

# The Centrality of Jesus

A sermon in the series  
Life in the Son

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I John 5:6-11

***This is He who came by water and blood—Jesus Christ; not only by water, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit who bears witness, because the Spirit is truth. <sup>7</sup> For there are three that bear witness in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one. <sup>8</sup> And there are three that bear witness on earth: the Spirit, the water, and the blood; and these three agree as one. <sup>9</sup> If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater; for this is the witness of God which He has testified of His Son. <sup>10</sup> He who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself; he who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed the testimony that God has given of His Son. <sup>11</sup> And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son.***

I read a news article that stated *Saturday Night Live* blasphemed Jesus Christ in a very bloody and violent parody a week ago last Saturday evening. The fake movie trailer featured the Savior brandishing guns and blowing away Romans in a very violent manner. Blood, gore and profanity spewed across the TV screen and at one point Jesus sliced a man's head in half. The announcer declared, "I never knew how much Jesus used the n-word."

Jesus is so hated by our culture. The American culture and its view of our Savior is rapidly disintegrating. He is no longer a respected figure. Men and women in the news media can utter all sorts of terrible epithets about our Lord, but they don't dare say one unkind thing about Mohammad? Why is that? One reason is they value their lives and they want to keep living. The world of Islam will raise the sword in defense of their prophet and they know the Christian won't. But there's more to it than that. The truth is they don't really hate Mohammad so long as Islam doesn't bother them, but they do hate Christ. Jesus Christ is more polarizing than Mohammad.

What is it about Jesus that makes Him the curse of men's lips and the song of praise on the lips of others? How could men hate Him so when others love Him more than life?

What makes a man become violent at the name of Jesus that he will take a sword and run a man through because he is a follower of Christ, and what makes a man be willing to have a blade run through him for the sake of Christ? I think the answer is the same in the case of the hater and

the lover of Jesus—Jesus is who He says He is.

The whole of Christianity rises or falls on Jesus. The whole truth of life and death, right and wrong, morality and immorality, eternal life or eternal death revolves around the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus is not just a religious figure and His person goes beyond the question of religion. His impact exceeds the boundaries of religion and touches the very foundation of life, life here and now, and life after this one is gone. One hates Christ because of this and another loves Him for the same reason.

The Apostle John yet again brings us back to the centrality of Jesus Christ. So today my subject is infinite and thus impossible to exhaust—Christ Jesus the Lord.

## I. JESUS CHRIST IS THE MESSIAH

That's what John is establishing for us in our text. But before we go any further we do need to discuss the issue of textual criticism. If you do not have a King James or a New King James Bible, your translations will not read the same in verses seven and eight. Textual criticism in this case does not mean criticizing the text, rather it is a discipline that studies manuscripts and documents to make sure we have the most accurate translation possible. No one has the original documents written by the apostles or the other men who penned the New Testament, but since there are so many manuscripts claiming to be genuine but are in fact faulty, it has become the task of the textual critic to study manuscripts and determine authenticity. According to the textual critics, verses seven and eight don't read as the New King James or the King James' versions. Most of those translations read like this,

*“For there are three that testify,*

Verse eight,

*“the Spirit and the water and the blood and the three are in agreement.”*

It is not the purpose of my message today to answer which translation is correct. In the end, no doctrine is challenged or weakened no matter which rendering you believe to be the most accurate. I'm thankful scholarship exists to help us in this regard, but I also realize that human scholars are not infallible, meaning not above error. Therefore, it little matters which translation is right here, because neither rendering changes the message that John is conveying.

Some say these modern translations have taken a blow at the doctrine of the Trinity. No they haven't. If that was so they would not mention God the Father, God the Spirit and God the Son in this passage and all three are mentioned here no matter which rendering you accept. The point is what John is trying to say, that is what matters. Whether it be the New American Standard or the New King James version, whether it be the Authorized Version or the New International Version, all versions that are reliable are going to give us the same message and here it is: Christ

is the Messiah.

## **A. Christ is the Eternal Son of God Come in the Flesh**

*“This is He who came by water and blood—Jesus Christ; not only by water, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit who bears witness, because the Spirit is truth” (1 John 5:6).*

First the Apostle John is dealing with one strain of the Gnostic heresy. We’ve explained Gnosticism in this series but I think it would be profitable to take a couple of seconds and do so again. There were two branches of Gnostics and John deals with the first variety in the earlier chapters. These were the men who believed and taught that Jesus was not a real person but an apparition. He was able to look so real that you could even feel His touch, but He was only a spirit. They denied the material body of Christ.

