



[Understanding the Christ](http://www.thelambslove.org)

Episode 43 - What 1 John 5 Really Means: Water, Blood and Spirit Explained

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Videocast Website: www.scottdtgrev.podbean.com

Podcast Revelation: www.scottstanleyx.podbean.com

Website: www.theLambsLove.org

In this episode, Scott Stanley of DTG Ministries takes viewers through a close reading of 1 John 5:7–8, comparing the King James and NIV renderings and addressing why this passage is often used in Trinity debates. Scott explains why he reads these verses spiritually rather than literally and uses other Scriptures (John, Psalms, Revelation, Leviticus) to show how biblical language about "heavens," "earth," and "sea" function as symbols of levels of understanding.

Scott lays out the core symbolic interpretation: the three that bear record in the heavens—the Father, the Word (Son as the logos/concept of God), and the Holy Spirit—represent unified aspects of God's understanding; the three that bear witness in the earth—the water, the blood, and the spirit—represent, respectively, our understanding (water), the record of who we are or the soul (blood), and the spirit we manifest. He contrasts a literal reading with a spiritual, inward reading that treats Scripture as addressing conscience and mind.

The episode walks through the imagery of Christ on the cross as a portrait of humanity—crown of thorns as guilt, stripes as what others have done to us, nakedness and darkness as separation from spiritual understanding—and explains how the pierced

side that yields water and blood illustrates the pouring out of our old understanding and record so that God can give a new spirit. Scott stresses that salvation is not a one-line pronouncement but a process: dying to self, committing one's spirit to the Father, receiving the Holy Spirit, and living out faith so that works perfect that faith.

Key practical takeaways include: think spiritually rather than merely literally; seek God's understanding so the Father, Son, and Spirit are unified in your conscience; pursue the ongoing work of salvation through faith made complete in obedience (James 2); and recognize the need for teaching and community amid the current apostasy—faith comes by hearing and requires guidance, not isolation. The episode closes with a call to commit one's spirit to God and to allow the living water and new spirit to shape a life of love for God and neighbor.

Modified Transcript:

Scriptures are transcribed directly with notations. Refer to KJV for verbatim wording.

Hi, I'm Scott Stanley with DTG Ministries, continuing my videocast concerning understanding the Christ. Today, I want to get into a couple of verses found in 1 John 5:7-8, because as I listen to other ministries, people who are defending the Trinity, trying to tell us how scriptural it is, this is one of the verses that they like to use. I've heard arguments as to whether this verse should even be in the Bible. In fact, before I go any further, let me just put this on the screen. Let's read 1 John 5:7-8, King James version.

1Jn 5:7 There are three that bear record in heaven. The Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit: and these three are one.

1Jn 5:8 And there are three that bear witness in the earth, the Spirit, the water, and the blood: and these three are one.

Now let me put the NIV on the screen, verse 7, 1 John 5:7.

1Jn 5:7 (NIV) For there are three that testify.

1Jn 5:8 (NIV) The Spirit, the water, and the blood; and the three are in agreement.

Now, why the difference? Personally, I believe the way the NIV has rendered this is accurate. But I'm also glad that the way the King James rendered it is there for us to talk

about. I would like to ask a simple question concerning these verses, looking at the King James. When we read 1 John 5:7-8, are we reading that literally or spiritually, because it gives us a lesson into our understanding of the Bible? If we're reading this literally, what does it mean in verse 8, "*For there are three that bear witness in the earth, the water, the blood, and the Spirit*"? What could that possibly mean, *the water and the blood and the Spirit bear witness in the earth*?

It's obvious when you say, in the heavens, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit. But what about in the earth? Is this literal? Does anybody ever know of a time when that was explained to you? People will turn to that verse and try to tell you, "Well, the Trinity is true, because look here, the Father, the Word, and the Spirit are one," and they will say that they are one person. But they never try to explain to you, "What's the rest of that?" What's verse 8, *to bear witness in the earth, the water, the blood, and the Spirit*?

