

Session 4

November 5, 2023

IS JESUS THE ONLY WAY TO GOD?

1 John 5:1-13

When I was growing up, there was a joke going around: It seems that a group of Presbyterians had died and gone to heaven. While they were being shown around, St. Peter told them to be especially quiet while they passed by one wing of the mansion. “That’s the Baptist wing,” he explained. “And they still think they are the only ones here.” The idea that Baptists think they are the only ones going to heaven has been around a while and is obviously absurd (Adrian Rogers used to say there were a lot of Baptists who *wouldn’t* be there!). But it does remind us that there is only one gospel that saves (see Gal. 1:7-9). And while the gospel is often presented from a denominational perspective, we are not saved by the *church* or *denomination* of Jesus Christ...we are saved by the *Person* of Jesus Christ (Acts 4:12).

It’s all about conversion (vv. 1-5). You are not *born* a Christian; instead, you are *re-born* a Christian. Only John records and refers to the theme of “new birth.” It was introduced by Jesus in John 3’s encounter with Nicodemus. And the theme appears five times in the epistle of 1 John. In John 3, Jesus said “You must be born again” (John 3:3,7). That’s the *edict* of the new birth. In 1 John, the apostle explains how you really know you *have been* born again. That’s the *evidence* of the new birth. Briefly, here they are: (1) In 2:29, those who are truly born again will practice righteousness; (2) In 3:9, those who are truly born of God will give up sin; (3) In 3:14, those who are truly saved will “love the brethren.” (4) Here, in 5:1, those who are truly born again will believe that Jesus is the Christ; and (5) In 5:18, those who are truly born of God will keep themselves pure. The evidence in 5:1 involves both fact and faith. In reality, a true believer accepts that (a) Jesus, and *only Jesus*, is the anointed One of God. There is no one else. It’s Jesus; (b) that Jesus is the one-and-only *Messiah*. He is not just a good man, or a good teacher. He’s God’s Son, the Savior; and (c) you must *be believing* (the verb appears in continual action). That means more than acknowledging Christ; it means *trusting in Him*. Simply put, a true believer forsakes all others and continually embraces Christ and Christ alone for salvation. For reflection: *Jesus used the metaphor of the new birth to describe accepting Him. Why did He do so? What other characteristics of a new birth does a new believer have?*

It’s all about confirmation (vv. 6-10). The key verses in this section are 7 and 8 “For there are three that testify: the Spirit, the water, and the blood—and these three are in agreement.” That all three agree is the easy part to understand (see John 8:17; 2 Cor.3:1). But what does the apostle mean by Spirit, blood, and water? That He *came* by water and blood (v. 6) must apply to His incarnation. Not just water (His purity? His deity?), but by blood (His flesh? His humanity?) I like to think the water hints of the beginning of His ministry (His baptism) and the blood hints of the end of His ministry (the cross), but that may be reading too much into the text. The important thing is that the Holy Spirit—the Spirit of truth (v. 6)—testifies of Christ’s deity *and* His humanity. And if men readily accept the testimony of other men, they should have no problem accepting the testimony of the Holy Spirit! To deny such, is to make God a liar (v. 10). For reflection: *Read 1 John 1:5-10. Notice John’s contrast of truth and lying. How does that theme carry over from the first chapter to the last?*

It's all about conviction (vv. 11-13). These verses give us two great truths. First there is an *affirmation*. What testimony does the Holy Spirit affirm? The truth of the gospel: “God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son.” That’s it. God has indeed provided a way to eternal life...and that way is Jesus. Period. (see John 14:6). Second, John gives us an *assurance*: “I have written these things...so that you may *know* that you have eternal life.” Every other religion depends on good works to make it to heaven. The result is that no other religion gives assurance of salvation. How can it? How can you ever know you have done enough? You can’t! Only Christianity teaches the truth of salvation by grace apart from works. So only Christians can have assurance of it. For reflection: *Unlike everybody else, Christ-followers don’t have a “think so” or “hope so” salvation. We have a “know so” salvation!*