There was another strain of Gnostics who believed Jesus was a real man. That was their problem—that’s all they believed about Him. They believed when John the Baptist baptized Him, then the Spirit of the Son of God came upon this regular ordinary man and stayed with Him right up until the crucifixion. At the cross the Spirit of Deity left him so it was not the Son of God, but a man who was crucified. It’s this latter strain of Gnosticism John is refuting in our text.

John’s response is that the Son of God came into the world before John the Baptist’s baptism and that He lived and remained even after His death. He uses the illustration water and blood as metaphors to represent something important. The word *by* in our text, “He who came by water and blood,” is saying *by means of or through*. In other words, *Jesus came through water and blood*, which is another way of saying that the man Jesus was not anointed with the Spirit of Deity at His baptism in Jordan and then forsaken before the crucifixion, rather the Son of God came into the world and went through these events, His baptism and His death, proving He was both divine as well as human. The word *water* represents His baptism and the word *blood* represents His death. It was not these events that made Him the Son of God, but by them He declared and testified that He was the Messiah.

They became testimonies that He was who He said He was. How so? How does Jesus’ baptism and death say that He was the Son of God?

His baptism shows us His identification with sinners. If He were a regular man He would already be able to identify with sinners. But He was more than a regular man. He was not just the Son of Man but the Son of God—without sin. So He goes to the Jordan River to be baptized by John the Baptist and John refuses, saying Jesus ought to be the one baptizing him. Jesus responded and said, “Suffer it so now, for it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness.” In other words, Jesus was saying,

*John, this was appointed to Me as a means of proving My identification with men and sinners. Men will have a hard time understanding that I am really a man so in order to identify with sinners I am submitting to a baptism of repentance even though I need no repentance.*

But what about His death? Well, we know that in His death He identified with us. The prophet foretold, “He shall bear their iniquities.” The Lamb of God, on our behalf, took our sins and could make no greater statement that He was one with us than when He made Himself one with our sin. Just like the Apostle Paul says, “When we were still without strength, in due time, Christ died for the ungodly.” He identified with the ungodly. He says to that same church in Romans 4, “He was delivered up for our offenses,” this is why He died. He identified with us that He was willing to die for our sins.

2 Corinthians 5:21,

*“For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us.”*

Galatians 1:4,

*“Who gave Himself for our sins.”*

1 Peter 2:24,

*“Who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree.”*

1 Peter 3:18,

*“For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust that He might bring us to God.”*

In His death He is identifying with you and I.

***In my place condemned He stood.  
Sealed my pardon with His blood.***

I put in your bulletin John Flavel’s vision of the Father and the Son engaged in the conversation about His coming to die and sealing the covenant between the Father and the Son. Now, it’s only a man’s imagination but I found it chocked full of truth. I want to read it to you.

Here you may suppose the Father to say, when driving his bargain with Christ for you:

Father—My Son, here is a company of poor miserable souls, that have utterly undone themselves, and now lie open to my justice. Justice demands satisfaction for them, or will satisfy itself in the eternal ruin of them: what shall be done for these souls?

And thus Christ returns: Son—O my Father, such is my love to, and pity for them, that rather than they shall perish eternally, I will be responsible for them as their Surety; bring in all thy bills, that I may see what they owe thee; Lord, bring them all in, that there may be no after-reckonings with them; at my hand shalt thou require it. I will rather

choose to suffer thy wrath than they should suffer it: upon me, my Father, upon me be all their debt.

Father—But, my Son, if thou undertake for them, thou must reckon to pay the last mite, expect no abatements; if I spare them, I will not spare thee.

Son—Content, Father, let it be so; charge it all upon me, I am able to discharge it: and though it prove a kind of undoing to me, though it impoverish all my riches, empty all my treasures, yet I am content to undertake it. (for so indeed it did, 2 Cor. 8:9 ‘Though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor’)

He so identifies with you and me that He received all of our sins and the penalty for all of our sins so that truly “in my place condemned He stood. Sealed my pardon with His blood.”

John the apostle is saying to us by the historicity of these events, His baptism and death, that deity did become a man and He did identify with us. Jesus is testifying to us. This is His witness and He is the Messiah.

But it’s not just Jesus, John continues, but the Trinity—all three persons—testify.

