

Let the Record Show

Without a Doubt, Part 4

1 John 5:9-11

Several years ago, a state review board approved a new set of textbooks for the state-wide public school system.

It wasn't long before a group of parents became alarmed at the information their children were learning and so they conducted their own evaluation.

When they wrapped up their review, they had found more than 200 errors in one history textbook alone – including major blunders like Napoleon actually won the battle of Waterloo instead of lost.

Another mistake was recording President Harry Truman dropping the atom bomb – not on a city in Japan, but on a city in Korea. They also misspelled some names so that General Douglas MacArthur ended up leading the anti-communist campaign in the 1950's instead of Senator Joe McCarthy.

When the parents demanded action, the education board conducted their own review and found even more errors. And then the parents found even more.

When it was all tallied, there were more than 5,000 errors.

When the parents demanded the textbooks be recalled by the publisher, they refused and their spokesman argued that “except for the errors, these were the finest textbooks they had published to date.”

The truth is, most of us would accept as fact most of what we read in a textbook without question.

When I was in Middle School, if my history book said that Napoleon won at Waterloo, or the Atomic Bomb had landed in Korea or MacArthur instead of McCarthy led the hunt for communists in the 1950's, I would have memorized those facts for the test and assumed they were correct.

And that's where parents play a role.

Parents who watch out for the minds and hearts of their children are prone to evaluate the topics and the trends and the teachers and even the textbooks of the day.

It struck me while studying for this message, John the Apostle views himself as a parent. In his third letter he writes that he has no greater joy than to hear that his children – the believers – are walking in the truth.

Like a concerned parent, this Apostle want to make sure – and finds his deepest joy – in hearing that his children are actually learning the truth . . . the truth.

Because it's going to really matter.

Listen, Napoleon winning or losing at Waterloo isn't going to determine our eternal future.

The truth John sets before us will.

And John wants us to have confidence in the truth he's presenting. He doesn't want us to have any doubt that he's telling us the truth from God.

This is why he goes to great lengths to substantiate his letter with divine footnotes.

In fact, 7 different times over the next two verses before us in First John chapter 5, John will use the same word – over and over again.

Beginning with *verse 9* – which is where we left off – and through *verse 11* – John will use the word *marturew* (μαρτυρεω) seven times which can be translated, testimony or witness or record.¹

It's as if John says, “Let the record speak for itself.”

Now in large part, John is writing to a Jewish audience.

They were trained to evaluate someone's testimony – they would have been the kind of

parents to check out textbooks that came home – and one thing they held to was the need for substantiation.

In fact, in a courtroom, Jewish law required the presence of at least 3 witnesses.

Deuteronomy 19:15 gives us the law of God through Moses that ***by the record or testimony of two or three witnesses a matter shall be confirmed.***

And by the way, the Jewish courts didn't just allow any witness. In fact, we know from history that they wouldn't allow a thief with a criminal record to testify in court; perjury from a false witness was punishable by death; they wouldn't allow anyone suspected of financial dishonesty to testify in court – which would have included tax collectors and customs officials. Added to that, one principle from the Talmud – the Jewish book of customs and laws dating back to the first century – didn't want common people of the land testifying in court.ⁱⁱ

I mean, you really needed someone well connected – someone reliable – someone trustworthy to provide a testimony or written record of whatever the truth happened to be.

And that's exactly where John is leading us.

1. The Immortal Testimony

Notice ***verse 11***. ***If we receive the testimony of men*** – John implies 'and we do' – the testimony – or the record of God is greater; ***for the testimony of God is this, that He has testified concerning His Son.***

John moves us from a lesser to greater argument.

If we believe the testimony of reputable witnesses; if we take to heart and believe their record in a court of law, how much more should we believe the greater testimony of God Himself.

I mean, how trustworthy can you get? How reputable a witness could you ever find than the God who cannot lie.

