

1 John 5:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one.

Analysis

And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one. John provides earthly witnesses complementing heavenly testimony (v. 7, if authentic). "And there are three that bear witness in earth" (kai treis eisin hoi martyrountes en tē gē) identifies terrestrial witnesses accessible to human observation. "The Spirit, and the water, and the blood" lists the three.

The Spirit's witness is ongoing, internal testimony to believers (Romans 8:16) and external conviction of unbelievers (John 16:8). The water likely refers to Christ's baptism when the Spirit descended and the Father spoke, confirming Jesus's identity. The blood refers to Christ's crucifixion and shed blood for sin's atonement. Some see sacramental reference (baptism and Lord's Supper), but the primary meaning seems historical—events in Christ's earthly ministry.

"And these three agree in one" (kai hoi treis eis to hen eisin)—literally "unto the one" or "for the one purpose." The three witnesses converge in united testimony. The Spirit's witness, the baptismal attestation, and the crucifixion's blood all testify to the same truth—Jesus Christ is God's Son, the Savior of sinners. Multiple independent witnesses established truth in Jewish law (Deuteronomy 19:15), making this triple testimony legally binding and completely reliable. We have certain grounds for faith in Christ.

Historical Context

The principle of multiple witnesses was foundational in Jewish jurisprudence. One witness was insufficient for capital cases; two or three were required (Deuteronomy 17:6, 19:15). Jesus and Paul invoked this principle (Matthew 18:16, 2 Corinthians 13:1). John applies it to testimony about Christ—we don't depend on single, questionable evidence but multiple, converging witnesses establishing certainty.

The early church emphasized eyewitness testimony (Luke 1:1-2, Acts 1:8, 1 Corinthians 15:3-8). The apostles saw Christ's ministry, death, and resurrection. The Spirit testified through miracles and changed lives. This multiple attestation provided confidence in Christian proclamation. Unlike mystery religions based on private visions or philosophical speculation, Christianity rested on public, verifiable events with multiple witnesses. This evidential foundation remains vital for Christian apologetics.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. How do these three witnesses (Spirit, water, blood) each individually and collectively strengthen your confidence in Jesus Christ's identity and work?
2. What role does external evidence (historical events like baptism and crucifixion) play alongside internal testimony (the Spirit's witness) in grounding faith?
3. How can you use the principle of multiple converging witnesses when sharing the gospel or defending Christian truth?

Interlinear Text

καὶ	τρεῖς	εἰσιν.	οἱ	μαρτυροῦντες	ἐν	τῇ	γῇ,	τὸ	
And	these three	agree	G3588	that bear witness	in	G3588	earth	G3588	
G2532	G5140	G1526		G3140			G1093		
πνεῦμα	καὶ	τὸ	ὕδωρ	καὶ	τὸ	αἷμα	καὶ	οἱ	τρεῖς
the Spirit	And	G3588	the water	And	G3588	the blood	And	G3588	these three
G4151	G2532		G5204	G2532		G129	G2532		G5140
εἰς	τὸ	ἐν	εἰσιν.						
in	G3588	one	agree						
G1519	G1520		G1526						

Additional Cross-References

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:

1 Peter 3:21 (Parallel theme): The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ:

Mark 14:56 (Witness): For many bare false witness against him, but their witness agreed not together.

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

Hebrews 6:4 (Spirit): For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost,

Hebrews 13:12 (Blood): Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate.

Acts 15:15 (Parallel theme): And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written,

Romans 8:16 (Spirit): The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:

2 Corinthians 1:22 (Spirit): Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.

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