So I think if I could take some time, and delve into this and try to help you understand, God is not the author of confusion. I mean, obviously, to say that there are three that bear record in the heavens, in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit, I would have to ask the question, "What is 'the heavens'? Does he mean literally in heaven?" See, are we taking these verses literally or spiritually? Let me share a verse with you out of Revelation chapter 12, reading from verse 12.

Rev 12:12 Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and sea! For the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knows he has but a short time.

Is that literal? *Rejoice, you people who are dwelling in heaven, in the heavens*. Are we talking about people who have died and gone to heaven? What is he talking about? The "heavens," the "earth," and the "sea" are symbols of different levels of understanding. *Rejoice if you are in the heavens*. What could the "heavens" possibly mean? John 3:13, Jesus makes the statement,

Jhn 3:13 No man has ascended up into heaven, except he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man who is in the heavens.

Here Jesus is, he literally is standing on the earth, literally stating he is in the heavens. What could that mean? How about Psalms 103:19?

Psa 103:19 The LORD has prepared his throne in the heavens; and his kingdom rules over all.

His throne is in the heavens. But we see in Luke 17 that God's kingdom is within you (Luk 17:20-21). So how are we taking that? *His kingdom is within you*. How is his kingdom within me? Well, his throne is in the heavens. Well, his throne, wouldn't that be part of his kingdom? Well, guess what? I have learned that when we're talking about the throne of God, it's your conscience. That is where the decisions are made. His throne is in the heavens. The heavens represent God's understanding. *Rejoice, you people who are in the heavens, that you have God's understanding. Woe be to you if you're on the earth and sea.*

What's the earth and sea? Well, remember the parable. The sower goes forth to sow his seed. He sows it in the earth (Mat 13:1-23). Jesus, what's the seed? It's the word of God. Oh, where do words go? In the mind. What's the earth then? Self, it's the mind. The word of God is sown in your mind. The earth represents "self" in your own interpretation, the way you see things.

What about the sea? The sea is the world. Water throughout the scripture is a symbol of understanding (Isa 55:8-11). God's word is like rain coming down from heaven. And on the earth, you have the sea. Seawater, or the thoughts of the world, will kill you. You cannot live on seawater.

So what does this have to do with anything? *There are three that bear record in heaven, or in the heavens*. The "heavens" are God's understanding. 1 John 5:7 is not speaking of literally going to heaven and seeing three people up there bearing witness. There are three people that bear witness. There are three things that bear witness. We can stick with the word people... that bear witness in the heavens, in God's understanding.

What are those three? Who are those three? Well, the Father bears witness to God's understanding, the heavens. The Word, which we see in John 1:1, is the logos. It was a concept of God. This concept of God bears witness of God's understanding. The concept of God is the Son of God.

Well, what about the Holy Spirit? Jesus said himself that he's the Comforter. He is the personification of the Holy Spirit (Jhn 14:15-18). The Holy Spirit is God's understanding of humanity... the problem that they have of iniquity, as portrayed by Jesus on the cross, as he said, *the serpent on the pole, as you lifted up the serpent on the pole, so must you lift up me* (Jhn 3:14). The serpent is the author of iniquity (1Jn 3:8). Jesus was portraying on the cross the soul of humanity: Crown of thorns, stripes, nakedness... you're in darkness about God. And then he spoke what he spoke, basically giving us the sinner's prayer.

So let's come back. There are three bearing witness in the heavens. The Father, the concept of God (the Son of God), and what the Son of God portrayed on that cross, the Holy Spirit. If you want to understand God, remember John 17:3. *"For this is life eternal, that they might know you, the only true God and Jesus, whom you've sent."* Because Jesus is the Logos of God, he portrayed the understanding of the Father on that cross and is the personification of the Father's understanding.

Are there three that bear record in heaven? Yes, sir. Are they one? Yes, they're one. What does it mean they're one? It means they're in unity. It means these three are teaching the same thing. We can raise our hands and praise God for Jesus, but according to Philippians 2, we do that to the glory of the Father. And I want to put one more verse on the screen. John 17:22.

Jhn 17:22 The glory which you gave me, I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one.

