

Keystone Text for Authenticity: The Image on the Shroud Is “The Father’s Testimony that He Testified Concerning His Son!”

1 John 5:4-13²

A Paper by Larry Stalley³ © 2025 for
The International Conference on the Shroud of Turin
St. Louis, Missouri, 2025

ABSTRACT

The following thesis plausibly resolves this puzzling and cryptic passage in *First John*: The Resurrection was the occasion when Christ “went through” His burial cloth, symbolized in this passage by the “water and blood” spear-stain, visible on the image of “the man of the cloth.” This aligns with the passage in John’s Gospel concerning the “blood and water” spear wound suffered by Christ on the Cross (19:34-35). The bodily Resurrection is the basis for the believer’s “faith that overcomes the world” (vv. 4-5f.) and provides “assurance of eternal life” (vv. 11, 13). The past-tense aspect of the two-fold perfect-tense verb “testified” (vv. 9-10) refers to the Resurrection event, while the ongoing aspect of that repeated perfect-tense verb—buttressed by the united and present-tense testimony of the “three witnesses” (v. 8)—refers to the abiding and divine “testimony” (vv. 9-10) provided by the *miraculous image* left behind on the burial Shroud from the Resurrection event. The only way to associate (in any literal sense) “water and blood” (v. 6a) with both (a) an abiding “witness” or “testimony of God” (vv. 9-10) and with (b) Christ’s Resurrection—the basis of the believer’s “faith” (v. 4) and assurance of “eternal life” (vv. 11, 13)—is by linking them together to the visible “blood and water” spear-stain that exists (present tense) on the burial Shroud regarding the crucified “man of the Cloth.” In fact, the only way to associate the “blood” of the Passion with the

¹ Picture 1: The facial image on the Shroud of Turin as it appears on a photographic negative with the bloodstains highlighted in red and the image flipped left to right. This photo featuring the positive facial image on the Turin shroud and derived from a negative photo, along with the blood stains having been highlighted, is courtesy of Barrie Schwartz. Origin unknown.

² For an extensive exegesis of this passage, see chapter 17 in the author’s book *Divine Testimony for the Resurrection: Hidden References to the Holy Shroud in the Bible* (Jenny Stanford: Singapore, 2025), pp. 443-522.

³ Revised September 19, 2025. The author can be contacted via his website: www.theincredibleshroud.com.

Resurrection, in any literal sense, is with the blood left behind on the burial Cloth with its visible and miraculous image. The first clause of verse 6 points to the Resurrection—evidenced by the visible “water and blood” spear wound on the Shroud’s image—while the second clause of the verse points (symbolically) to the spiritual gifts that the Incarnate Christ brought for those who choose to believe in Him: “the living water of the Holy Spirit” (cf. 1 Jn 2.27; Jn 4.10; 7.37-39), normally received on the occasion of one’s baptism (e.g., see Jn 3.3-5; Acts 2.38-39; Tit 3.5; et al.) and “the blood that released us from our sins” (Rev 1.5; cf. 1 Jn 1.7). John alluded to such theological meanings—prophesied by the prophet Zechariah (see Zech 12.10; 13:1)—when, in his Gospel, he wrote concerning the spear wound (Jn 19.34-37).

Setting and purpose behind *The First Letter of (the Apostle) John*: As a church pastor and Apostle of Christ, John writes this letter to his flock after a painful church split, defending the orthodox teaching of the Church regarding their Messiah Jesus, the Son of God. He seeks to warn and provide corrective instruction regarding a deceptive heresy that had created conflict in their midst. Apparently, some had denied the incarnation or full humanity of Jesus. In a passage found in the final chapter, he encourages his flock to persevere in their faith and hope. Due to “*the testimony that God testified concerning His Son*” (vv. 9-10), they can be assured that Christ overcame the world, even death itself. Consequently, Christ Jesus is indeed the Son of God and, as His disciples, they also can be assured of eternal life. What exactly was this “*testimony that God testified concerning His Son*” that helped to assure his readers of “eternal life” (vv. 11, 13, 20)? The exegesis of this paper reveals how this “divine testimony” is the miraculous image on the burial Shroud that bore witness to the death, burial, and Resurrection of God’s Son!

⁴This is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. ⁵*Who is the one who overcomes the world, but the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?* ⁶*This is the One who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ; not with the water only, but with the water and with the blood. It is the Spirit who testifies because the Spirit is the truth.* ⁷*For there are three that testify:* ⁸*the Spirit and the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement.* ⁹*If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater; for the testimony of God is this, that He has testified concerning His Son.* ¹⁰*The one who believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself; 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.* ¹¹*And the testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son.* ¹²*The one who has the Son has the life; the one who does not have the Son of God does not have the life.* ¹³*These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life.*⁴

⁴ 1 John 5:4b-13, *New American Standard Bible* (NASB:1995). See the author’s suggested translation for this passage in section 9, just prior to the conclusion of this paper.

1. Interpretations

Verse six “*is perhaps the most perplexing verse in all of the Johannine letters.*”⁵

*What does John mean by saying that Jesus Christ “came by water and blood ... not in water only, but in water and in blood”? The original reference was no doubt easily accessible to John’s readers, but it is less obvious to us.*⁶

Four different explanations have been suggested for this cryptic verse, particularly the opening clause (v. 6a): “*This is the one who came by water and blood—Jesus Christ.*”

1.1. The Sacraments (baptism and the Eucharist)—Ambrose, Chrysostom, Cyril of Alexandria (4th and 5th centuries) and Luther and Calvin (16th century).⁷ There are several problems with this view:

- “*Blood*” is an odd way to speak about the Eucharist. John does not explain what he meant, but apparently his followers understood his intent.
- If John intended the Eucharist to be understood here by “*blood*,”⁸ why did he alone (of all the canonical Gospels) omit the Eucharistic words of Jesus at the Last Supper: “*This is my body*” and “*This is my blood*”? “*Do this in remembrance of Me.*” This omission seems out of place if John’s interest here concerns the sacraments.
- Can these two sacraments be spoken of as one composite sacrament rather than two distinct sacraments? Why the difference in syntax between the two clauses of verse 6?
- How would the sacraments pertain to the schism that had taken place (cf. 2:19)? There is no indication the secessionists rejected the sacraments. The schism centered on Christology, not on worship.
- How do these two sacraments explain (a) “*the testimony of God that He testified*” (vv. 9-10) or (b) provide assurance regarding “*eternal life*” (vv. 5, 11, 13, 20)?
- How does not believing equate to “*calling God a liar*” (v. 10)?
- The aorist tense participle ὁ ἐλθὼν (*ho elthōn*), “*The one who came*,” suggests a definite moment in history, rather than a repeated appearance in the sacraments (cf. 4:2).⁹
- “*The one who came...*” We must ask, when, how, and why did Christ come “*by water and blood*”? “*He came (into the world) with the sacraments*”? Perhaps that is what John meant, but that understanding seems quite unlikely. It does not find support either in the literary context or in the historical context of John’s Letter.

⁵ Burge, G. (1996), “The Letters of John,” *The NIV Application Commentary* (Zondervan: Grand Rapids, MI), p. 201.

⁶ Smalley, S. (2008), *Word Biblical Commentary: 1, 2, and 3 John*, vol 51, revised (Zondervan Academic: Grand Rapids, MI), p. 264.

⁷ See Brown, Raymond (1982), *The Anchor Bible: The Epistles of John*, vol 30, (Doubleday: New York), pp. 575-576.

⁸ In this writer’s opinion, it is much too early to identify the “*blood*” in this passage with the doctrine of Transubstantiation. That doctrine was first defined by Radbertus in 831 A.D., based on John 6. See Ives, R. (1978). “Transubstantiation,” *The New International Dictionary of the Christian Church* (Zondervan: Grand Rapids, MI), p. 983.

⁹ Smalley, *1, 2, and 3 John*, op. cit., p. 264.

1.2. The Bookends of Jesus' Earthly Ministry (Jesus' baptism and His death)—Tertullian (as the two baptisms Jesus underwent, c. 200 A.D.).¹⁰ This is the most common interpretation today (Bruce, Bultmann, Johnson, Marshall, Michaelis, Rensberger, Thomas, B. Weiss).¹¹ However, in the opinion of the current author, it is incorrect and has serious shortcomings.

