much debate over these two verses?

Remember in lesson 30 and 31, we talked about the deception of the Gnostics trying to corrupt the Bible. And we saw an example of this in 1 John 4:3 when they removed the words, “*Christ came in the flesh.*” This is exactly what is happening again in 1 John 5:7-8. The Gnostics removed this section from our Bible, but this phrase is most peculiar because of its almost non-existence in Greek manuscripts. Not just in the Alexandrian Codices, but it is also very scarce among the Byzantine manuscripts as well.

And as we discussed previously, the Byzantine manuscripts are the trusted source for the pure Greek Words of Scripture that were preserved by the Hand of God through the centuries. They were preserved from error because these manuscripts had very little influence from the Gnostic Alexandrian Bibles. Today, there are about 5,300 Byzantine manuscripts extant of the NT, and when compared with each other, they are 99.8% agreeable with only slight changes in word order and accent marks. This fact alone tells us that we can trust our Bible.

However, there is one major variant, even among the Byzantine manuscripts, that has been in great debate. And that is this Johannine Comma, 1 John 5:7-8. Because even among the Byzantine manuscripts, these two verses are inconsistent. This is the only place in Scripture, among the Byzantine manuscripts, we see this controversy. And it has caused much debate because the number of Greek manuscripts that actually contain this phrase is very small. You might notice in your NKJV, there is a footnote at 1 Jn 5:7 that states, “only 4 or 5 late mss contain these words

in Greek.” Is that right? Of the 5,300 Byzantine manuscript fragments, only 500 of these texts actually include the 5th chapter of 1 John, not because it wasn’t included in the original text, but because the abuse of time had destroyed the parchment or vellum it was written on. But what is surprising, is out of these 500 manuscripts, only 10* manuscripts contain the Johannine Comma. Now that seems concerning right? So the major question is why is this statement missing and was it truly in the original writings of John?

Therefore, since the majority of the Greek texts agree as NOT including the statement, is this conclusive evidence that these verses do not belong in the Bible? On the surface it might seem that way, but as a supporter of the Johannine Comma, and the Textus Receptus, I am going to propose a conjecture in favor of this divine text.

Years ago, I studied the 16th Century Reformation and I learned of the faithful men and women that gave their lives so that we could have our Bibles today. I learned about great men like Luther, Melanchthon, Tyndale, Coverdale, and many others in history that brought our Bible, the True Word of God back into the hands of the people in our own common languages. And all these men played vital roles in God’s plan to bring the Bible back to light, but there were two men who stood as the pillars of the Reformation, because these two men gave us our Greek Textus Receptus; Erasmus of Rotterdam and Robert Stephanus. These two men brought to Light the original Words of God, which became the power behind the Reformation. So, the question is, did these two men include the Johannine Comma in their Greek New Testaments? The answer is YES!

Even with the lack of the Greek manuscriptal evidence, both these men included the Johannine Comma in their printed Greek New Testaments. So why did they do this? By what means did they use to justify putting these two verses in Bible? Were they wrong in doing so? If there were hardly any manuscripts that included these verses, what was compelling them to do this? I believe it was the Hand of God preserving His Truth for us because, as I am going to show you today, there is very compelling evidence that the Johannine Comma was indeed in the original writings of John. And it was corrupt men taking it out of the Bible.

Back in the 4th century, there was a man named **Socrates Scholasticus**, not Socrates the philosopher... (380- 450AD), he was a Byzantine church historian who wrote his *Historia Ecclesiastica*, “Ecclesiastical History” or History of the Church. And he said in that book, speaking of a heretic who was removed from church leadership named Nestorius... he said about him, “...he did not perceive that in the Catholic epistle of John it was written in the ancient copies, ‘Every spirit that severs Jesus is not from God.’ (1 John 4:3). For the removal of this [passage] out of the ancient copies are understandably by those who wished to sever the divinity from the human economy. And thus by the very language of the ancient interpreters, **some have corrupted this epistle, aiming at severing the humanity from the divinity.** But the humanity is united to the divinity, and are not two, but one.” So here we have proof from the 4th century that Gnosticism and heretical teaching was corrupting the Bible and removing verses specifically from the first epistle of John.