## **B. The Holy Spirit Testified to Jesus’ Messiahship**

*“And it is the Spirit who bears witness, because the Spirit is truth.” (v. 6)*

It is the Spirit who bears witness because He is the Spirit of truth. When did the Spirit testify that Jesus is the Son of God? He already told us—by water and blood at the baptism and death of Jesus.

At the baptism we see the Spirit of God descending upon the Messiah in anointing power in the form of a dove. No, no, this is not the Spirit of Deity coming upon a regular man, this is the Holy Spirit and He comes to anoint the God-man. The Apostle Peter tells us in Acts 4 that God anointed Him with the Spirit to go about doing good. This is the anointing of the ministry of our Lord and there at Jordan’s banks the Spirit of God declares this is the Messiah and inspires His own prophet John the Baptist to say, “Behold, the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world.”

But not only in His baptism does the Spirit testify, but in His death. The Holy Spirit testifies at the crucifixion. We don’t get this by reading the Gospels but by reading Hebrews 9:14.

*“how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?”*

The Spirit was very much involved. Jesus, by the Holy Spirit offers Himself.

How do we know that offering is recognized and considered by the Father complete? Three days later Jesus rose from the dead. The Apostle Paul tells us He was raised by the Spirit of holiness, “And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead” (Romans 1:4).

The Spirit testifies, and thank God you have heard the Spirit’s voice which gave you witness to this Jesus of Nazareth, for by that witness you have been saved. The voice of God is the voice of the Holy Spirit speaking to the heart and testifying, this Jesus is He, the Savior of sinners. Believe in Him!

### **C. The Father Testifies of the Messiahship of the Son**

We see this also in our text. If you follow the King James rendering we see the Father bearing witness in heaven, but even if you’re following a different translation that does not read the same way in verse seven, certainly the text following shall tell us the same thing. He tells us the witness in verse nine is of God.

*“for this is the witness of God which He has testified of His Son.”*

God here is referring to the Father, the first person of the Trinity. How do we know that? Because this person is testifying of “His Son,” which means it’s from the Father. I ask you when did the Father testified to the Messiahship of Jesus? During the ministry of Jesus and, once again, at His baptism. The very same event where we see the Spirit coming upon Jesus like a dove, as we see Jesus rising out of the Jordan waters, and the Bible says,

*“And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”*

The Father gave testimony. This is the Messiah.

At Jesus’ death, God the Father testifies, yet again through the blood. How so? Well, do you not remember reading that at noon as Jesus hung on the cross the sun refused to shine and became dark? This is the Father’s testimony. And when Jesus said, “It is finished. Into Thy hands I commit My Spirit,” the Bible says there was an earthquake so fierce, so powerful that the veil in the temple was torn in two. We’re not talking about shears, ladies; we’re talking about a piece of fabric woven carefully, which exceeded a distance of 15 feet in length. And thickness? Oh, it was thick. There was no way that two men, three men or four men could grab and tear that temple veil. But God did. Thereby saying that what happened on the cross was enough. He had been propitiated, now He was accessible to sinners who would come. At the death of Christ He was testifying, then after His death not only in the resurrection but also in the ministry of Jesus on this earth.

Hebrews 2:4,

*“God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will?”*

God anointed Jesus to do wondrous works. Jesus said, “If you don’t believe what I’m saying, at least believe Me for the works I do” and He gave the Father the credit for those works. The apostles also went about confirming the gospel of Christ with signs and wonders. God uses the supernatural and the gifts of the Spirit to testify to us today that Jesus is who He says He is and He confirms the Gospel with them.

Please listen because what I’m about to say is controversial in some circles. We should expect and accept these testimonies from the Father—the supernatural and the gifts of the Holy Spirit. This is one of the ways in which God testifies to the Messiahship of Christ. It is a sad thing that so many places in Christendom want to say these things no longer occur, that it was for a certain time period and ended with the apostles. Well, let me stop and deal with at least that one argument this morning. If Peter, James and John and the beloved Apostle Paul needed confirming, how much more do I, do we? That argument doesn’t seem to hold water and it certainly doesn’t hold truth. Our God is an awesome God, He reigns in power and life and He exposes that power and life from time to time. Every time we see the hand of God and His activity, either by His supernatural power or through the gifts of the Holy Spirit in the church body, as even we have this morning, these are God the Father’s testimony, His seal—*this is My beloved Son, hear ye Him.*

One word of caution. We cannot demand these gifts or acts of supernatural power. We cannot demand them or manipulate them, nor can we expect them at all times. Why? Because even the writer of Hebrews inserts the phrase, *according to His own will.* The Father does these things according to His own will. Be careful, therefore, how you treat the Father’s witness. Look at verse nine.