“And Jesus Christ was revealed as God’s Son by his baptism in water and by shedding his blood on the cross—not by water only, but by water and blood. And the Spirit, who is truth, confirms it with his testimony.” – New Living Translation (NLT)

- The very next verse (v. 7) speaks of “*three who are now bearing witness*” or “*testifying*” (μαρτυροῦντες) (*marturountes*): “*the Spirit and the water and the blood*” (v. 8). “*The water,*” therefore, cannot be referring to the occasion of Jesus’ baptism!
- Furthermore, how does this explanation account for the present testimony of “*the blood*” of the cross?
- Was Jesus’ “*earthly ministry*” really finished without mentioning either His Resurrection or the Ascension? Christ’s ministry certainly did *not* end with the Cross! The *Letter of Hebrews* emphasizes Christ’s ministry as the superior High Priest who offered the superior sacrifice of His own blood in the heavenly sanctuary (9:11-12). These bookends completely sidestep that important theology!
- How does ending with the bookend of the Cross provide hope and assurance for his readers regarding “*eternal life*” (vv. 5, 11, 13, 20)?
- How does this interpretation explain the present testimony of “*the blood*” (v. 8)? In fact,
- How does this interpretation explain verses 9-10 of the passage and its likely association with “*the Father’s witness*” in the *Fourth Gospel* (John 5:37)?
- How does it explain or relate to the ongoing witness associated with the perfect tense, “*testified,*” found twice in vv. 9-10?
- How does starting with the bookend of Jesus’ baptism—and skipping the virgin birth—affirm John’s Christology regarding the Incarnation and deity of Jesus while, at the same time, refute the heresy of his opponents?
- These bookends do *not* refute the heresy of Jesus merely being God’s adopted son since that heresy pointed to the very occasion of His baptism as the time when God adopted him. This interpretation then could be used to support that heresy.
- If the occasion of Jesus being baptized is the intent behind “*water*” then why did John simply imply in his Gospel that Jesus was baptized in water? Of all the Four Gospels, only his Gospel lacks an explicit account of Jesus’ baptism.¹² Furthermore, the account of the dove and God’s testimony at the time about Jesus is reported as John’s own testimony and not something, as in the Synoptic Gospels, where “*the heaven was opened, and the Holy spirit descended upon him in bodily form, as a dove, and a voice came from heaven, ‘Thou art my beloved Son; with thee I am well pleased.’*”¹³

¹⁰ See Tertullian, *On Baptism*, chapter 16.

¹¹ See Smalley, *1, 2, and 3 John*, op. cit., p265-266.

¹² See John 1:29-34

¹³ Luke 3:21b-22

- Is there any other place in the New Testament where the span of Jesus' ministry is summed up by pointing to the bookends of His baptism and the Cross? It is questionable that the action intended by the aorist tense participle, "*the one who came*," refers to the three-year time span of Christ's earthly ministry.
- Why the change in the syntax between the first clause of verse six and the second clause of that same verse? This interpretation offers no clear reason for the syntactic change, and most scholars do not attach any significance to the difference.¹⁴ However, the current author believes this is incorrect. His exegesis concludes that this distinction in the syntax between the two clauses is both deliberate and significant. This matter will be explained during our analysis of the two remaining interpretations and when the author discusses his own thesis as to what John intended by this puzzling and cryptic passage.

1.3. The amniotic fluid during the birthing process when the Word became flesh

New Testament scholar, Ben Witherington III, postulated in a peer-reviewed paper that "*through water*" in this verse should be equated with the amniotic fluid during the birthing process.¹⁵ His thesis has not been widely accepted and, although peer-reviewed, in the opinion of the current author, this understanding of the text has several flaws.

- "*Blood*" in this passage refers to the Passion of the Christ, not to the Incarnation. Outside this passage, the only other place where "blood" is found in the *Letter* is in 1:7, and in that verse "blood" refers to the Passion.
- Similarly, "*water*" in the Johannine literature is frequently symbolic of "the Spirit" which is mentioned three times in the subsequent two verses!¹⁶
- This thesis does not respect the syntactic construction whereby a composite entity or unit is intended by (a) two anarthrous nouns, "*water and blood*," (b) joined by the conjunction "and" (καί) (kai), and (c) governed by a single preposition (διὰ) (*dia*).^{17, 18, 19}

¹⁴ Brown, *The Epistles of John*, op. cit., p. 574.

¹⁵ Witherington III, B. (1989). "Waters of Birth." *New Testament Studies*, **35**, pp. 155-60.

¹⁶ See John 3:3-5; 4:7-15; 7:37-39; cf. Zech 12:10; 13:1; 14:8.

¹⁷ Brown, *The Epistles of John*, op. cit., p. 573, 577.

¹⁸ For example, compare John 3:3, 5. To be born "*by (out of) water and spirit*" (ἐξ ὕδατος καὶ πνεύματος) features two anarthrous nouns joined together by καὶ (*kai*) ("and") and governed by a single preposition (ἐκ) (*ek*). This grammar suggests the two nouns form a single unit or compound entity. To be "*born (out) of water and Spirit*" (together) comprise the singular new birth [See Bruner, F. (2012) *The Gospel of John, A commentary* (Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, MI), p. 176]. Similarly, in 1 John 5:6a, the phrase "*by (or, through) water and blood*" (δι' ὕδατος καὶ αἵματος) shares the same syntactic construction [See Brown, R. (1982) *The Epistles of John* (Doubleday: New York), p. 573].

¹⁹ In the *Fourth Gospel*, we are told that "*blood and water came out*" from Jesus' side while He hung on the Cross. The verb "*came out*" (ἐξῆλθεν) (*exēlthen*) is singular in person. That is, the composite subject of "*blood and water*" is spoken of as a single subject. The verb is singular, not plural. This fact both grammatically and textually supports this objection regarding the syntax. Namely, the grammatical construction of "*water and blood*" in the *Letter* should be understood as a single (composite) entity. Even though we have two substances, "*water and blood*," they are viewed as constituting a single unit. How does that perception or intent fit with the "water" of Mary's amniotic fluid and the "blood" of Christ's Passion? It does not!

- Due to this syntactic construction, what can be said about “water” should also be true and applicable about “blood.” This is a strong grammatical reason against identifying “water” in this clause with the amniotic fluid at the time of Jesus’ birth. That is, should we understand “blood” in this verse as part of the birthing process?²⁰ No, surely not! “Blood” is found three times in this short passage, and its significance concerns the Passion of the Christ (cf. 1 John 1:7; Rev 1:5) rather than His birth (cf. John 1:13).
- This thesis does not provide an adequate explanation for the striking changes in syntax between the two clauses comprising verse six. In the second clause (v. 6b), both nouns now have the definite article; in addition, each noun has its own preposition which has changed from “through” (διὰ) (*dia*) to “with” or “by means of” (ἐν) (*en*).²¹ Whereas in the opening clause “water and blood” refers to a unit, in the second clause the two nouns are now independent from each other, and each is its own entity.
- While “born of water” might have been a way to speak of a natural birth in the culture of that day, there is no indication that either Jesus or John intended such a meaning by this phrase. In John’s Gospel, Nicodemus misunderstood the word ἄνωθεν (*anōthen*) as being born “again” (3:3-5). However, this word can also mean to be born “from above,” and that is more in keeping with what Jesus intended for a person who is born “out of water and spirit” (3:5). The “and” (καί) (*kai*) conjunction connecting the two nouns can be understood as an epexegetical καί (*kai*), where the second noun explains the first: “born of water, *which is* the spirit” (cf. John 1:16). This understanding fits with the subsequent story where the Samaritan woman is offered “*living water*,” that is the Spirit.²²
- In his Gospel, John speaks of the natural or physical birth as one that is “born of blood” (John 1:13) rather than “born of water.” Due to the syntax explained above, someone who postulates that “water and blood” refers to the birthing process needs to apply both nouns to that process. However, surely “blood” in this context is about the Passion of the Christ, rather than to the Incarnation (cf. 1:7; 2:2)!
- How does this interpretation explain (1) “the three who are testifying” (v. 8), (2) the assertion regarding “the testimony of God that He testified concerning His Son” (vv. 9-10), or (3) provide assurance of “eternal life” (vv. 5, 11, 13)? It does not!

1.4. The Spear Wound Suffered on the Cross—Augustine (fifth century); Tertullian (c. 200 A.D.)²³

“One of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately there came out blood and water.” – John 19:34

At least **ten similarities** (touching points) exist textually between these two passages within the Johannine corpus (i.e., between John 19:34 and 1 John 5:5-13).

²⁰ Cf. John 1:13

²¹ See fn. 18. The syntax of the second clause now communicates a degree of individuality and uniqueness to each of the two nouns: “... *with the water and with the blood*.” Each one now has its own separate identity.

²² Cf. fn. 16.

²³ Although Tertullian promoted a form of the second interpretation we just covered (i.e., he wrote about the twin baptisms Jesus had undergone (water and blood—that is, martyrdom), he also linked the “water and blood” in John’s *First Letter* with the spear wound mentioned in the *Fourth Gospel* (*On Baptism* 9 and 16).