Saint Jerome also lived in the 4th century, (342-420AD), in the same time as Socrates, and he began seeing faulty translations of the Bible into Latin appear in Rome. So, to prevent this from spreading, he wrote a letter to Pope Damasus requesting permission to translate the Bible into Latin from the original languages to prevent the corruption of the Bible. In his letter to the Pope he wrote “...**there are almost as many forms of texts as there are copies.** ... why not **go back to the original Greek and correct the mistakes** introduced by **inaccurate translators**, and the **blundering alterations** of confident but ignorant critics, and, further, **all that has been inserted or changed by copyists** more asleep than awake?”†

Jerome embarked on this task and for 23 years he diligently worked on this until finally in 405AD, he had fully translated the Bible into Latin from the original languages of Hebrew and Greek. And one of these errors that he corrected in doing so was rightfully including the Johannine Comma. In fact, Jerome wrote a prologue concerning one of these unfaithful Latin translations by saying, “...especially in that text where we read **the unity of the trinity is**

* † **Greek evidence:** Biblical MSS – 6r (ca. 1520); 88m (ca. 1000, margin ca. 1500), 177m (ca. 1000, margin ca. 1500), 221m (ca. 900, margin ca. 14-1500), 429m (ca. 1300, margin ca. 1500), 629 (ca. 13-1400), 636m (ca. 1500, margin ca. 1500), 918 (ca. 1500), 2473; Lectionaries – 60 (1021), 173 (ca. 900).

† <https://christianhistoryinstitute.org/magazine/article/jerome-completes-vulgate>

placed in the first letter of John, where much error has occurred at the hands of unfaithful translators contrary to the truth of faith, who have kept just the three words; water, blood and spirit in this edition **omitting mention of Father, Word and Spirit** in which especially the catholic (universal) faith is strengthened and the unity of substance of Father, Son and Holy Spirit is attested."

These unfaithful translators in Jerome's time were deeply influenced by the Gnostics who were trying to destroy the Word of God. But it was because of Jerome's influence, that the Johannine Comma remained in the majority of the Latin Bibles. In fact, 49 out of every 50 Latin Bibles have the Johannine Comma included. And for over 1,000 years, Latin Bibles continued to be issued and copied containing the Johannine Comma. And today, there are over 8,000 Latin manuscripts that contain this statement.

Socrates and Jerome are two ancient witnesses who tell us there were unfaithful men trying to corrupt the Bible and specifically this letter of 1 John and the Johannine Comma. But in addition to Socrates and Jerome, we have other writings from the early church fathers that prove this Comma was in the Bibles of the early church.

Below are just a few examples of the church fathers who quoted the Comma‡:

Ante-Nicene Fathers

Cyprian, a North African bishop, about 250AD

- quoted the Comma in the "Treatises of Cyprian" (Tr. 1, paragraph #6), The Lord says, "I and the Father are one", John 10:30, and again **IT IS WRITTEN** of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, "**And these Three are One.**" There is no other place in the Bible that IT IS WRITTEN of the Trinity that these three are One, except in 1 John 5:7.
- Cyprian also quotes the Comma again in what is called the Ad Jubaianum (23:12) in a debate with a rejector of the Trinity saying, "...But he could not be made Christ's temple, for he denied the deity of Christ, the Holy Spirit, since **these Three are One...** Again, using this exact phrase from the Johannine Comma describing the Trinity.

Origen (184-253AD)

- quoted the Comma in Selecta in Psalmos (PG XII, 1304): "... And the Lord our God is three, for **the three are one.**

Tertullian in 200AD, in his apologetic work "Against Praxeas",

- makes the statement concerning the Trinity. He says, "Thus, the connection of the Father in the Son, and of the Son in the Paraclete (Holy Spirit), produces three coherent Persons, who are yet distinct One from Another. **These Three are One** essence, not one Person, as it is said, 'I and my Father are One,' in respect of unity of substance not singularity of number."

Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers

John Chrysostom (349 – 407AD) wrote Adversus Judaeos (Homily 1:3)

- writes the following phrase: "Three witnesses below, three witnesses above..." which can only be found in the Comma.

Phoebadius in 359AD quotes the Comma saying,

- "... But the sum is one, for **the three are one.**

Cassiodorus of Italy (485 – 585AD) quotes the Comma in Complexiones In Epistollis Apostolorum:

- "This matter the three mysteries testify in earth: 'the water, the blood, and the spirit', which are fulfilled as we read in the Passion of the Lord: but in heaven **'the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit: and these three are one God'**

This next group of church fathers specifically name John as the writer, making it abundantly clear that they are quoting Scripture...

‡ <https://www.kjvtoday.com/johannine-comma-1-john-57/>

Priscillian, 340 – 385AD, a bishop from Spain

- quotes the Comma in a 4th century Latin treatise entitled “Liber Apologeticus”. He says, “**As John says:** There are three things that bear witness they say on earth: water, flesh, and blood, and these three are one, and there are three things they testify in heaven: **Father, Word, and Spirit, and these three are one** in Christ Jesus.” The wording is slightly different, but the gist of the Comma is obvious and he even says, “As John says...”

