

1 John 5:6

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth.

Analysis

This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth. John emphasizes Jesus Christ's coming "by water and blood"—a difficult phrase with several interpretations. "This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ" (houtos estin ho elthōn di' hydatos kai haimatos Iēsous Christos). The aorist participle "came" indicates historical arrival—the incarnation and ministry of Jesus Christ.

"By water and blood" likely refers to Jesus's baptism (water) and crucifixion (blood), bracketing His public ministry with authentication from start to finish. Alternatively, it may reference the water and blood flowing from Christ's pierced side (John 19:34), confirming His true death. Against docetic heresy claiming the divine Christ descended at Jesus's baptism but departed before crucifixion, John insists Christ came "not by water only, but by water and blood"—the divine Christ was present through both baptism and crucifixion. The incarnation included suffering and death, not merely teaching ministry.

"And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth" (kai to pneuma estin to martyroun hoti to pneuma estin hē alētheia). The Spirit provides ongoing testimony to Christ's person and work. The Spirit descended at Christ's baptism (Matthew 3:16), empowered His ministry (Luke 4:18), and continues testifying to believers (John 15:26). The Spirit's testimony is reliable because He is

truth—His nature guarantees His witness's veracity. This Trinity of witnesses (Spirit, water, blood) establishes Christ's identity conclusively.

Historical Context

The phrase "water and blood" likely addressed specific heresy in the Johannine community. Cerinthus taught that the divine Christ descended on Jesus at baptism (water) but departed before crucifixion, leaving mere man Jesus to die. John refutes this—Jesus Christ came by both water and blood, remaining fully God and fully man throughout His earthly ministry, death, and resurrection.

The Spirit's testimony was central to early Christian proclamation. At Pentecost, the Spirit's coming authenticated the apostles' witness (Acts 2). The Spirit continues testifying by convicting of sin, righteousness, and judgment (John 16:8-11), illuminating Scripture, and producing fruit in believers' lives. Against claims requiring additional revelation or tradition, Protestants emphasized the Spirit's internal testimony authenticating Scripture's truth.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Study Questions

1. How does Christ's coming by both water (baptism) and blood (crucifixion) refute false teaching that denies His full humanity or atoning death?
2. What role does the Holy Spirit play in your understanding of and confidence in Jesus Christ's identity and saving work?
3. Why is it important that Christ remained fully God and fully man through both His ministry and His death on the cross?

Interlinear Text

Οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ ἐλθὼν δι' ὕδατος καὶ αἵματος.

This is G3588 he that came by water And blood
G3778 G2076 G2064 G1223 G5204 G2532 G129

Ἰησοῦς ὁ Χριστός οὐκ ἐν τῷ ὕδατος μόνον ἀλλ' ἐν

even Jesus G3588 Christ not by water only but by
G2424 G5547 G3756 G1722 G3588 G5204 G3440 G235 G1722

τῷ ὕδατος καὶ τῷ αἵματος καὶ τὸ πνεῦμα ἐστιν τὸ

water And G3588 blood And G3588 the Spirit is G3588
G5204 G2532 G129 G2532 G4151 G2076 G3588

μαρτυροῦν ὅτι τὸ πνεῦμα ἐστιν ἡ ἀλήθεια

that beareth witness because G3588 the Spirit is G3588 truth
G3140 G3754 G4151 G2076 G3588 G225

Additional Cross-References

Hebrews 9:14 (Spirit): How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

John 15:26 (Spirit): But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me:

John 16:13 (Spirit): Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come.

Hebrews 12:24 (Blood): And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.

Mark 14:24 (Blood): And he said unto them, This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many.

John 14:17 (Spirit): Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.

Revelation 7:14 (Blood): And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

Revelation 5:9 (Blood): And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation;

Hebrews 13:20 (Blood): Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant,

Matthew 26:28 (Blood): For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.

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