Notice the last phrase of ***verse 9***. ***God has testified concerning His Son.***

He has – perfect tense – ***testified***. In other words, God the Father has placed himself permanently on record, bearing witness to the authenticity of Jesus Christ as His divine Son.ⁱⁱⁱ

If you were with us in our last study, we noted the three-fold witness to the validity of Jesus Christ as the genuine Messiah – remember? The evidence of ***water, blood and Spirit (verse 8)***.

Now what John does next – here in ***verse 9*** – is inform us that these three witnesses of water, blood and Spirit were actually a part of God's testimony concerning Jesus.

In other words, God Himself brought forward these three witnesses in order to substantiate His own declaration that Jesus is the Christ.

So God is fulfilling His own law to confirm a matter with three witnesses.

John is saying, "Listen, we would believe the testimony of mortal men? How can we resist believing the immortal testimony of eternal God?"

2. The Internal Holy Spirit

Now John goes further to tell us in ***verse 10*** – notice the first half – 10. ***The one who believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself.***

What does that refer to?

John is referring to not only an immortal record of God's testimony, but an internal record of God's testimony through the Holy Spirit.

The testimony of God is also inside the believer.

Paul would write that you can't really believe this record unless the Holy Spirit opens your eyes. ***The natural man – the unbeliever – doesn't receive the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. (1 Corinthians 2:14)***.

One of the wonderful evidences of genuine salvation – which ought to remove all doubting – is the internal witness of the Holy Spirit.

The gospel message, which for the world is an external testimony, is, for the believer, not just external truth but experiential truth.^{iv}

We have internalized this truth – it's a matter of our Spirit and our heart and our will and our love and our passion; which comes by means of the Holy Spirit's illumination and indwelling.

You say, but how do I know if I'm really indwelt by the Spirit. I mean, is it something you have to feel? What if I *do* doubt? What if I feel weak in my faith at times and other times strong?

Well, for starters, John isn't leading you here to evaluate how you feel.

He wants you to evaluate your response to the testimony of God about Jesus Christ – the record you have open in your lap – the one you're hearing preached Sunday after Sunday from this pulpit; John is asking you simply and squarely, "do you believe the record of God?"

And he asks a multiple choice question – allowing for two possible answers.

Notice the last part of *verse 10b*. ***The one who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has given concerning His Son.***

So which one are you?

Are you one of those who believes the record of God concerning Jesus – or are you denying the record of God?

Are you sitting in your seat saying in your heart, God’s testimony about Jesus isn’t true?

I don’t believe He really is the only way to heaven – the way the truth and the life. I really don’t believe He is deity – God the Son.

Well just so you know, according to what John just wrote, ***“You are actually calling God a liar.”***

You’re effectively walking up to the witness stand and pointing your finger in the face of God the Father and saying, “You’re not telling the truth.”

John pulls off the nice façade and says here, “You really doing nothing more than calling God a liar.”

Do you believe the record of God about Jesus?

Listen, do you believe the record of God about you? Where you came from . . . and where you’re going?

Did you know that by the year 1808, there were catalogued no less than 80 theories of origins? If you weren’t aware of it, theories of origins have been around as long as the fall of mankind.

In 1808 there were at least 80 theories of man’s origin; theories that we came from seaweed, theories that we were birthed by gods and goddesses, theories that we descended upward from animals; and even more recently, the ever growing popular belief that wasn’t even conceivable during my childhood, but now is growing more and more popular and it is that life on earth began by aliens depositing life forms that then evolved.

You simply evolved from some prehistoric matter left here by space travelers from another galaxy.

But why do you believe what you believe?

Where’s the ultimate source of your fundamental beliefs about who you are, where you came from and where you’re going?

Which is John’s great passion for us to know without a doubt in this text.

Why is it that the vast majority of college students abandon the faith of their fathers during their freshmen year?

The answer is simple – it was the faith of their fathers.

What’s your faith today?

Is it the faith of your parents – is it the faith of your past? Or is it personal?!

In ***Romans 14:5***, Paul challenged everyone to be ***“fully convinced in his own mind.”***

In other words, think it through and then stay alert because you are entering a world that will criticize the record of God’s testimony more than it will ever critically evaluate its own.