Athanasius (296 – 373AD)

- quoted the Comma in Disputatio Contra Arium speaking baptizing in the “**Thrice-Blessed Name**” and then says... **John affirms, ‘and these three are one.’**”
- **Athanasius** is also recorded as quoting the Comma in Quaestiones Aliae. He says, “so also God is one, but is also triune, **Father, Word, and Holy Ghost**...”

Victor bishop of Vita in 485 AD

- quotes the Comma and states John’s name specifically saying, “And in order to show with clearer light that the unity of divinity is with the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, **John the evangelist bears record**. For which it is said: **There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit, and these three are one.**”

Fulgentius bishop of Ruspe in North Africa (died 527 AD)

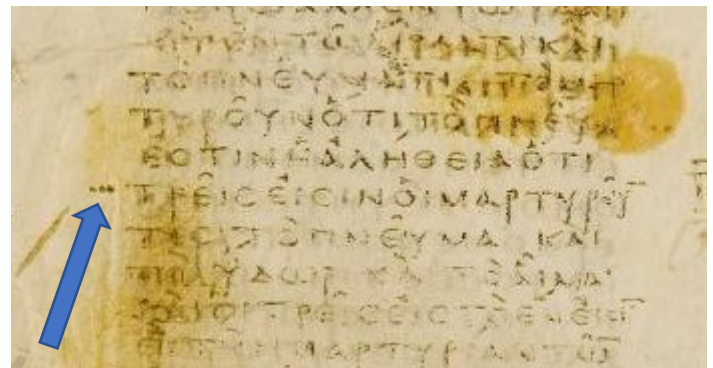
- quoted the Comma in Responsio Contra Arianos Libri Duo saying, “... For the **blessed John the Apostle** testifies, saying: **There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Spirit; and the three are one.**”

Council of Carthage in 484,

- over 100 Trinitarian African bishops, led by Eugene of Carthage presented a statement of faith that included the Johannine Comma and it said, “And as a shining light teaching the unity of the divinity of the Father and Son and Holy Spirit, the **testimony of John the Evangelist** demonstratively testifies: **There are three who bear witness in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit, and these three are one.**”

The church fathers is very strong external evidence that this Comma existed in the early church Bibles.

There is one more piece of evidence I want to show you to prove the Gnostics were corrupting and removing this section out of the Bible. And we find this in the **Codex Vaticanus**, which is the earliest complete manuscript extant of the Greek NT. It dates back to the early/mid 4th century, but this is one of the heretical Alexandrian Codices as a result of Gnostic corruption. And from the text itself, we can prove that this manuscript was corrupted because there is a very interesting discovery that a scholar named Philip Payne found in this manuscript. He noticed three little dots in the margins that appear over 750 times throughout this Bible. And as he researched this, he realized that these dots were scribal indicators to point out known textual variants within the text. Places where the words of the text would vary from other writings of Scripture. And there just so happens to be one of these scribal indicators exactly in the place where the Comma should be in 1 John 5:7-8 (see pic). Coincidence? I don’t think so. I believe this is proof that suggests the scribe who was copying this manuscript knew there was something missing. The fact that this exists, is proof that the Johannine Comma was originally in the Bible, and sometime within the first few centuries, corrupt men took it out.



There is no other verse that the Gnostics have attacked more than the Johannine Comma, and it’s because of the power that this verse holds. It speaks of the Trinity, the heavenly Witnesses, and Jesus, who is the Word being sent to us in the flesh from heaven.

This section of Scripture became a major target for the Gnostics. And the enemy had almost succeeded in removing its entire existence from the Greek NT. But through the Hand of God, in His divine mercy and power, the Johannine Comma was brought back to light in the Greek text when Erasmus, being led of the Spirit, included it in his 3rd edition of 1522. And from then on it has remained in the Textus Receptus.

This is why I encourage us to read the KJV or the NKJV because it is the only translation that is from the Textus Receptus, which is the pure Word of God. The history of the Johannine Comma is as an example of God's Hand preserving His Word and overcoming the enemy.

Next week we will dive deeper into the context of what this verse means. And we will find that the implications of the meaning of these verses are the most compelling evidence for its existence... that Jesus is the One, the Word, who was sent from the Father from Heaven to redeem us and reconcile us unto Eternal Life in Him.