

# 1 John 5:12

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.

## Analysis

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**He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.** John presents the starkest possible contrast. "He that hath the Son hath life" (ho echōn ton huion echei tēn zōēn)—possessing Christ means possessing life. "Having the Son" means union with Christ through faith, not mere intellectual assent to facts about Him. The present tenses indicate current possession—believers have life now, not merely future hope. This echoes Jesus's teaching: "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life" (John 3:36).

"And he that hath not the Son of God hath not life" (ho mē echōn ton huion tou theou tēn zōēn ouk echei). The negative is equally absolute—lacking Christ means lacking life, regardless of other religious beliefs, moral achievements, or sincere efforts. This isn't merely lacking future bliss but present spiritual death. Those without Christ exist physically but are spiritually dead (Ephesians 2:1), separated from God who is life's source.

This binary division allows no middle ground. You either have Christ and therefore have life, or lack Christ and therefore lack life. There's no third category—sincere seekers, good people, followers of other religions who might have some life without Christ. The division is absolute because life is exclusively in God's Son (v. 11). This exclusivity is offensive to modern pluralism but is biblical Christianity's unchangeable truth. It also clarifies evangelism's urgency—those without Christ are perishing, needing the gospel desperately.

## Historical Context

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This exclusive claim that life is only in Christ was Christianity's distinctive, countercultural assertion from the beginning. Acts records Peter proclaiming, "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). Paul taught that Christ is the one mediator between God and man (1 Timothy 2:5). This exclusivity wasn't cultural arrogance but theological necessity—if salvation could come through other means, Christ's death was unnecessary (Galatians 2:21).

The early church's exclusive claims faced persecution from Rome, which tolerated many religions but demanded acknowledgment of Caesar and Roman gods. Christians' refusal, insisting on Christ alone, was considered atheism and disloyalty. Today's pluralistic culture similarly rejects Christianity's exclusive truth claims. Yet biblical Christianity cannot compromise this—Christ alone provides salvation; all other paths lead to death, however sincere or morally respectable they seem.

## Related Passages

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**Romans 10:9** — Confession and belief for salvation

**John 3:16** — God's love and salvation

**1 Corinthians 13:4** — Characteristics of love

**John 15:13** — Greatest form of love

## Study Questions

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1. How does this verse's stark either/or (have Christ and life, or lack Christ and life) challenge contemporary religious pluralism?
2. What does 'having the Son' mean practically beyond mere intellectual belief in facts about Jesus?
3. How should the truth that those without Christ 'have not life' affect your urgency in evangelism and your prayers for unbelievers?

## Interlinear Text

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ὁ	ἔχει	τὸν	υἱὸν	ἔχει	τὴν	ζωὴν	ὁ	μὴ
G3588	He that hath	G3588	the Son	He that hath	G3588	life	G3588	not
	G2192		G5207	G2192		G2222		G3361
ἔχει	τὸν	υἱὸν	τοῦ	Θεοῦ	τὴν	ζωὴν	οὐκ	ἔχει
He that hath	G3588	the Son	G3588	of God	G3588	life	not	He that hath
G2192		G5207		G2316		G2222	G3756	G2192

## Additional Cross-References

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**John 3:36** (References God): He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.

**John 5:24** (Parallel theme): Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.

**1 Corinthians 1:30** (References God): But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption:

**John 3:15** (Parallel theme): That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.

**John 1:12** (References God): But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:

**Mark 16:16** (Parallel theme): He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.

**Hebrews 3:14** (Parallel theme): For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end;

**2 John 1:9** (References God): Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son.

**Galatians 2:20** (References God): I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

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