- John 19:34 is the only other occurrence in the Johannine corpus where “*water and blood*” are found linked together (although the order of the two nouns is reversed²⁴).
- In both passages the two nouns are anarthrous.
- In both passages the two nouns are governed by a single preposition.
- This **syntactic structure** of two anarthrous nouns joined by the conjunction “*and*” (καί) (*kai*) and governed by a single preposition suggests a composite unit or entity, rather than two separate, individual, or independent items.²⁵
- Also, both texts make use of a form of the verb ἔρχομαι (*erchomai*) (“I come”) in the aorist, past tense. In the *Gospel*, “blood and water” “*came out*” or “*flowed out*” (ἐξῆλθεν) (*exēlthen*) of Jesus’ side on the momentary occasion of the crucifixion. In the *Letter*, Jesus is “*the one who came*” or “*went*” (ὁ ἐλθὼν) (*ho elthōn*) “*by*” or, literally, “*through*” (διὰ) (*dia*) “*water and blood.*”
- Both passages place an emphasis on “*testimony*” (μαρτυρία) (*marturia*) ... that is genuine (or “*true*”) ... and assists a person in faith or “*believing.*” No less than ten times in 1st John 5.5-13 the writer makes use of words associated with μαρτυρέω (*martureō*), meaning “I witness” or “I testify.”²⁶ Similarly, we find this statement in 19.34-35 of the *Fourth Gospel*:

...but one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately there came out blood and water. And he who has seen has borne witness (μεμαρτύρηκεν) (*memarturēken*), and his witness (αὐτοῦ ἡ μαρτυρία) is true; and he knows that he is telling the truth, so that you also may believe.²⁷

- It is important to note that both passages include the significant verb, “testify,” in the perfect tense: “*he has testified*” (μεμαρτύρηκεν) (*memarturēken*).
- Both passages mention human testimony. However, in the *Letter*, the author emphasizes the importance of “*divine testimony*” over “*the testimony of men.*”

The common words and themes shared by these two passages make it highly likely that the two are associated in some way and should *not* be divorced from each other. One of the primary Rabbinic rules for interpreting the Torah is called **gezerah shavah**, meaning “equivalence” or “similar laws, similar verdicts.” This rule underscores an association between two texts sharing a common phrase or wording. It is a rule of interpretation by way of analogy. According to this hermeneutic principle,

²⁴ Two rational reasons can be postulated for this reversal in the order of the two nouns from the *Fourth Gospel*. First, it may be due to the reversal of how the verb is to be understood in the two clauses. As will be explained shortly in this paper, the first clause should be understood as Christ having ascended whereas the second clause is best understood in connection with the Incarnation when Christ descended (i.e., that is when He came into the material realm). Thus, the verse speaks of Christ going (or ascending) before it speaks of Him coming (or descending) (cf. John 3:13). A second reason for the reversed order of the two nouns in the *Epistle*, when compared with the *Gospel*, may be theological. The current order allows the writer to emphasize the importance of the “the blood” in the next clause. Were some naysayers rejecting or downplaying the role of the Cross? We know some were denying that “*Jesus Christ came in the flesh*” (1 John 4:2-3). The witness of the blood would be a powerful counterpoint to that denial.

²⁵ See fns. 16-18.

²⁶ Seven of these occurrences are found in the climatic verses of nine (4x) and ten (3x).

²⁷ John 19:34 (NASB)

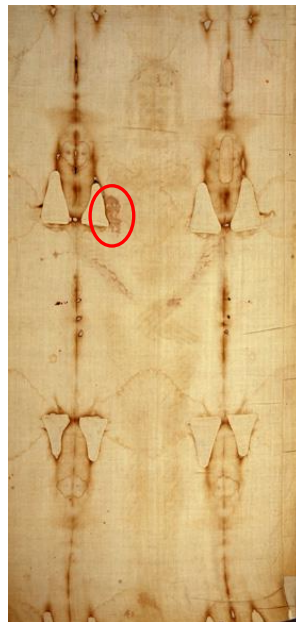
passages in which the same phrase or words occur should be interpreted with reference to each other.²⁸

*Gezerah shavah is a Talmudic method of interpretation that draws connections between two verses in the Hebrew Bible based on shared keywords or phrases. This technique allows scholars to derive new legal principles or insights by linking seemingly unrelated texts through their common language, showcasing the intricate relationship between different parts of the scripture.*²⁹

This Rabbinic hermeneutic rule, *gezerah shavah*, is an especially strong reason for associating “water and blood” in verse six with the spear wound in the Gospel.

2. Thesis

The textual similarities strongly suggest that the statement in the Gospel (19:34) has bearing on the statement we find in the Epistle (5:6). But how could the two be connected? That is the important question we must ask! **In John’s mind, what exactly linked these two passages together with their testimony concerning “blood and water”?** The thesis of the current author is that the Holy Shroud—with its prominent and visible blood-water stain from a likely spear wound on the side of the crucified man of the cloth—provides us with the bridge linking these two texts together.



Picture 2: The mysterious, frontal image on the Shroud of Turin as seen by the naked eye. A bloodstain circled in red reveals a wound on the victim’s side. Likely it was caused by a spear.
Photo courtesy © 1978 Barrie M. Schwartz Collection, STERA, Inc.

²⁸ Esthalom, Y. “Talmud Torah 4:8,” *torah.org*, <https://torah.org/learning/rambam-talmudtorah-tt4-8/>.
Bauckham, R. (1989) *God Crucified: Monotheism and Christology in the New Testament* (Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, MI), p. 50.

²⁹ Key Terms > Introduction to Judaism > *Gezerah shavah*, online from *Fiveable Inc.*, <https://library.fiveable.me/key-terms/introduction-to-judaism/gezerah-shavah>.

The crucified “man of the cloth” depicted by the renowned Shroud of Turin shows a person who suffered the same wounds Christ is reported to have suffered, as told by the canonical Gospels: (1) numerous scourge marks from a severe, Roman flogging; (2) hands and (3) feet pierced by nails; (4) abrasions on the scalp, as if by a crown of thorns; and (5) an ecliptic wound in the side by a Roman lance (as seen within the red circle in the picture above).³⁰ While numbers (1), (2), and (3) may have been common with many crucifixions at the time, number (5) likely was not ... and, with regards to number (4), no one other than Jesus in recorded history is known to have been crowned with thorns and mocked as a king when being crucified! Furthermore, the reader should take note that the emperor Constantine outlawed crucifixion in the early fourth century.³¹

Due to the emphasis the Gospel writer placed on this wound in the side of Christ while on the Cross, it is apparent that he regarded the testimony³² of this “*blood and water*” as being incredibly significant. Why is that? The simple and likely best answer is because both he and his community were aware of the existence of the Holy Shroud with its miraculous image that visibly depicted the spear stain on the right side of the “the man of the Cloth.” If that conclusion is accurate, then we should be compelled to consider a similar solution for this puzzling “*water and blood*” statement found in his *Letter*.

Furthermore, it is important to remember that it was the very funeral linens discovered (unwrapped, yet without a body) in the empty tomb that directly caused this Biblical writer to come to faith (in the Resurrection): “*He saw and believed!*”³³ The Holy Shroud, therefore, must have been priceless in the eyes of this Biblical author.

About 180 A.D. Irenaeus, claiming to have knowledge back to the apostolic generation through Polycarp, informed his readers that John wrote his Gospel to refute the errors of a docetic heretic named Cerinthus.³⁴ He was a false teacher who had distinguished a difference between the Christ, a heavenly deity, and the earthly man from Nazareth. Christ had descended upon the man Jesus at his baptism and had departed before the crucifixion. Hellenistic philosophy tended to look at the

³⁰ See picture # 5 at the end of this paper for these wounds on the image. Compare these wounds with those that the resurrected Jesus invited doubting Thomas to inspect in order that he might believe (John 20:26-29). Is it just a coincidence that these are the same visible wounds one can still see on “the crucified man of the cloth,” the Shroud of Turin, an image that the scientific team of STuRP concluded was “*not the work of an artist*”? This was the primary conclusion reached by the team of 33 scientists who were invited to study the Cloth up close in 1978. See “A Summary of STuRP’s Conclusions,” <https://www.shroud.com/78conclu.htm>.

³¹ Ian Wilson, (1998), *The Blood and the Shroud* (The Free Press: New York), p. 207; Mary Fairchild, (July 11, 2019), “A Brief History of Crucifixion in the Ancient World,” *Learn Religions*, <https://www.learnreligions.com/what-is-roman-crucifixion-700718>.

³² The current author believes this “testimony” or “witness” of the miraculous *image* of Christ on the linen burial Shroud—symbolized by the visible water-blood spear-stain on the Shroud (an image bearing witness to the crucifixion and, at the same time, having a direct correlation with the Resurrection)—is what John intends by verse 6a (“*He passed through water and blood*”). That is, Christ “went through the (water/blood spear-stained) Shroud” at the time of His Resurrection. The image is also the best solution to John’s cryptic statement in this passage regarding the greater, divine testimony: “***the testimony of God that He testified regarding His Son.***” This is a significant and climatic statement found twice in the passage (vv. 9-10) and occurring at the center of its chiasmic structure.

³³ John 20:8. See Stalley, *Divine Testimony*, op. cit., pp. 398-404, 606-610.

³⁴ Irenaeus’s *Against Heresies*, 3.3.4 and 3.11.1.

material world as essentially evil. Therefore, the heavenly Christ may have looked human, but He never could have been a real man. In this Letter, John provides a confessional test for orthodoxy:

Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come³⁵ in the flesh is from God; and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; and this is the spirit of the antichrist ...³⁶

The miraculous image of the scourged and crucified man on the Shroud—with its prominent blood-water stain on the victim’s side—would have provided John with powerful and visual testimony for the humanity of Jesus. In Greek mythology the gods did not bleed with human blood but with an immortal, ethereal fluid called ichor (ἰχώρ) (*ichōr*). Ichor was said to be toxic to humans, killing them instantly if they came in contact with it. The “blood” spear-stain apparent on the burial Shroud of Jesus, the Son of God, witnessed both to Christ’s humanity and to His atoning death.