For you to possess the glory of the Father is the character of the Father. The glory so that we can be one even as they are one. Well, what does that mean? That we're all one person? Does that mean that the Trinity, we're all part? No. Simply means you're in unity. There are three bearing witness in the heavens, in God's understanding... in God's understanding. Do you have God's understanding? Rejoice, you people who dwell in the heavens, in God's understanding, because you have an understanding then of the Father, of the Son of God, the concept of God, and the personification of God's understanding, the Holy Spirit, the Son of God.

Rejoice if you're in the heavens because those three things all come together and they are one. And when you possess that, you become one even as they are one. So to read that verse and say, "Look, there's a Trinity God," that's laughable. I thank God that that verse is there because we wouldn't even be having this conversation if it weren't. We have got to wake up and start thinking spiritually. Death is in the letter. Life is in the spirit (2Co 3:6).

So what does it mean that there are three that bear witness in the earth? The water, the blood, and the spirit. This, too, is spiritual. In the earth is self. There are three bearing witness to your "self." The water. First of all, water is understanding. When you come to God, before you pick up a Bible, before you start studying your Bible and reading it, the only thing you know about God is what you've been told. And from birth, you have been taught things concerning the world, God, yourself, and this is the water that's between your ears. This is the understanding that you have.

In fact, in Psalms 24, God says he founded the earth with the sea (Psa 24:2). And that's exactly what's happened to us. You're born into the world. The only thing you know about anything is what you're being taught by the people around you. Well, the people around you are the world. He founded the earth with the sea.

Now, this understanding that was given to you starting at birth, this understanding has caused you to do things. You have done things to other people. Maybe you've lied. Maybe you've cheated. Maybe you have committed things that you're sorry for having done. This 'sorry for having done' is called guilt. So this water has brought guilt to you.

What other people have done to you is another thing. You have your guilt, and you have your anger, bitterness, and resentment due to what people have done to you. Think about it. There are only two kinds of sin: what you have done to people and what people have done to you. That's really as simple as you can make it. Therefore, you have guilt, and you have resentment, anger, and bitterness. That's your water.

The record of who you are is the blood. Let's read another verse. I'm reading from Leviticus 17. First, I want to read verse 11.

Lev 17:11 For the life of the flesh (this word "life," what do you think the word "life" is? It's translated over 400 times as "soul.") The soul of the flesh is in the blood: I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your soul. (That word "soul" is the same word "life" in this verse.) For it is the blood that makes an atonement for the soul.

Lev 17:14 For it is the soul, the life of all flesh; the blood of it is for the soul, the life of it: therefore I said unto the children of Israel, You shall eat the blood of no manner of flesh: for the soul, the life of all flesh is the blood of it: whosoever eats it shall be cut off.

What are we saying? Blood is a symbol of the soul. Let me further define the soul for you. The soul is the record of who you are. I can literally take blood and put it under a microscope and see what you've been eating, see things about your life, your health, and so on. It's the record. So the blood is a type of the soul. Well, there are three that bear witness in the earth. The water, the understanding you're carrying, and the record of who you are.

Your water, again, has caused you to do things that maybe have caused other people to do things to you. And that record of your water is the blood. Am I literal or spiritual here? I'm spiritual. This is the way God would have you think, spiritually, not literally. Take that literally, "Oh, the water and the blood, that's a record in the earth." That doesn't even make sense except you're able to put that inwardly. When I say spiritually, I mean "of the mind." This is spiritual.

So let's learn something about ourselves. You're carrying water. This water has helped to create the record of who you are. It is the spirit you're manifesting that shows us your water and blood. I mean, I think of, for me, the simplest way to say it, if I see a woman and she's dressed like a harlot, let's say, well, she is carrying water and understanding and a record. There have been things done to her, things said to her. She has been hurt. She doesn't know how to release that, and she's manifested it in the way she dresses, in the way she acts, in the things that she is doing.

The water and the blood... the spirit is the truth of the water and blood. You cannot get around that. You cannot change that without Christ. Let me ask you a question. Jesus on the cross, do you understand that he is portraying us? If you can understand he is portraying humanity, if you can understand that his crown of thorns represents the guilt,

the stripes on his back represent what others have done to him, the nakedness where you're acting without the Spirit, you don't have the covering of salvation... the darkness. See, the sun is blotted out, and now there's darkness.