*“If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater;”*

I could bring any man up here today and ask you, “Do you believe in this brother? Do you take him at his word when he says something?” And all of us would say, “Assuredly! Absolutely!” Well then, if the witness of man is sufficient for us, how much greater is the witness of God? But be careful how you treat the Father’s witness because the Apostle John says in verse ten,

*“He who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself; he who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed the testimony that God has given of His Son.”*

It is a shameful thing to call God a liar, and how does a man do that you ask? By not believing Him. Some are recoiling at this moment and taking a step back saying, *I would never ever say God was a liar. Maybe some evil person out in the world, but not I.* Friends, when you do not believe what God has said, you have called Him a liar. This is the word of the Apostle John by the power of the Holy Spirit and therefore we ought to take caution to our souls and heed this word. By not allowing Christ the proper place in your life, whether you are unsaved or saved, the very act of disbelief is

an accusation against Him. If you do not believe Him to meet your needs, dear Christian brother, if you pray with anxiety and doubting have you not said, “God I cannot accept your testimony, it is an unfaithful word, I cannot put stock in it”?

Doesn't that make your heart sink in horror? Doesn't that make you recoil and say *that's terrible*? Well may your heart sink all the more that you may not say or feel or operate on such a lack of faith because it's accusing God of lying.

Dear sinner, I wish to be most kind to all of you who do not know Jesus yet because I have hopes that you will be my brother or sister someday. I want us to get off on a good foot in our relationship for all of eternity. So I'm not trying to be accusatory or ugly, I'm saying this for your redemption—you must be careful how you deal with what you're listening to right now, even at this very moment. Though I am not the Apostle John, I'm a weaker and lesser vessel than he, I am proclaiming to you the Word of the Lord and I am therefore His instrument, and I say to you if you will not heed my words you are calling God a liar. You say, *But I do believe what you're saying*. No you don't. If you believed the Gospel you would obey it.

The word *faith* in the Scriptures never ever implies faith without obedience, it is a faith joined together always with obedience. Why? Because you believe what God has said. If He says *there is no way except through My Son*, you believe that and quit your works of morality and righteousness, you give up playing church and your hope that it can save you and you put your faith in Christ and follow Him. Why? Because you believe there is no other way. You believe what God has said about the day of judgment, that He will say to good people who did many wonderful works in His name, who laid their hands on the sick, prophesied, cast out devils, “Depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.” You believe that and say, *if these cannot get into heaven, what hope do I have? I must cling all the more to Jesus and give Him the leadership of my life*.

But if you refuse that today you have said to God that He is a liar. It does not matter what the intent of your heart is, you have accused Him of lying.

## **II. THE INTERNAL WITNESS OF THE MESSIAHSHIP IN THE BELIEVER**

Verse 10,

*“He who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself; he who does not believe God has made Him a liar,”*

John is saying not only has Jesus testified of His Messiahship and the Holy Spirit and God the Father, but we do too because that witness has been placed within us. When and how is this possible?

### **A. The Divine Call of God**



When God called you, He did something more than invite you into Himself. He put a witness in your heart. In John 6:45, the Bible describes this call. Please listen, this is really important.

*“It is written in the prophets, ‘And they shall all be taught by God.’ Therefore everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Me.”*

Before you can even come to Jesus, God the Father has to teach you that Jesus is the only way and that your way won't work anymore. Your morality, your goodness won't work anymore. Your good behavior won't work. He has to teach you that you are a sinner in desperate need of Christ. He needs to show you what you don't want to see—that you are ungodly. But He has a way about Him that is so convincing. His arguments are irrefutable that it leaves you speechless and all you can say is this—*Woe is me for I am undone. I am a man of unclean lips.*

Then He shows you that Christ died for the ungodly—you're the person that He died for. That's the call. I'm not talking about a general call to repentance, I have given that to all of our lost today. I have pleaded in short measure already with some of you who are not Christians. I have given the call—believe in Christ and you will be saved. But that call will not save any one of you. Listening to me will not get you any extra points in heaven. There is a general call to salvation. It is when people hear the Gospel, they hear God say through the pastor, through the witness, through the missionary, “Be saved, Christ is the way,” but that has no power to save you. So the apostle comes along and talks about another call in Romans 8:30.