Not only did Christ come in the flesh,³⁷ He died a bloody death. But then He arose from the grave! **God the Father provided “testimony” and historical, visual evidence for the truth of the Resurrection and the Gospel³⁸ by leaving a miraculous *image* on His Son’s burial cloth. Jesus is the Son of God!**

Furthermore, in contrast to the other interpretations we discussed for verse 6a, this understanding for John’s assertion addresses the repeated theme of “**eternal life**” found in the passage (vv. 5, 11, 13, 20). The miraculous image on the Shroud, formed in association with the Resurrection of Christ, provides hope and assurance for the believer that he or she too will one day experience resurrection.

Not only is the miraculous **image** on the Shroud (a) a powerful witness that Jesus came “*in the flesh*” (i.e., His humanity), it also is (b) a powerful witness as “*the Father’s testimony*” (vv. 9-10)³⁹ (regarding His Son’s divinity) for life after death. The image, thereby, addresses *two* heresies in the early Church: The Greek view that Jesus was not fully human and the Jewish assertion that the Christ was not fully God.

Such “testimony” should not be quickly dismissed or brushed aside by the reader. The Holy Shroud, with its miraculous image of the crucified Christ, is **the one interpretation** of the passage that provides us with a literal understanding for “*God’s greater testimony*” (v. 9). The textual evidence from both the Gospel and the Epistle is best bridged by means of the Holy Shroud with its “*water and blood*” spear stain. Therefore, it should be regarded as the preferred and primary interpretation.

³⁵ The manuscripts make use of a perfect tense here for the verb (as either a participle or an infinitive). Why the perfect tense? What is the intent? Does it imply that Christ was pre-existent and came into history “from the Father”? Does it imply that His Resurrection was a bodily resurrection? Or to be more precise, is the ongoing aspect of the perfect tense linked to the abiding image of the physical “man of the Cloth” pictured on the burial Shroud?

³⁶ 1 John 4:2-3; cf. 2:22-23; 2 John 7.

³⁷ John 1:14; 3:13; 1 John 4:2, 9.

³⁸ “Gospel” is not a term John uses. However, the theology of “*the Gospel of God*” (see Rom 1:1-4ff.) is found in statements he makes (see John 3:12-21; 1 John 1:6-2:2; Rev 1:5-9; et al.).

³⁹ Cf. John 5:37

3. We Can Believe!

Questions are raised when a person first looks upon the “crucified man of the Cloth.” Who was this man? Why did he suffer such excruciating torture, first a severe scourging, followed by crucifixion? What crime had he committed? Was he guilty or innocent? If innocent, will his executioners ever be held accountable? If executed unjustly, will God Almighty ever come to this man’s defense and see that justice is rendered?

This canonical author, the Apostle John, wrote in his *Gospel* how the Jesus of the New Testament had compared Himself, typologically, with the serpent that Moses had lifted up in the wilderness. On one occasion during their wilderness journey, the Israelites began to complain about their circumstances and “spoke against God and Moses.”⁴⁰ As a result, the Lord sent poisonous snakes among the people and many people died. However, the people expressed repentance, and the Lord instructed Moses to fashion a serpent out of bronze and to lift it up on a standard so that, “if a serpent bit any man, when he looked to the bronze serpent, he would live.”⁴¹ Based upon that earlier historical event, we find these words by Jesus in the *Gospel of John*:

... the Son of Man has come down from heaven. ¹⁴ And as Moses lifted up the bronze snake on a pole in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, ¹⁵ so that everyone who believes in him will have eternal life. ¹⁶ “For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ God sent his Son into the world not to judge the world, but to save the world through him. ⁴²

For more than a century, Biblical scholars have debated what can be known about “the historical Jesus.” *The Christ Myth*, first published in 1909 by Arthur Drews, a German scholar, denied that the Jesus of the *Four Gospels* ever lived. The accomplished Lutheran minister, Albert Schweitzer wrote:

The Jesus of Nazareth who came forward as the Messiah, who preached the ethic of the Kingdom of God, who founded the Kingdom of Heaven upon earth, and died to give His work its final consecration, never had any existence. He is a figure designed by rationalism, endowed with life by liberalism, and clothed by modern theology in an historical garb.⁴³

However, today “virtually every competent scholar of antiquity, Christian or non-Christian, agrees” that Jesus certainly did exist.⁴⁴ Yet, *The Jesus Seminar* in the 1980s and 1990s concluded we can be certain about very little concerning his life and teachings.⁴⁵ And agnostic professor, Bart Ehrman, has complained that we have too few, early historical references regarding Jesus, especially among Greek and Roman authors.⁴⁶ Furthermore, he asserts: “There is no physical archaeological evidence for Jesus, and there are no writings by Jesus.”⁴⁷

⁴⁰ Num 21:5

⁴¹ Num 21:9

⁴² John 3:13b-16, *New Living Translation* (NLT)

⁴³ Schweitzer, A. (1948), trans. Joy, C., *The Psychiatric Study of Jesus* (The Beason Press: Boston, MA), p. 396.

⁴⁴ Ehrman, B. (2011), *Forged : writing in the name of God* (Harper: New York, NY), p. 285

⁴⁵ See “Jesus Seminar,” *Academia.edu*, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jesus_Seminar.

⁴⁶ Ehrman, *Forged*, op. cit., p. 43-45.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

So, considering those denigrating statements about the lack of evidence available in support of faith in Christ Jesus, a person might certainly want an answer to the following question:

How do we know that “*God so loved the world that He gave his one and only Son,*” as an atoning sacrifice,⁴⁸ to rescue humanity from judgment and—in place of judgment and punishment—graciously extend “eternal life” to those who choose to believe in Him?

What evidence do we have for the Faith? After all, in our passage, the Biblical author asserts upfront: “... *this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith*” (v. 4b). Then he concludes the passage by saying, “*These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, in order that you may know that you have eternal life*” (v. 13).

To begin to answer that important question, we can bring forward the testimony of Christ’s closest disciples—those who had walked with Him personally. Those disciples became His Apostles, and they believed so deeply Jesus had appeared to them alive (after his corpse had spent three days in the tomb) that they were willing to suffer martyrdom than deny that belief. We also know how the great persecutor of the early Christians, Saul of Tarsus, underwent a most remarkable conversion and transformation. He became a very influential leader within the movement itself, namely the great Apostle Paul. And he attributed his conversion to the resurrected Christ having appeared to him and having commissioned him. Paul chose to be beheaded rather than deny that belief! Furthermore, the first century Jewish historian, Josephus, made mention of Jesus as a historical person who was a “teacher,” a “wise man” who performed “wonderful works” and was [the] “Christ” whom Pilate crucified.⁴⁹

However, all that evidence—as powerful as it is—is “human testimony.” And, in our passage, the Apostle John spoke of a greater witness: “*If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater*” (v. 9).⁵⁰

So, here is John’s answer to our question: It is divine testimony—the very “*testimony of God that He testified concerning His Son*” (vv. 9-10)—that provides believers with strong evidence to reassure them regarding the truthfulness of the Faith. Believers can maintain their faith in Jesus (as the incarnate and resurrected Son of God), despite the hardship and trials the world will throw at them, because God Almighty provided a compelling piece of physical and visible evidence for faith. God’s “witness” still exists today as a priceless piece of archaeological evidence, despite Bart Ehrman’s claim to the contrary. Today we have the Father’s own “witness” to the fact that His crucified Son was bodily raised from the dead. The miraculous *image* left behind on His Son’s burial Shroud testifies to that truth!

The following is a suggested outline for our passage where the canonical writer seeks to reassure his faith community that they have strong reasons to be assured about their faith in Christ.

⁴⁸ See 1 John 2:2

⁴⁹ Josephus, *Antiquity of the Jews*, 18.3.3.

⁵⁰ The “human testimony” that John writes about might specifically be concerning the testimony of the soldier or himself at the foot of the cross (John 19:34-35). However, (1) the general principle of his assertion is certainly true; (2) “men” is a plural noun, not singular; and (3) John does speak of the apostles’ human testimony in the first five verses of this *Letter*.

A Thematic Outline (1 Jn 5:4-13)

We Can Believe!

A – Overcoming the world (vv. 4-6)

- (1) Our Faith (v. 4)
- (2) Believers (v. 5)
- (3) Christ (v. 6) — His victory (v. 6a) & Gifts (v. 6b)

B – Evidence for faith (vv. 7-9)

- (1) The Witness of the Spirit (v. 7)
- (2) The Three Witnesses (the Spirit, the water, and the blood) (v. 8)
- (3) The Father's Witness (v. 9)

B' – Acceptance of the evidence (v. 10)

- (1) The believer & the Spirit's witness (v. 10a)
- (2) The non-believer (v. 10b)
- (3) The Father's Witness (v. 10c)

A' – Eternal Life (vv. 11-13)

- (1) The effect or result of God's Witness: eternal life (v. 11)
- (2) Possessing the Son determines whether a person has or does not have eternal life (v. 12)
- (3) Believers have the assurance of eternal life (v. 13)

4. Exegesis:

Again, verse six “*is perhaps the most perplexing verse in all of the Johannine letters.*”⁵¹ If verse 6a is applicable to the burial Shroud of Christ, does the rest of the passage support that understanding? If it does, how exactly?

