

God's Two Witnesses and the Testimony of God

Text

Deut. 19:15 *“One witness shall not rise against a man concerning any iniquity or any sin that he commits; by the mouth of two or three witnesses the matter shall be established.”*

John 5:31-37 ³¹ *“If I bear witness of Myself, My witness is not true. ³² There is another who bears witness of Me, and I know that the witness which He witnesses of Me is true.*

³³ *You have sent to John, and he has borne witness to the truth. ³⁴ Yet I do not receive testimony from man, but I say these things that you may be saved.*

³⁵ *He was the burning and shining lamp, and you were willing for a time to rejoice in his light. ³⁶ But I have a greater witness than John's; for the works which the Father has given Me to finish—the very works that I do—bear witness of Me, that the Father has sent Me.*

³⁷ *And the Father Himself, who sent Me, has testified of Me. You have neither heard His voice at any time, nor seen His form.”*

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John 8:17-18 ¹⁷ “It is also written in your law that the testimony of two men is true. ¹⁸ I am One who bears witness of Myself, and the Father who sent Me bears witness of Me.”

1 John 5:6-8 ⁶ 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. ⁷ For there are three that bear witness in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one. ⁸ And there are three that bear witness on earth: the Spirit, the water, and the blood; and these three agree as one.

Gen. 18:1-3 Then the Lord appeared to him by the terebinth trees of Mamre, as he was sitting in the tent door in the heat of the day. ² So he lifted his eyes and looked, and behold, three men were standing by him; and when he saw them, he ran from the tent door to meet them, and bowed himself to the ground, ³ and said, “My Lord, if I have now found favour in Your sight, do not pass on by Your servant.”

Memory Verse

2 Cor. 13:1 (NIV) ... “Every matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.”

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Introduction

God never asks us to take His word for it without evidence. Under the Law of Moses, no one could be condemned on the testimony of one witness (Deut. 19:15). Jesus applied that same rule to Himself: “If I testify about myself, my testimony is not true.” (John 5:31)

So God gives witnesses. He gives them outside of Himself in creation, prophecy, and the apostles. And He gives them within Himself—Father, Son, and Spirit bearing record together. When you understand this, a lot of confusion about the Trinity and about Scripture clears up.

Objectives

To show that God follows His own legal principle of two witnesses.

To clarify the disputed reading in 1 John 5:7.

To address the confusion around the three men who visited Abraham.

To understand the difference between soul and spirit.

Presentation

1. The Principle: Truth is Established by Two or Three Witnesses

(1) In Israel's legal system, one person's accusation was not enough (Deut. 19:15). You needed corroboration.

(2) Jesus used this to defend His identity. He pointed to John the Baptist, His works, the Scriptures, and the Father as witnesses (John 5:32-37).

(3) God does not break His own standard. If He expects two witnesses from us, He provides them for Himself.

2. The Witnesses Within the Godhead

(1) John 8:17-18 (NIV): "In your own Law it is written that the testimony of two witnesses is true. I am one who testifies for myself; my other witness is the Father, who sent me." Jesus does not stand alone.

(2) 1 John 5:6-8 (NIV): This is the one who came by water and blood—Jesus Christ. He did not come by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth. For there are three that testify: the

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Spirit, the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement.

(3) About 1 John 5:7: The phrase “For there are three that bear witness in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one” is not in the earliest Greek manuscripts. It was added later to make the meaning explicit. The doctrine of the Trinity does not rest on that verse. It rests on the whole of Scripture: what we see in v.6-8, in John 1:1, in Matt. 28:19, and in the way Jesus, the Father, and the Spirit act as distinct persons while being one God.

3. The Three Men Who Visited Abraham

(1) Abraham looks up and sees three men standing near him. He bows and addresses one as “Lord” (Gen. 18:1-3).

(2) Two of the men leave for Sodom and are later called angels (Gen. 19:1). The third stays and speaks as Jehovah, judging Sodom and promising Isaac.

(3) This is a Christophany, an appearance of the pre-incarnate Son. It shows distinction of persons within the one God. The Father sends, the Son appears, and the Spirit is active throughout.

(4) It is not three gods. It is one God revealing Himself in a way humans can encounter.

4. Soul, Spirit, and the Inner Witness

(1) The Bible uses “soul” and “spirit” in overlapping ways.

(2) Spirit is the God-breathed part of us that can know and commune with God (1 Thess. 5:23). It is what is “born again” (John 3:6).

(3) Soul is the life of the person: the mind, will, emotions. It is “you” as a living being (Matt. 16:26).

(4) The key verse: “The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God” (Rom. 8:16). God’s Spirit testifies to our spirit. That is the inner two-witness setup. You do not just feel it. God’s Spirit confirms it.

Conclusion

God is not hiding. He gives testimony that stands up in any court. The Father testifies of the Son. The Son points to the Father. The Spirit testifies of both and confirms it in the believer. The three men with Abraham showed that distinction and unity are not contradictions in God. And the Spirit in you bears witness that you belong to Him.

When you see this, the Godhead stops being a maths problem and becomes a relationship you can know.

Evaluation Questions & Answers

1. What Old Testament law did Jesus appeal to when defending His testimony in John 5:31-32?
 - * Deut. 19:15: "... by the mouth of two or three witnesses the matter shall be established." Under the Law, no one could be condemned on the testimony of one witness. Jesus applied this to Himself in John 5:31-37, pointing to John the Baptist, His works, the Scriptures, and the Father as witnesses. It prevents false claims and shows that God's truth is verifiable, not blind faith.
2. Name the three witnesses listed in 1 John 5:6-8.
 - * The Spirit, the water, and the blood. John says these three testify together and are in agreement about Jesus Christ. The Spirit bears witness internally, while the water and blood point to Jesus's baptism and crucifixion as historical events confirming who He is.

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3. Why does the added phrase in 1 John 5:7 not undermine the doctrine of the Trinity?
 - * It does not undermine the Trinity because the doctrine rests on the whole of Scripture: 1 John 5:6-8, John 1:1, Matt 28:19, John 8:17-18, and the way in which Father, Son, and Spirit act as distinct persons who are one God.
4. What does the account of the three men in Gen.18 reveal about God?
 - * In Gen. 18:1-3, Abraham sees three men. Two leave for Sodom and are called angels in Gen. 19:1. The third stays and speaks as Jehovah. This is understood as a Christophany, an appearance of the pre-incarnate Son. It shows distinction of persons within the one God: the Father sends, the Son appears, and the Spirit is active. It is one God, not three gods.

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5. What does Rom. 8:16 tell us about how the Spirit confirms our identity as God's children?
- * "The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God." The Holy Spirit confirms inwardly to the believer's spirit that they belong to God. It is God's inner testimony that removes doubt and gives assurance. That is the "two-witness" principle applied personally: God's Spirit agrees with your spirit.

Prayer

Father, thank You for not leaving me to guess about You. You speak, You act, and Your Spirit bears witness in my heart. Remove my confusion and let me rest in the truth that You are one God: Father, Son, and Spirit. Amen.