*“Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.”*

The apostle shows us there is a call that is effectual, which is another call besides the general call that is heard in the preaching of the Gospel. This call effects those who hear it. What is the effect upon them? It justifies them. It does something to their soul so that their souls are transformed and no longer hard and bitter and striving against God. They now lay down their weapons of rebellion and they readily, excitedly, hopefully, embrace the Messiah and the call to be saved because that's what this call does. Notice, if everybody who heard the Gospel would be saved then there would be no reason for Him to say “whom He predestined, these He called”, because we know that not everybody who hears the Gospel is justified or saved. This is a special call. It's the call Jesus referred to in John 6:45, the Father puts that witness in their heart.

## **B. The Witness of the Spirit**

Romans 8:16,

*“The Spirit Himself bears witness with our Spirit that we are the children of God.”*

When a man, woman or a young person comes to believe upon Jesus because of God's effectual call, God puts His Spirit within you and the Spirit is always pointing you to Jesus. He is there to

encourage your faith in Christ. All of these testimonies point to one thing—they are in unison declaring the centrality of Jesus Christ. It's all about Jesus. The Apostle summarizes the testimonies of God, Christ and the Holy Spirit in verse 11,

*“And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son.”*

John could say it no better than to say that this eternal life I'm talking about is Jesus. You don't just get to live forever; you receive eternal life when you receive the person of Christ because He is Eternal Life. Lord willing we'll pick up here next week, but today as I conclude I want to ask you a question.

We have the testimony of the Father, we have the testimony of the Son, we have the testimony of the Holy Spirit—what do you say about Jesus? I'm asking all of us, saved and unsaved, Christians and yet to be Christians. What do you say about Jesus? What is your testimony about Him? This is the most important question you will ever answer and I'm asking you to answer it right now. Be honest. But before you answer, let me tell you one more thing about this Christ. He's not just a man, He's also God. This is what John has been telling us. Being a man He is altogether like us. Being God He is altogether unlike us. This is what the transfiguration witnesses or testifies to.

Jesus guided three of His disciples up the side of a mountain to the summit and spent the evening in prayer. But as usual, Peter, James and even the author of our text today, John, fell asleep. They were awakened to such a sight so incredible it defied telling. The light emanating from Jesus was not a reflection from another light source, but Jesus was the light. They saw that His clothes had changed in appearance. It was a shade of white they had never encountered before. It was whiter than freshly fallen snow. No one could duplicate that shade of white. And lastly, they saw Moses and Elijah talking to the Lord about His approaching death and there to, the Father on that mountaintop gave His testimony yet again. “This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him.”

Let me ask you—what is happening there on that mountaintop? You all know the facts but if you're not careful the facts will get in your way sometimes. We know Jesus changed in His appearance and there were Moses and Elijah and a voice came from heaven and Peter once again opens his mouth and inserts his foot and says “Let's build three tabernacles.” You know the facts, but what are these facts screaming at us? For this particular hour, what is it saying to you? What were these three witnessing? I answer that it is the centrality of Jesus and that He's far greater than just a man. He's divine. There is something about this Man that is more than a man.

Let me illustrate with another question. If I were to ask you to define purity, how would you answer? Stop and think about that. It's a hard question isn't it? Immediately the mind begins to think of something that is absent of something. We define purity usually by the absence of sin. If you were to ask me, Michael, are you a pure man? The truth is none of us are pure within ourselves. But you want to think of your pastor as a pure man and you would expect of me—if I am pure—to have the absence of immorality and dishonesty. You would expect me to be a man who

does not use profanity and vulgarity when he speaks. So mostly and mainly we define purity as the absence of something because that's all we know. We're all sinful. But in the case of Jesus as you see Him there on that mount of transfiguration as pure as one can be, it is not because of the absence of something. Yes, He is without sin, but we call Him pure because of the addition of something else. He is not pure just because He doesn't have sin, He is also pure because He has something we do not have—deity.

For a few moments that is what those three men saw, the glory of His deity that He possessed all along, even as a babe in a manger. This is not a regular man. This is more than a man. This makes Jesus so much greater than all the religious teachers of the ages. He is God in flesh, veiled in humanity to bear all of sin. Your sin. Your sin can be lifted from you, washed away in the torrent of Jesus' mercies and you can be this hour made clean. It all depends on your testimony about Jesus. What will you say about Jesus? What will you say? Amen.