4.1. A Literal Understanding for Verse 6a: “*This is the One who passed through water and blood, Jesus Christ!*”

4.1.1. Alternative Translation

Usually, the opening clause of verse six is rendered: “*This is the one who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ.*” However, there are a couple of reasons why this rendering might not be what the author intended. First, the **Greek preposition** “*by*” (διὰ) (*dia*) normally means “*through*” with regards to a place or location. A literal translation would be: “*This is the one who came/went through water and blood, Jesus Christ.*”

Second, the **Greek verb** “*came*” is an aorist, past-tense participle of ἔρχομαι (*erchomai*). This verb normally means “*I come.*” The *Aktionsart* of the aorist participle suggests a momentary occasion in the past. On what **occasion** did Jesus come “*through water and blood*”? Was it at His birth? His baptism? His death? The Resurrection? The Ascension? Or was it throughout the three years spanning His earthly ministry, from the time of His baptism to His crucifixion? That last option is certainly not momentary. We do know from the *Fourth Gospel* that “*blood and water came out*” (ἐξῆλθεν)⁵² (*exēlthen*) from Christ’s side on the punctiliar occasion of His crucifixion when a lance pierced His side (19:34). Significantly, that verb in John’s account in his *Gospel*—regarding the spear wound (i.e., “*came out*”)—is also an aorist form of the very same verb found in our puzzlingly verse in John’s *First Letter* (5:6a), only in the *Gospel* the prefix “*out*” (ἐκ) was added to the verb.

English versions of the New Testament have chosen, perhaps without exception, to render this verb in 1 John 5:6a with the understanding of “*coming.*” However, this verb can also mean “*to go.*”⁵³ It simply depends on one’s perspective. Is the person coming or going? For example, in the story of the Prodigal Son we are told: “*He arose and came* (ἦλθεν) (*ēlthen*) *to his father.*” Normally we would say, “*He went to his father.*” So, in verse six, is the Biblical writer speaking of Jesus as “*coming*” or “*going*”? Might he even be teasing the reader with both meanings?⁵⁴

“This is the One who went through water and blood, Jesus Christ; (He came) not with the water only, but with the water and with the blood.”

⁵¹ Burge, *Commentary*, op. cit., p. 201.

⁵² This is a 2nd aorist indicative form of the verb ἐξέρχομαι (*exerchomai*).

⁵³ Cf. Mark 11:13; Luke 15:20; and John 20:3; 21:3. See Bauer, W. (1957), *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, trans. Arndt, W., and Gingrich, F. (University of Chicago Press: Chicago, IL), p. 311.

⁵⁴ The reader might compare how Jesus told Nicodemus, “*Unless a person is born again* (ἄνωθεν) (*anōthen*), *he cannot see the kingdom of God*” (John 3:3)! Nicodemus understood “*again*” to be a second birth from the womb, but ἄνωθεν (*anōthen*) can also mean “*from above.*” This Biblical writer was fond of using words having double meanings. See fn. 94.

Should we understand and render the first clause of verse six (v. 6a) literally as “He went through water and blood”? That is, His body became materially transparent and *went through* the water-blood spear-stained linen Shroud at the time of His Resurrection within the tomb?

Accordingly, **the Resurrection** of the crucified Christ—evidenced by the absence of the corpse within the still wrapped Shroud⁵⁵ (when this very disciple, along with Peter, entered the tomb on Sunday morning)—**was given on-going “divine testimony” by the miraculous image left behind on the linen burial Cloth.** In the ultimate sense, the Resurrection demonstrated Jesus’ victory over the world and the evil one. His victory over death empowers the faith of His followers to believe He is the Son of God, and He will give them victory over death as well. Immediately prior to verse 6a we find this declaration:

⁴For every child of God defeats this evil world, and we achieve this victory through our faith. ⁵And who can win this battle against the world? Only those who believe that Jesus is the Son of God.⁵⁶

And then the passage concludes with this assertion:

¹³I have written this to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know you have eternal life.⁵⁷

4.1.2. Two Other Canonical Passages Support this Alternative, Literal Translation

(1) John 20

In his Resurrection narrative, this same Biblical author relates that when he had stooped down and looked into the tomb, “*he saw the linen wrappings lying there.*” (v. 5). Then, a short time later, once he had entered the tomb after Peter, he tells us that “*He saw and believed*” (v.8).

The verb “lying” (κεῖμαι) (*keimai*) is found four times in that passage, three times as a present tense participle. And before something can be described as “lying,” it first must be laid down or put into place. In the previous chapter of his Gospel, the author wrote how the body of Jesus was prepared for burial, stating that it “*was bound in linen wrappings*” (19:40). Then, in the next verse, he added this interesting comment: “*Now in the place where He was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new tomb, in which **no one had yet been laid***” (19:41). The verb is a perfect-tense participle of τίθημι (*tithēmi*), “*I place or lay.*”

⁵⁵ The Biblical author likely intended the reader to understand this scenario in his Resurrection narrative of his Gospel (John 20). See Stalley, L. (2024), “‘He Saw the Linen Wrappings Lying There...’ What is the meaning of ‘lying?’”, *Academia.edu*, https://www.academia.edu/124785677/He_Saw_the_Linen_Wrappings_Lying_There_What_is_the_meaning_of_lying_.

⁵⁶ 1 John 5:4-5 (NLT)

⁵⁷ 1 John 5:13 (NLT)

Textual evidence elsewhere suggests that the perfect-tense participle of this other verb coincides with a present-tense participle of “lying” (κεῖμαι) (*keimai*).⁵⁸ **Once something has been “set” in place or “laid,” then afterwards it might be spoken of as “lying.”**⁵⁹ Once the body of Jesus had been bound in linen wrappings and placed (or laid) within the tomb, those linens could then be referred to as “lying.” Later in the narrative we are told that, when Mary looked into the tomb, “*where the body of Jesus **had been lying***” (20:12), she saw two angels. Although we have repeatedly been told that the linens were still “lying,” we are now told that the body was no longer present or “lying” there. The verb is in the imperfect tense of κεῖμαι (*keimai*).

Then the narrative proceeds with the body of Jesus suddenly appearing to Mary and then miraculously appearing to His disciples behind “locked doors”. Jesus now demonstrated the ability to pass through material barriers! The narrative intends for us to understand that is also what had transpired regarding the linens. They were lying within the tomb on Resurrection morning, as if the corpse was still wrapped within the linen sheet, however, now the body was absent. The two verbs of verse eight both lack a direct object. The author is teasing his informed readers about the image on the Shroud. The image was on the inside of the Cloth, so that is not what he saw. Instead, he saw the linens “lying” like they had been placed on Friday evening but now missing the body! “*He saw and believed!*”

(2) ***Letter to the Hebrews***

Another canonical author provides additional evidence how the early Church understood that, at the time of the Resurrection, the body of Christ has “passed through” the burial Shroud. This will be explained in the following two subsections.

4.1.3. Christ’s High-Priestly Ministry

The canonical author who wrote the *Letter to the Hebrews* left evidence of a similar theology to John’s regarding the Shroud. This other author wrote how Christ, when He appeared as a high priest, “*passed through the greater and more perfect tabernacle ... and through (διὰ) (dia) His own blood.*”⁶⁰ Shortly thereafter he further explained how “*Christ inaugurated for us a new and living way*” (i.e., to enter the heavenly Sanctuary into the presence of God) “*through the curtain, that is by means of His flesh.*”⁶¹

⁵⁸ See 1 Cor 3:11

⁵⁹ In English, there is a subtle difference between “laying” and “lying.” In the author’s English “College Dictionary,” there is this statement: “*LIE, LAY, often confused, are not synonyms. LIE, meaning to recline or rest, does not require an object. Its principal parts, too, are irregular, and are therefore distinctive. LAY with its forms “laid,” “have laid,” “laying,” etc., means to put or place. If “put” or “place” can be substituted in a contemplated sentence, the verb to use is LAY. Moreover, since one must always “put” or “place” something, the verb LAY is used only when there is a grammatical object to complete the sense.*” Urdang, L, Editor in Chief (1884) *The Random House College Dictionary*, revised edition (Random House, Inc.: New York, NY), p. 773.

⁶⁰ Heb 9:11-12

⁶¹ See Heb 10:19-20; cf. 6:19-20.

What was the identity of this “*greater tabernacle*” and its “*curtain*” through which Christ—in His ministry as a high priest—passed “*through*”? Rev. James Swetnam was a Jesuit priest who taught at the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome for fifty years. For a time, he served as dean of the Institute and given the honorary title, professor emeritus. Swetnam earned a PhD from Oxford University centered on the *Letter to the Hebrews*. Hebrews was his specialty. He once wrote of the following about this “greater tent” mentioned by the Biblical writer in chapter nine, verse eleven:

*The identity of the tent has been a constant puzzle to exegetes past and present. It is a tent well known to the addressees of the epistle.*⁶²

Note the skillful chiasmic structure of these important two verses and how “tent” is in parallel with “His own blood”:

A — BUT WHEN CHRIST APPEARED AS THE HIGH PRIEST ...
 B — THROUGH/BY MEANS OF THE GREATER ... **TENT**
 C — (NOT MADE BY HUMAN HANDS, THAT IS NOT OF THIS CREATION...)
 C' — NOT THROUGH/BY MEANS OF THE BLOOD OF GOATS ...
 B' — BUT ... THROUGH/BY MEANS OF **HIS OWN BLOOD**,
 A' — HE ENTERED THE (HEAVENLY) SANCTUARY...⁶³

The current author has explained elsewhere how this “*greater and more perfect tabernacle (or tent)*,” along with its “*curtain*,” were typological understandings for the Holy Shroud.⁶⁴ In the early Church, Hellenistic Jewish Christians associated the linen Shroud, typologically, with the greater Messianic Tabernacle of Christ’s high-priestly ministry. The linen Shroud was associated, typologically, with both the Holy Place and with the sacred curtain of that greater, sacred Tent of their Messiah.

