

1 John 5:7

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.

Analysis

For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. This verse appears in some manuscripts (Textus Receptus, basis for KJV) but is absent from most ancient manuscripts and modern critical texts. Most scholars consider it a late addition, not original to John's epistle. However, the theological truth it expresses—the Trinity's united testimony—is biblical, though this specific verse's authenticity is questionable.

If authentic, "there are three that bear record in heaven" (hoti treis eisin hoi martyrountes en tō ouranō) identifies the heavenly witnesses. "The Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost" lists the three persons of the Trinity. "The Word" (ho logos) refers to Christ (John 1:1, 14). "And these three are one" (kai houtoi hoi treis hen eisin) affirms the Trinity—three persons, one essence. The heavenly witness to Christ's person and work involves all three divine persons working in perfect unity.

Even if this verse is textually uncertain, Trinitarian truth is firmly established elsewhere in Scripture. The Father testified at Christ's baptism (Matthew 3:17), the Son accomplished redemption, and the Spirit testifies to believers. The Trinity's united work in salvation provides certain assurance—God Himself in three persons bears witness to Christ's saving work. This triple divine testimony is unimpeachable.

Historical Context

This verse's presence in later manuscripts reflects the church's developing Trinitarian formulation, particularly after Nicaea (325) and Constantinople (381) councils defined orthodox Trinitarianism. While the verse likely wasn't original, its inclusion demonstrates early Christians' recognition of Trinitarian truth throughout Scripture, even if this specific formulation was added to make it explicit.

The Trinitarian controversy involved Arians (denying Christ's full deity), Sabellians (denying distinction of persons), and orthodox Trinitarians affirming one God in three persons. This verse's late addition may reflect attempts to combat anti-Trinitarian heresy by making the biblical witness more explicit. However, sound interpretation builds doctrine on certain texts, not disputed ones. Fortunately, Trinitarian truth is well-established elsewhere.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Study Questions

1. How does understanding that the entire Trinity (Father, Son, and Spirit) testifies to Christ's work strengthen your assurance of salvation?
2. What does the Trinity's united work in salvation reveal about God's nature and His commitment to redeeming His people?
3. How should you approach textually uncertain biblical passages—what principles guide interpretation when manuscript evidence varies?

Interlinear Text

ὅτι τρεῖς εἰσιν οἱ μαρτυροῦντες ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ, ὁ
For three are G3588 that bear record in G3588 heaven G3588
G3754 G5140 G1526 G3140 G1722 G3772

πατήρ, ὁ λόγος, καὶ τὸ ἅγιον Πνεῦμα· καὶ οὗτοι
the Father G3588 the Word and G3588 the Holy Ghost and these
G3962 G3056 G2532 G40 G4151 G2532 G3778

οἱ τρεῖς ἐν εἰσιν
three one are
G3588 G5140 G1520 G1526

Additional Cross-References

Matthew 28:19 (Holy): Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

2 Corinthians 13:14 (Holy): The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen.

Acts 5:32 (Holy): And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him.

Acts 2:33 (Holy): Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear.

John 1:1 (Word): In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

Isaiah 61:1 (Spirit): The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound;

1 John 5:6 (Spirit): 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.

Matthew 17:5 (Parallel theme): While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.

John 8:54 (Parallel theme): Jesus answered, If I honour myself, my honour is nothing: it is my Father that honoureth me; of whom ye say, that he is your God:

John 10:30 (Parallel theme): I and my Father are one.

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