He is representing, he is the similitude of the soul of every person that's ever been born on this planet. It's all of us. In that state of being, as soon as the sun is darkened, he is portraying humanity, and he says, *"Father, why have you forsaken me?"* He isn't saying that as the Son of God. He is saying that as one of us. *"Why have you forsaken me?"* That is the way your crown of thorns, your stripes, and your nakedness make you feel. I'm forsaken of God. *"Why have you forsaken me?"*

Next, *"I thirst."* I still thirst. I'm thirsting for answers. I feel forsaken, but I thirst. Next, *"It's finished. I am through trying to do this myself. Father, please help me. I'm finished doing this myself."* Next, *"Into your hands I commit my spirit."* If there ever was a sinner's prayer, that's it. And since I'm on this level with you, let me say there is no such thing as praying a prayer and instantly you're saved. You pray this prayer, *"Into your hands I commit my spirit,"* and what happens?

Well, remember, he's portraying you. He dies. He literally dies so that you and I can unite with him in his death. You and I can come to the cross and realize, I, too, have a crown of thorns. I have stripes. I have nakedness. I'm in darkness about God. And you can die to self and say, *"Father, I commit my spirit to you."* You die.

After he dies, a Roman soldier comes up and pierces his side. And what do you think came out of it? Water and blood (Jhn 19:34-35). Remember, he is a picture of all of us. How do you get rid of that water that you've had all of your life? How do you get rid of that record of who you are? You come to the cross and find death to self... and the water and the blood will be poured out. It's at this point that you, now having found death, are separated from your spirit, and God will give you a new spirit.

It's called the Holy Spirit. This Holy Spirit is the information of what I've just told you. *Out of your belly will flow rivers of living water, this spake he of the Spirit, which was not yet given because he was not yet glorified* (Jhn 7:38-39). Well, now he is glorified, and I have just spoken to you living water, and you can take this to the cross. Get on your knees before the Lord and make that decision. *"Father, even though I have felt forsaken, I'm*

still thirsting for truth. I'm going to quit. It's finished... me trying to do this myself. I'm committing my spirit to you."

When you do, he will help you pour out the water and blood. He will give you a new spirit that will help you walk in love and keep his commandments. The commandments he will help you keep are to love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength, and love your neighbor as yourself.

There are three that bear record in the heavens, in God's understanding. There are three that bear witness in the earth, in your understanding: the water, the blood, and the spirit you manifest. We want a new spirit. We want the Holy Spirit. We want to worship God, and it not be a bunch of verses that we keep these verses, and therefore God has to do this for you... He's legally bound to do this for you. No.

Let me tell you something about your salvation. I told you a few minutes ago, you don't just pray a prayer, and now you're saved. Your salvation is the completion of your faith, 1 Peter 1:9. How do I complete or how do I perfect my faith? James 2:22, *Your works will perfect your faith*. So you take this truth I have given you. You believe this living water. You drink this living water. You follow the Lord's understanding.

"Father, I'm committing my spirit to you now. I'm going to do and think as you say and think." And as you live what it is you know to be true, your works will perfect your faith, and that is the salvation of your soul. In so doing, you're working out your own salvation with fear and trembling.

We have been caught up; we're in the net of an apostasy. We're in the midst of an apostasy, and we need to find our way out of it. We need the Lord to guide us and direct us into all truth. We cannot be an independent Adam. We're going to have to receive truth from another person. Remember, *faith comes by hearing, hearing by the word of God. How are they going to hear without a preacher?* (Rom 10:17, 14) This is not something you do on your own. This is something you need someone to help you with.

I pray that this video be a first step for you to find the only true God, as Jesus said, *"This is life eternal, that they might know you, the only true God, and Jesus, whom you have sent"* (Jhn 17:3). Because when you receive the Father and Son, you possess the Holy

Spirit, 1Pe too. And that is the tool God has given you to love him with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength and to love others as yourself. That's what it's all about.

It isn't a bunch of verses. It's finding the joy and peace and happiness in recognizing who you are, committing it to God, letting him pour out the water and the blood and give you a new spirit to walk with him. And that new spirit will never draw you away from his church. It will bring you closer to it.