The Apostle John appears to have shared this same typological understanding concerning the Shroud, as he associated the tomb itself with being an earthly type of the second compartment, the Most Holy Place. When “*Mary stooped and looked into the tomb, she saw two angels in white sitting, one at the head, and one at the feet, where the body of Jesus had been lying.*”⁶⁵ Is John not cryptically linking these two angels with the two golden, winged, celestial cherubim which were placed at both ends of the mercy seat of the Ark of the Covenant?

⁶² Swetnam, J. (1966). “The Greater and More Perfect Tent’: A Contribution to the Discussion of Heb. 9:11,” *Biblica*, 47, pp. 91-106. Swetnam thought this tent “refers to Christ’s risen body.” [Swetnam, J. (2016), *Hebrews an Interpretation* (Pontifical Biblical Institute Gregorian & Biblical Press: Roma), p. 197.] However, if that is the case, how did “*His flesh*” pass through “*the curtain*” (10:20) of His risen body? And how did His risen body pass “*through His blood*” (9:12)?

⁶³ Heb 9:11-12. See fn. 77.

⁶⁴ See the textual references in the previous two footnotes and Stalley, L. (2024), “The Holy Shroud as the Holy Place of the Messianic Tabernacle - Hebrews 9:11-12,” Academia.edu, https://www.academia.edu/121656118/The_Holy_Shroud_as_the_Holy_Place_of_the_Messianic_Tabernacle_Hebrews_9_11_12_2024_.

⁶⁵ John 20:12

*You shall make two cherubim of gold ... at the two ends of the mercy seat, ... one cherub at one end and one cherub at the other end.*⁶⁶

4.1.4. “The Curtain” and Hellenistic Judaism

Philo was the leader of Hellenistic Judaism in Alexandria, Egypt in the first century. He was an influential Jewish philosopher during the period of early Christianity. **Hellenistic Judaism of the second temple period viewed *the curtain* of the temple as the boundary between earth and heaven, the dividing wall separating the heavenly realm from the material world.**⁶⁷ Thus, those who entered the Most Holy Place (also known as the Holy of Holies) were entering heaven.⁶⁸ The Logos was the heavenly High Priest. When the Logos passed through the curtain—passing from heaven to earth (at the time of the Incarnation)—He clothed Himself with it, thereby taking on material form and becoming the manifested God to the world.⁶⁹

*And the Word (Logos) became flesh and tabernacled among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father.*⁷⁰

The imagery of the curtain within the tabernacle provided the first Christians with rich symbolism for conveying what they meant by the Incarnation of Christ.⁷¹ Both Josephus and Philo associated the four different colors of the inner curtain with the four elements God used in creating the material world: earth, air, fire, and water. The white linen represented the earth in which the flax had grown, the blue was the air, the scarlet thread represented fire, and the purple was the sea, that is, water.⁷²

Similarly, when the “*flesh*” of Christ “*passed through the curtain*”⁷³—that is, when He went through the water-blood-spear-stained burial Shroud at the moment of His Resurrection—He left the material world behind and entered back into the heavenly realm.⁷⁴ Passing through “the curtain” (symbolized by the linen Shroud) was passing into heaven. This is likely what John is cryptically asserting in the first clause of verse 6 of our passage (v. 6a). It is also the typological teaching that the canonical author of *Hebrews* cryptically wrote about in his canonical *Letter*. That other Biblical author associated the linen burial Shroud—typologically and cryptically—with “the curtain” of “the greater (Messianic) tabernacle.”⁷⁵

⁶⁶ Ex 25:18-19; cf. Heb 9:5

⁶⁷ Philo, *Questions on Exodus*, II.91, 94-95. See Barker, M. (2004), *Temple Theology: An Introduction* (SPCK: London), pp. 27-32; and Barker, M. (2008), “The Veil” in *The Gate of Heaven: The History and Symbolism of the Temple in Jerusalem* (SPCK: London), pp. 104-132.

⁶⁸ Cf. Heb 9:24

⁶⁹ Philo, *On Flight*, 110. See Barker, M. (1992) *The Great Angel: A Study of Israel’s Second God* (Westminster John Knox Press: Louisville, Kentucky), p. 98, 123.

⁷⁰ John 1:14

⁷¹ See Barker, “The Veil,” op. cit.

⁷² Josephus, *The Wars of the Jews*, V.V.4; Philo, *On Flight*, 110 and *On Dreams* I.216.

⁷³ Heb 10:20

⁷⁴ See Heb 9:11-12; 10:19-20; and 6:19-20; cf. John 3:13

⁷⁵ Ibid.

A typological motif⁷⁶ in the form of a grand **chiasmus**⁷⁷ extends through the central portion of the literary sermon of *Hebrews* (spanning five chapters, i.e., six through ten) which focuses on the Tabernacle, the priesthood, and the sacrificial offering Jesus made for the sins of humanity. The chiasmus takes the inverted form of AB/B'A' with a emphasis on “*the curtain*” and “*the greater* (Messianic) *tabernacle*”:

A – “... *a hope ... which enters within **the curtain**, where Jesus has entered ...*”⁷⁸

B – “... ***the true tabernacle** which the Lord pitched, not man.*”⁷⁹

B' – “Christ ... (passed) through (or, with) ***the greater and more perfect tabernacle** ... and ... through (or, with) His own blood, He entered the Holy of Holies.*”⁸⁰

A' – “... *we have confidence to enter the Sanctuary by the blood of Jesus—by the new and living way, which was opened for us through **the curtain**, that is, by means of His flesh.*”⁸¹

4.1.5. Scientists have Postulated a Hypothesis for Image Formation that Aligns With this Alternative Translation for 1st John 5:6a

Contemporary science has no bearing on how John’s statement in the canonical text should be translated. Even so, there exists a very interesting hypothesis regarding the formation of the image that the reader will likely find very interesting. Concluding that the body of Jesus became materially transparent at the time of His Resurrection and, at the same time, “passed through” the burial Shroud, leaving behind a 3-D image, was a hypothesis postulated more than thirty years ago.

Physicist John Jackson has been at the forefront of scientific investigation on the Shroud of Turin for over forty-five years. He led the Shroud of Turin Research Project (STuRP) in Turin back in 1978. In 1991 Jackson published his “unconventional hypothesis.” He suggested that an immense, but extremely brief burst of radiated energy came forth from the body as the body itself became mechanically transparent and passed through the cloth! Jackson believes this process produced the 3D negative image on the Cloth:

⁷⁶ Note the writer’s explicit mentioning in the larger context of “*a type (or copy) and shadow of the heavenly things*” (8:5). Furthermore, he contrasts the “earthly Sanctuary” (9:1) and its “priests” (8:4) with the high-priesthood of Christ Jesus (8:1-2; 9:11) and the heavenly “Sanctuary” (8:2a; 9:12, 24). Typology is certainly being discussed but not fully explained. In verse five, he essentially states: “*All this is full of meaning but we cannot enter now into a detailed explanation*” (J.B. Phillips New Testament).

⁷⁷ A chiasmus is an inverted literary pattern (e.g., ABCD/D'C'B'A') common in Hebrew. Two paths share parallel features regarding words or concepts that correspond to each other in a reversing order. The pattern can be helpful in clarifying the author’s intent, meaning, or emphasis. The apex at the center of the pattern is often the focal point.

⁷⁸ Heb 6:19b-20a

⁷⁹ Heb 8.2

⁸⁰ Heb 9.11-12; cf. v. 24

⁸¹ Heb 10.19-20

... we must assume the body became mechanically 'transparent' to its physical surroundings....
The hypothesis of a collapsing cloth into a radiating body appears to explain all known characteristics of the Shroud image...⁸²

4.1.6. Summary: A Literal Understanding for Verse 6a

The current author suggests this explanation for the Shroud and its association with the Resurrection supports a literal understanding for the first clause of verse 6: *"This is the One who passed through water and blood, Jesus Christ."* That is, Christ's physical body passed through the water-blood-spear-stained-Shroud at the time of His Resurrection. This alternate translation and literal interpretation of John's assertion in this first clause of verse 6 answers the important question: *When did Christ "pass through water and blood"?* Was it during the Incarnation? At His baptism? On the Cross? During the Ascension? Or was it repeatedly, each time during the sacrament of the Eucharist? The correct answer is linked to the Resurrection!

Concerning this matter, we fortunately have affirming and relevant comments both in the canonical *Letter to the Hebrews* and in the writings of Philo (as explained above). They reveal for us a first-century, Hellenistic-Jewish understanding of the inner "curtain" of the Tabernacle. Again, **Philo** associated the inner "curtain" of the tabernacle as the boundary between earth and heaven. Those who went through the curtain left the material world behind and entered the presence of the divine.

