

Life in the Son

Jonathan K. Dodson | 1 John 5:6-12 | June 5, 2022

Many books, films, and stories have been written in the quest for the meaning of life. *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, after many twists and turns, travelers come upon a supercomputer created by aliens called Deep Thought. It concludes that the meaning of the universe and everything in it is 42. It's author's way of saying, the joke's no you. There is no meaning so live however you want. But the Bible, and our passage, show us the *real* meaning of life. Let's take a look: *The Testimony, Most Consequential Act, the Meaning of Life*.

The Testimony

In about 90 AD John wrote his Gospel in what historians call "living memory," a testimony within sixty years of the actual events. Ten years later, he wrote this letter to help the church grasp the true Jesus since a group had broken off teaching a false Jesus. John marshals three key witnesses to testify that Jesus is *the Son of God*. The Son of God a title that refers to Jesus as both human and divine. The three that testify are: the Spirit, the water and the blood. While these would have been obvious to John's audience, they're enigmatic to us. Let's look: **This is he who came by water and blood—Jesus Christ; not by the water only but by the water and the blood.** How do the water and the blood testify? According to Jewish tradition, blood and water mean you're human not spirit, so some take this to refer to the blood and water spilt from Jesus' side when pierced on the cross, an emblem of his humanity (Jn 19:34–35). But this reverses the order from his Gospel: blood and water, and he singles out the **water**—not by the water only. Why? Because the splinter group that split off from the church insisted that when Jesus was baptized by water, that the eternal Christ *came down from heaven* upon the earthly Jesus. That Jesus of Nazareth was just a man temporarily possessed by the eternal Christ. Then, just before the crucifixion, the eternal Christ went back to heaven. Why say this? Well it's a very Greek idea: that the divine had no place in corrupt flesh. Why import it? Any number of reasons. One that it allowed them to view Jesus as a moral teacher, their example, but not a true savior. They needed enlightenment not redemption. Bottomline: they insisted on the divinity of Jesus to the exclusion of his humanity. You might say they were so heavenly minded they were no earthly good. Today make the same mistake. This was evident during

the pandemic when people over spiritualized Jesus by saying they didn't need an "earthly" vaccine because they were "under the blood." This error also surfaces when people go to church every once in a while to have a brush with the divine, *but don't allow Jesus to shape rest of their lives*. Pull Jesus' divinity apart from his humanity. So how does the water testify? It's shorthand for the baptism of Jesus where *the Father* says from heaven: *This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased* (Matt 3:17). Not this is Jesus of Nazareth on whom I'm placing an eternal Christ. The baptism is God's testimony of *his* Son, Jesus Christ. What of the **Spirit**? As John baptized Jesus he said: *"I saw the Spirit descend from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him...And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God* (1:32-34). Water, Spirit, **blood**? When Jesus gave up his last breath on the bloody cross, a Roman guard declared, *Surely this man was the Son of God* (Mk 15:40). The water: *baptism*; the blood: *crucifixion*; the Spirit all testify that *Jesus is the Son of God*. Nicene Creed: very God of very God...incarnate from the virgin Mary made man, fully human fully divine. Scandalous to some but absolutely necessary. Why? If Jesus was not fully human, he could not represent us in his sufferings. He would just be a spirit watching a man, not living as a man. could not sympathize with our weakness or identify with sorrows. But Jesus did. He walked great distances, grew hungry and thirsty, was fatigued by crowds, placed hands on the sick, tempted by sin, abandoned by his friends, and wept at the funeral of his best friend. A spirit doesn't do that; Allah doesn't do that; Vishnu doesn't do that; the Universe doesn't do that. *Only* the *Son* of God. What about his divinity? If Jesus wasn't divine, fully and truly God, he couldn't have overcome *all* temptation, suffered punishment of *all* humanity, conquered sin, death and evil, and he certainly couldn't have imparted *eternal* life. So you see, we need both. A God human enough to sympathize and suffer for sin, and a human divine enough to triumph over all. The water, Spirit, blood declare: Jesus *Son of God*.

Most Consequential Act

Now, if Scripture goes such a distance to establish Jesus is the Son of God, and God himself goes to such great lengths to redeem humanity, how should we respond? It's a tremendous thing that *God* should provide *us* with this testimony: the water, blood, and Spirit. Add to that the 20,000 copies of the NT dating as far back as the 1st century, which when compared to the best manuscript for a classical Greek text, which we do not question, come to 200

copies only going back to the 9th century. Which means the Bible is *one hundred times* more reliable. To put in John's terms, *If we receive [the testimony of men](#), [the testimony of God is greater](#)* (9). What is this testimony? *for this is the testimony of God that he has borne [concerning his Son](#). Not anybody's son; the eternal Son of the eternal Father, his testimony expressed through three, decisive, history-altering events and a mountain of texts.* 66 books, written by some 30 authors, across multiple continents, in three languages, with one cohesive, redemptive theme: *whoever believes in Jesus Christ has eternal life!* How should we respond? It comes down to this: *Whoever believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself. Whoever does not believe God has made him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has borne concerning his son* (10). To not believe is to say I, a limited, finite, human have a corner on truth and eternal God does not. And since God has put this claim out there—that Jesus is the Son of God, to respond in unbelief is to make him a liar. There is no middle ground. He is a liar or he is telling the truth. Which is why Kuyper says: *“To believe in him is the most consequential act we humans face.”* The most consequential, defining, ultimate act is to believe or not believe Jesus is the Christ. Refuse and you will be punished for eternity but believe and you will be receive eternal life.

Meaning of Life

Now that might sound like the old street preacher. Why should I want eternal life? To escape eternal death? Yes, but so much more. John says, *And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son*. What is eternal life? Well, according to John eternal life isn't distant life. Notice the past tense: *gave* us eternal life. In Jesus eternal life is up close. He says: *this life is in his Son*. In Jesus heaven overlaps earth, divine becomes human, eternity plunges down into the everyday. Which means those united with Christ *enter into eternity, not at the moment of death but at the moment of belief!* *In this life*. In Jesus, the life of the age to come breaks into age that is. *Eternal life is immediate*. So what's the meaning of life? Wrong question. Where's the presence of life, eternal! Jesus did all of this not so he could give us mere meaning but so he could give us *himself*—the pulsating word of life. And as a result we gain a whole new way of seeing. We realize that under every ache and every longing and every quest for meaning *is Jesus Christ*. That's why John talks about him being the *bread of life*: he's what sustains you; the *water of life*; he's what

refreshes you; the *resurrection* and the life: he's what transforms you. So when you fear being canceled for the latest headline, remember, *Jesus is your life*. Which means you're like a time traveler who has gone to a distant, just, verdant, eternal city, where you drink from the river of life, eat from the tree of life, and are immediately suffused with an *indescribable* presence and vitality. The testimony is *in you*. Scales fall from your eyes and you see, you hear, you touch the Son of God. And then you return from the future with the life we all long for. So that now when you see others in despair or anger, you can tell them of the life you've found, life from the one baptized in the flesh, crucified for redemption, and suffused with the Spirit to grant *eternal life* to all who repent. Turn afresh to the Son of God and believe him, trust him, confess to him, find your life *in him*. There is life nowhere else.