This is the time to evaluate the textbooks that travel across your desk or the conclusions that show up in nightly news reports or in the values of the board room or the trends in the neighborhood.

Stay alert – like never before.

I got to tell you, I have discovered something about growing older that I don’t like – not that there’s anything to like.

I told Marsha about this growing theory of mine that I’m sure can’t be proven – but it’s happening to me nonetheless.

Maybe to you too . . .

It seems that my automatic pilot is beginning to lose its edge. In other words, you know how you can be driving down the road and 5 miles later not have any recollection of driving – yet there you are, perfectly situated in your lane.

Your unconscious mind has actually been doing the driving while you’ve been daydreaming or singing or talking.

Well, evidently this unconscious ability wears out and I’ve noticed I have to consciously stay alert in order to stay in my lane.

And evidently it’s only going to get worse!

I read some time ago the rather humorous story of two elderly women who were out driving. Cruising along, they came to an intersection. The stoplight was red, but the woman driving kept going. Alarmed, her friend in the passenger seat thought, I must be losing my mind, I could have sworn we just went through a red light! They came to another intersection and again, the light was red, but her friend, once again, drove right through it without even slowing down. Now the passenger was really getting nervous, but she assumed she wasn’t seeing things correctly and kept quiet. Still, she was really getting scared. Then, at a 3rd intersection, sure

enough, it happened again. They drove right through a red light without even slowing down. She couldn't stay quiet this time and she turned to her friend Millie and said, "Millie, do you know you just ran 3 red lights in a row? You going to get us killed!" Millie said, "Oh my! Am I driving?!"

The moral of the story is, "you're driving . . . you are actually behind the wheel . . . and life is going to demand that you stay alert!"

Evaluate the record of your world while you claim the record of the testimony of God Himself.

And what is this record from God Himself?

3. The Inspired Testimony

Verse 11. And the testimony is this – in other words, here it is, plain and simple – *that God has given us eternal life and this life is in His Son.*

This is effectively the promise of God – He has given us eternal life through Jesus Christ His Son.

What a promise! What a promise!

I had the privilege of presiding yesterday at the wedding of Suzie and Philip . . . Suzie grew up in our church and what a privilege it has been to see her grow up physically and spiritually and then to be able to watch as she and her godly young man tied the knot.

One of the things they did was write their own vows of lifelong commitment and fidelity.

What precious promises.

I couldn't help but think how times have changed for our world.

Vows are being rewritten today to actually remove the lifelong commitment part. One couple I read about had evidently rewritten their vows so that, instead of saying, "I will cherish you as long as life shall last" they rewrote them to say, "I will cherish you as long as love shall last."

Is it any wonder then, that you can now lease wedding rings one year at a time?

Listen, you remove from your life the testimony of God's promise – and even your most cherished promises will carry little weight . . . and can easily dissolve away. What about this promise from God. The promise of eternal life? Listen, the promise of eternal life in His Son is only as good as the record of His Son being true.

Which is why John effectively writes, God the Father has provided a written testimony – a record that consistently points to His Son as the Redeemer and Savior to all who believe.

Let the Old Testament Record Speak!

So I took some time this week to go to each Book of this Record of God's Testimony to find Christ pictured and illustrated and promised.

Listen to the record of God's testimony in the Old Testament – listen to it speak!

In Genesis Jesus Christ is the creating voice of the triune God according to the confirmation of the Apostle Paul in Colossians 1. It was Jesus, God the Son, who spoke the worlds into existence.

Furthermore, in Genesis, Jesus Christ is the prophesied seed who will crush the serpent's head;

In Exodus Jesus Christ is the Passover lamb whose blood protects His people from the wrath of God; He is the manna from heaven and the water gushing from the rock;

In Leviticus He is the tabernacle of God among men:

- He is the brazen alter – signifying his death which gives entrance;
- He is the brazen laver – promising to cleanse us from every sin;
- He is the bread – signifying food that satisfied;
- He is the golden lamp stand – the light of the world that will never be extinguished;
- He is the altar of incense – ascending and perpetually interceding on our behalf
- He is the veil – through Whom is our access into the Holy presence of God;
- And He is the holy of Holies – for in Him God the Father communes with His people and His people commune with heaven.