Hebrews typologically associated the linen burial Shroud of Christ with *"the curtain"* of *"the greater (Messianic) Tabernacle"* (although the statement is intentionally cryptic⁸³).⁸⁴ That typological and theological understanding of the Holy Shroud in *Hebrews* was likely shared by John and is what he was professing when he wrote, *"This is the one who passed through water and blood, Jesus Christ."* That is, at His bodily Resurrection Christ's material body miraculously passed through the water-blood-stained linen Shroud (evidenced by the composite spear stain), the typological "curtain" of the Messianic Tabernacle. Christ, thereby, became immaterial as He *"went through the curtain"*⁸⁵ from earth back to heaven.⁸⁶

⁸² Jackson, J. (1991). "An Unconventional Hypothesis to Explain all Image Characteristics Found on the Shroud Image" in *History, Science, Theology and the Shroud*, ed. Berard, A. (St. Louis, MO: Symposium Proceedings, June 22-23, 1991). <http://theshroudofturin.blogspot.com/2012/01/john-p-jackson-unconventional.html>. See also, Fanti, G. (2024), "Turin Shroud: Insights' Review Confirming Biblical Reports About Etiology of Jesus," *Medical & Clinical Case Reports Journal*, vol. 2.4.

⁸³ Cf. Heb 9:5. Clement of Alexandria commented how *"the mysteries are delivered mystically,"* "Miscellanies," 1.1; cf. 7.17, in *The Ante Nicene Fathers* (Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, MI), vol.2. Why did the early Church not write openly about the image on the Shroud? Likely, the answer was due to persecution and the desire to safeguard the Shroud from potential harm, confiscation, and even destruction by enemies of the Faith. See Matt 7:6 and the opening section of the following paper where the current author discusses this matter is further: Stalley, L. (2025), "Why the Image on the Shroud Is "the Sign of Jonah," *Academia.edu*, https://www.academia.edu/127002566/Why_the_Image_on_the_Shroud_is_the_Sign_of_Jonah_2025.

⁸⁴ See the textual references in fn. 74.

⁸⁵ Heb 10:19-20; cf. 9:11-12; 6:19-20

⁸⁶ This explanation is how the current author suggests 1 John 6a should be understood. Note the theological assertion made in Heb 9:24 and the presence there of the verb εἰσέρχομαι (*eiserchomai*), "come (in, into)," "go (in, into)," or "enter."

When “*the flesh*” of Christ went “*through the curtain*” (Heb 10:19-20) of “*the greater (Messianic) Tabernacle*” (Heb 9:11)—i.e., at the moment of the Resurrection when He was within the linen Shroud inside the tomb—His physical body went through the burial Shroud, becoming immaterial, and thus “*He entered the (heavenly) Sanctuary*” (Heb 11:12) “*with (or through) His own blood*” (Heb 11:12).

At the **Incarnation**, Christ went through the heavenly curtain, taking on material flesh and becoming God manifested to the world.⁸⁷ On that occasion Christ came down from heaven to earth. Now, at the **Resurrection**, Christ “*passed through the curtain*” and, in so doing, he left the material earth behind and entered the immaterial heaven.⁸⁸

Is this dual perspective suggested and supported by the anachronistic⁸⁹ statement we find in John’s Gospel? “*And no one has **ascended** into heaven, but He who **descended** from heaven, even the Son of Man.*”⁹⁰

So, according to the explanation just delineated, verse 6a of John’s cryptic passage should be perceived as being in reference to the **Resurrection**—and the aorist verb and syntax be understood as “*This is the One who ‘went’ or ‘passed’ through water and blood.*” However, on the other hand, the second clause of the verse (6b) applies to the **Incarnation**. Consequently, the verb (although not repeated in the second clause) is implied and understood now as “*He came.*” The first clause pertains to Christ’s victory in overcoming death, while the subsequent clause speaks of the gifts His coming into the world brought to humanity.

While the first clause of verse six (v. 6a) can be understood *literally*, might the author have intended the subsequent clause of the verse (v. 6b) to be understood *symbolically* or *theologically*? As was explained earlier in this paper, the syntax has significant changes. Should we translate and comprehend this second clause in the following manner?

“***He came*** (i.e., *from His Father above and for His own followers*) ***with the water*** (of regeneration) ***and with the blood*** (of redemption).”

4.2. A symbolic meaning for verse 6b:

“(This is the One who ***came*** from heaven and took on flesh at the Incarnation⁹¹) ***not with the water only*** (i.e., the ‘living water’ of the Holy Spirit that brings a spiritual birth of regeneration⁹²) ***but with the water and with the blood*** (i.e., the precious atoning blood of redemption).”⁹³

⁸⁷ See John 1:1, 14; 3:13; cf. 1 John 4:2, 9.

⁸⁸ See fn. 74 and 86.

⁸⁹ Cf. the perfect tense verbs in John 5:37; 16:33.

⁹⁰ John 3:13

⁹¹ Cf. 1 John 4:2, 9. In the first of those two earlier verses the Biblical writer made use of a past-tense perfect participle of the same verb, “I come” (ἐρχομαι) (*erchomai*): “*Jesus Christ has come in the flesh...*” Why the perfect tense? Is it due to the abiding *image* of the crucified Christ in the flesh depicted on the burial Shroud?

⁹² Cf. John 4:6-15

⁹³ This is the second clause of verse six with the current author’s interpretive comments given in parentheses.

The second clause of verse six does not contain a verb. The verb must be carried over from the first clause. However, there are three exceptionally good reasons for shifting our understanding of that verb now.

- A notable change takes place in the syntax whereby both nouns each now have the definite article, as well as their own preposition, and, importantly, the preposition has changed from “*through*” (διὰ) to “*with*” (ἐν). No other interpretation for this verse offers a satisfactory explanation for these changes in syntax.
- John is fond of using words which have double meanings.⁹⁴
- Based on John’s Gospel, a compelling case can be made that the author’s intent is in harmony with Jesus’ own claim to have “come” from His Father above.⁹⁵ This second clause of verse six informs us why Jesus came or what He came “with.” **He came with the water of regeneration that the Spirit accomplishes,⁹⁶ and He came with the redemption made possible by His sacrificial blood.⁹⁷**

5. “The Three who are Testifying” (v. 8)

In verse seven the author writes of three witnesses: “*the Spirit and the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement.*” The syntactic construction gives a separate identity to each of these three witnesses.

Although all three nouns (Spirit, water, blood) are neuter in the Greek, John speaks of them using a masculine plural participle in the present tense “*the ones who are testifying*” (οἱ μαρτυροῦντες) (*hoi marturountes*): Why masculine? John is personifying these three so that they will be viewed and accepted as valid witnesses in a court trial regarding the Son of God. In Jewish jurisprudence, credible testimony needed more than a single witness.⁹⁸ These three offer a “united witness” regarding the Son of God.

Why the present tense of the verb? John asserts that, in the present day, they give a united testimony regarding the Son’s humanity and divinity! How is that possible? Jesus had been crucified many years earlier. How could His “blood” still be testifying? How is that possible? What exactly is this united and ongoing testimony of “*the Spirit and the water and the blood*”?

On the Shroud of Turin, a “water and blood” spear-stain can be seen in the side of the man who had been crucified. Furthermore, the formation of the image is both inexplicable and irreproducible from a natural perspective. It is a miraculous image produced by the Spirit of God

⁹⁴ For example, in the *Fourth Gospel*, ἄνωθεν (anōthen) (3:3-5) can mean either “*again*” or “*from above*.” In 4:10-11, ζῶν (zōn) can mean “*flowing*” or “*living*.” And in 7:8 ἀναβαίνω (anabainō) can mean either “*go up*” to Jerusalem or “*go up*” to His Father above.

⁹⁵ Nine times John makes use of ἐρχομαι (erchomai) in a passage discussing where Jesus came from. See John 5:37a; 7:25-44 (esp. vv. 28-29 & 38-39).

⁹⁶ Cf. John 3:1-5; 4:9-14; 7:37-39; cf. John 19:37; Ezek 36.25-27; 39.29; Joel 2.28-29; Zech 12.10; 13.1

⁹⁷ Cf. 1 John 2:1-2; Rev 1:5

⁹⁸ Deut 19:15

and “*not created by human hands.*”⁹⁹ So, it can be understood how all three witnesses do pertain to the Turin Shroud!

Based on the context of the passage, the current author suggests these three witnesses should be understood as supporting or buttressing the single “testimony of God” (ἡ μαρτυρία τοῦ θεοῦ) that will be spoken of in the subsequent two verses. In keeping with Jewish jurisprudence, credible testimony needed more than a single witness: “*on the evidence of two or three witnesses a matter shall be confirmed.*”¹⁰⁰ So, the purpose and function of “the three witnesses” is to validate the credibility of “*the testimony of God,*” the Father, “*that He testified concerning His Son*” (vv. 9-10).

6. “*The testimony of God that He testified concerning His Son*” (vv. 9-10).