In the Book of Numbers, He is the Great High Priest who will never fail;

In Deuteronomy, He is the city of refuge where criminals may run for protection;

In Joshua, He is the champion over every obstacle; strength over every enemy that stands in the way of His people;

In Judges, Jesus Christ is the angel of God, empowering the weak and pursuing the wandering; He is the perfection of patience toward His wandering people;

In Ruth, He is the wealthy Redeemer who buys His bride out of hopeless poverty; placing her in the

family line of royalty, giving her the right to everything that belongs to Him;

In **First and Second Samuel**, He is the Name of the Lord, in whose strength people of faith dare to conquer enemies and slay giants;

In **Kings and Chronicles**, Christ is the sovereign King behind and above all kingdoms both pagan and God-fearing;

In **Ezra**, He is the keeper of Divine promises to Israel and the Hand that liberates His people from bondage;

In **Nehemiah**, He is the re-builder of broken lives and broken hearts and broken dreams; He is the restorer of broken fellowship between God and man;

In **Esther**, He is behind the scenes, outwitting the Evil One; faithfully protecting His unfaithful people, whispering into the ear of a young queen that for such a time as this, she has been crowned.

In **Job**, He is the majestic One who rides upon the wind and commands the lightning and the storm; the Lord of mystery who does not explain life, but reveals He is sovereign over all of life;

In the **Psalms**, He is the Rock of refuge, the Shepherd of the sheep, the Tower of shelter, the Honeycomb of divine revelation;

In **Proverbs**, He is everlasting Wisdom; Divine counsel for those who accept His invitation to turn aside and listen;

In **Ecclesiastes**, He is eternal satisfaction over every earthly desire; the One to be remembered in the days of your youth;

In the **Song of Solomon**, He is the Bridegroom who pursues His bride, stopping at nothing until she is safely in His arms;

In **Isaiah**, He is the suffering Savior who will be crushed for our iniquities; He is the coming Prince of Peace whose strong shoulders will one day lead the government of the world;

In **Jeremiah** He is the branch of righteousness delivering justice and equity; He is the promised one who will write a new covenant on the hearts of His people;

In **Lamentations**, He is the father who disciplines those whom He loves;

In **Ezekiel**, He is resurrection power, breathing life into dry bones, bringing life out of death;

In **Daniel**, Jesus Christ is the corner stone, cut without hands, rejected by kingdoms, yet smiting the false image and filling the earth with His glory;

In **Hosea**, He is the faithful relentless Husband of an unfaithful rebellious wife;

In **Joel**, He is the Hope of His people;

In **Amos**, He is the wrath of God against oppressors; the promise of vineyards and gardens where His children will one day rest;

In **Obadiah**, He ascends Mount Zion as the deliverer who judges the kingdoms of this world and inaugurates His own everlasting reign;

In **Jonah**, He is the fulfillment of the sign that after 3 days and 3 nights, the Son of Man will come forth vindicating the righteousness of God and the resurrection power of His kingdom;

In **Micah**, He is the One who does not retain His anger forever; who delights in unchanging love; He is the one who treads our iniquities under his feet, and casts all our sins into the depths of the sea;

In **Nahum**, He is slow to anger and great in power; of Him the mountains quake and the hills dissolve; yet He is a safety for all who hide in Him;

In **Habakkuk**, Christ is the radiant sunlight; whose strength makes our feet like the feet of deer, causing us to one day walk on high places;

In **Zephaniah**, He is the One who will gather those who grieve and those who are lame and those who are outcast; he is the One who will turn their shame into everlasting shouts of joy;

In **Haggai**, Christ is the Victorious Lord of hosts who will shake the heavens and the earth as he overthrows the nations of this world; He is the One who will wear his chosen people as jeweled rings around his omnipotent fingers;

In **Zechariah**, the Lord stands with His redeemed on the Mount of Olives in that coming kingdom; a kingdom where the inscriptions on the bells of horses bridles as they gallop through the city of His glory – will sing – “Holy unto the Messiah”;

And in **Malachi**, Jesus Christ is the Divine Refiner, sitting over the smelting pot of His universe, purifying his chosen people as silver and gold; the One who does not change; the One who will one day rise with healing in His wings!

Amen?

Let the record of the Old Testament speak!

But that isn't all . . . we're just getting started. Never mind about lunch.

Let the record of the New Testament speak!

In **Matthew's Gospel** He is the King of the Jews;

In **Mark's Gospel** Jesus Christ is the submissive servant to God the Father;

In **Luke's Gospel** He is the Son of Man, announced by Gabriel who is the Savior of the World;

In the **Gospel by John** He is the great I AM, the Light of the World and the eternal Son of God;

In **Acts**, He is the commissioning Lord of the church;

In **Romans** His is the one who chooses us, justifies us, sanctifies us, and promises to glorify us;

In **1 Corinthians** He is risen authenticator of our genuine faith;

In **2 Corinthians** Jesus Christ is our liberty, transforming us from glory unto glory;

In **Galatians**, Jesus Christ is our liberator, allowing us to no longer be called slaves, but sons, that we might call God our Abba Father;

In **Ephesians**, He is the head of the church and the bridegroom of the beloved;

In **Philippians**, Jesus is the incarnate God, obedient unto death on a cross, now exalted so that every knee will one day bow before Him;

In **Colossians**, He is the incomparable Christ – the creator of everything in heaven and on earth;

In **1 Thessalonians** He is the One coming in the clouds with a shout, rapturing the church to His side;

In **2 Thessalonians** He is returning, avenging Lord who shall come to earth with angels of flaming fire to defeat the Enemy of His purposes;

In **1 Timothy**, Jesus is the ransom payment to redeem His church – the only mediator and bridge between earth and heaven;

In **2 Timothy** He is the word preached by faithful elders; the coming Lord and King over the living and the dead;

In **Titus**, He is the blessed hope for whom we wait;

In **Philemon** he is the emancipator of slaves; the one who fashions slaves and freemen into blood bought brothers;

In **Hebrews** He is the final sacrifice and the greater High Priest; both fully man and fully God;

In **James** He is the wisdom from above and the developer of our faith through divinely crafted trials;

In **1 Peter**, He is the corner stone of the house He himself is building; He is the Chief Shepherd of His flock;

In **2 Peter**, He is the rejected Savior, mocked and scorned by a world heading toward the final judgment of fire;

In **1 John** Jesus Christ is the cleansing flow and the source of our eternal victory;

In **2 John**, He is the great Divider between those who follow the great deceiver lie and those who follow the great deliverer;

In **3 John**, He is the Name that prospers the soul and marks the path of truth;

In **Jude** He is the One who keeps us from falling away; the One who will introduce us one day as His forgiven, joyful bride;

And in **Revelation**, He is the risen Lamb and the regal Lion; He is the inspiration behind the music sung by hundreds of millions of angels – joined in by all the redeemed from all time who glorify Him as King of Kings and Lord of Lords – the only one worthy of all blessing and honor and glory and power forever and ever, Amen.

So be it . . . let the record speak!

True through the ages; inspected by every generation – its promises fulfilled on time and promises yet to be fulfilled will also come to pass on time.

And John writes, *“Whoever believes this record which points to Jesus, is given life – eternal life.”* And this life is in and through and over and by, upheld, contained, delivered, surrounded and sustained by our eternal Creator, our living Lord.

Believe this record, John writes, and you will live in heaven forever.

This manuscript is from a sermon preached on 10/13/2013 by Stephen Davey.

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i Fritz Rienecker/Cleon Rogers, *Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament* (Regency, 1976), p. 795

ii Adapted from James Montgomery Boice, *The Epistles of John* (Baker Books, 1979), p. 135

iii Adapted from D. Edmond Hiebert, *The Epistles of John* (BJU Press, 1991), p. 241