“*9 We accept human testimony, but God’s testimony is greater because it is the testimony of God, which he has given (testified) (μεμαρτύρηκεν) (memarturēken) about his Son. 10 Whoever believes in the Son of God accepts this testimony. Whoever does not believe God has made him out to be a liar, because they have not believed the testimony God has given (testified) (μεμαρτύρηκεν) (memarturēken) about his Son.*” – New International Version (NIV)

Verse nine states an unchallenged truth: “*The testimony of God is greater than the testimony of men!*” Why does John feel the need to state that truth? What human testimony does he have in mind? It might be his own testimony, along with those who were eyewitnesses of Jesus. He opened his Letter with such a testimony:

“*What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we beheld, and our hands handled, concerning the Word of Life—and the life was manifested, and we have seen and **testify** and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was revealed to us...*”¹⁰¹

Or John may have had in mind the human testimony he had written about in his Gospel concerning the spear wound that Christ suffered on the Cross:

“*... but one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately there came out blood and water. And he who has seen has **borne witness**, and **his witness is true**; and he knows that he is telling the truth, so that you also may believe.*”¹⁰²

Whether John had the apostolic testimony in mind concerning those who had personally walked with Jesus, or the testimony of the one who witnessed the spear being thrust into Christ’s side, both are merely human testimony regarding the Son of God. There is a greater witness that John now wants to emphasize, namely “*the Father’s testimony that He testified concerning His Son.*”¹⁰³ He mentions “*the testimony that God testified concerning His Son*” twice in verse 9-10.

⁹⁹ Cf. Heb 9:11. See Stalley, *Divine Testimony*, op. cit., pp. 359-361.

¹⁰⁰ Deut 19:15

¹⁰¹ 1 John 1:1-2

¹⁰² John 19:34-35

¹⁰³ Cf. John 5:37

What exactly *was* and *is* that superior testimony? It can be spoken of as being both *was* and *is* due to the perfect tense of the verb that John wrote: “*testified*” (μεμαρτύρηκεν) (*memarturēken*). Sometime in the past (i.e., at the Cross) an action took place. However, afterwards some kind of effect or result from that act continues to bear testimony regarding Jesus being God’s Son. And the definite article is used to describe what happened: “*the testimony that God testified...*” It is, therefore, a one-of-a-kind testimony and is superior to any human testimony that might be given about what had taken place.

Some might suggest this testimony was the voice that came from heaven and testified at the occasion of Jesus’ baptism: “*This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.*”¹⁰⁴ However, that phrase is from the Synoptic Gospels. And, unlike those canonical Gospels, The *Fourth Gospel* does not explicitly mention the baptism of Jesus nor the voice that spoke from heaven. Rather, John the Baptist testifies in the *Fourth Gospel* to seeing “*a dove descending from heaven*” and to a personal revelation given to him earlier that such a scene would identify “*the one who baptizes with the Holy spirit.*”¹⁰⁵ Then he, rather than God, testifies: “*I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God.*”¹⁰⁶ Furthermore, how does that incident explain or align with “the water and the blood” of this passage? And how does that incident regarding the heavenly voice explain the continuing and abiding effect of “God’s testimony” implied by the perfect tense of the verb, “*testified*”? If we simply associate the Father’s testimony with the Spirit, the dove, or the voice from heaven on that occasion, how does “God’s testimony” differ from “the testimony of the Spirit” in this passage?¹⁰⁷

In *John’s Gospel* we find a list of witnesses that Jesus appeals to regarding His authority, and one of them is likely the same witness that we are contemplating now in his *First Letter*. In the *Gospel*, John records Jesus saying:

“*And the Father who sent Me, He has borne witness of Me. You have neither heard His voice at any time, nor seen His form.*”¹⁰⁸

It is unlikely we should associate this testimony of the Father with John the Baptist. The testimony of the Baptist had already been cited earlier in the passage (vv. 32-35), along with “the works” or miracles of Jesus Himself (v. 36). It is unlikely now in verse 37 that Jesus is returning to the testimony of the Baptist again. Furthermore, the perfect tense verb used for the Father’s testimony, “*He testified*” (μεμαρτύρηκεν) (*memarturēken*), does not fit with the testimony given by the Baptist. Yet, it is the same verb and tense found twice in John’s cryptic passage regarding “*the testimony of God that He testified concerning His Son*” in 1 John 5:9-10.

God testified concerning His Son:”

- What action did God do in the past?

¹⁰⁴ Matt 3:17; cf. Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22; John 1:32-34.

¹⁰⁵ John 1:32-33

¹⁰⁶ John 1:34

¹⁰⁷ See vv. 7, 8, and 10.

¹⁰⁸ John 5:37. For reasons why this testimony of the Father in the *Fourth Gospel* is likely the same witness as “*the testimony of God that He testified concerning His Son*,” found in John’s *First Letter*, see the author’s book, Stalley, *Divine Testimony*, op. cit., pp. 414-420.

- How did that act from several decades earlier continue to witness in the present moment to John's readers, since the verb is in the perfect tense?
- How does God's testimony differ from the Spirit's testimony (v. 7)?
- How does "*water and blood*" (v. 6a) pertain to God's testimony?
- How were "*the three who are witnessing*" (v. 8) (i.e., at the time when John wrote his *Letter*) pertain to "the Father's witness"?
- What denial of truth is it, exactly, that equates to "*calling God a liar*" (v. 10b)?

So, what is the best solution for "*the testimony the Father testified*" concerning Jesus in John's Gospel, as well as the twofold occurrence of "*the testimony that God testified concerning His Son*" in John's *First Letter*? The literary context of the Letter strongly suggests the solution is the image on the burial Shroud with its "*blood-and-water*" spear stain. The miraculous image on Jesus' burial Shroud still testifies to how the Son of God suffered for our sins: "*He Himself is the propitiation for our sins.*"¹⁰⁹ And the discovery of this image "*not made by human hands*"¹¹⁰ that was found in the tomb on the third day also testifies to the fact of God having raised Him up!

Succinctly stated, the miraculous image on the burial Shroud serves as the Father's divine testimony to the death, burial, and Resurrection of His Son. This is true since that was the single occasion when Christ "*went through*" the water-blood-stained linen Cloth. It was found on the morning of the Resurrection by this very disciple in the otherwise empty tomb. The miraculous *image* with its visible spear stain of "the man of the Cloth" is the Father's witness or testimony regarding His Son.

The miraculous and visual image seen on the Turin Shroud is the earliest and best evidence for the crucified and risen Christ. It is divine testimony as opposed to everything else being human testimony.

7. "*The one who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself; the one who does not believe God has made Him a liar*" (v. 10).

In verse seven we find the following assertion: "*It is the Spirit who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth.*" It is this "witness of the Spirit" that now comes back into focus as verse ten begins. Verse ten is an important explanatory comment in the writer's argument. It functions as a parenthesis.¹¹¹

The *witness* (or *testimony*) of verse ten is not the divine *witness* (or *testimony*) of verse nine. The believer does not possess "*the witness (or testimony) of God that He testified*" just mentioned in the previous verse (v. 9). So, the reader should not equate this "witness" residing within the believer with "*the witness of God that He testified concerning His Son.*" There are two strong reasons why the two are different. One proof regarding that matter is the perfect tense of the verb, "*testified.*" That singular and greater "*witness of the Father concerning His son*"

¹⁰⁹ 1 John 2:2

¹¹⁰ Heb 9:11. See fn. 99.

¹¹¹ The *New English Translation* mentions this matter of syntax in a footnote.

concerns an act of testimony given by God that had occurred in the past regarding the Resurrection, likely the miraculous *image* created on the Shroud.

*The references to “witnessing” in vv 6-8 suggest a **present** activity, whereas the verb μεμαρτύρηκεν, “he has borne witness,” is in the perfect tense (and that is why John cannot be speaking here of the ongoing “inner witness” of the Spirit in the heart of the believer.¹¹²*

With a return to the present tense in verse ten, the *New International Version* likely communicates the correct understanding for the opening assertion of this verse with its rendering: “Whoever believes in the Son of God accepts this testimony.”

This teaching is similar to what the Biblical writer stated earlier in his *Letter*:

I am writing these things to warn you about those who want to lead you astray. But you have received the Holy Spirit, and he lives within you, so you don’t need anyone to teach you what is true. For the Spirit teaches you everything you need to know, and what he teaches is true—it is not a lie. So, just as he has taught you, remain in fellowship with Christ.¹¹³

The Apostle Paul wrote something similar:

But it was to us that God revealed these things by his Spirit. For his Spirit searches out everything and shows us God’s deep secrets.¹¹⁴

If “the testimony (or witness) of God that He testified concerning His Son” mentioned in the previous verse is the miraculous *image* on His Son’s burial Shroud, why do many people not accept this divine testimony or witness—even though substantial and compelling evidence exists supporting the Cloth’s authenticity?¹¹⁵ Might the answer often be due to the non-believer neither having the desire to believe nor possessing the Spirit of God within his or her heart? Perhaps another remark penned by the Apostle Paul is relevant: “A natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.”¹¹⁶ Does not faith sometimes pose a bigger problem for a person’s heart than it does for the person’s mind?

Instead of linking this assertion in verse ten about the believer with “the testimony that God testified” in the previous verse, it should be associated with the contrasting assertion about the non-believer immediately following: “Whoever does not believe God has made him out to be a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has given concerning his Son.”¹¹⁷

¹¹² Smalley, *Commentary*, op. cit., p. 271.

¹¹³ 1 John 2:26-27, *New Living Translation* (NLT).

¹¹⁴ 1 Corinthians 2:10 (NLT)

¹¹⁵ See the author’s paper, “Is the Shroud of Turin the Actual Burial Cloth of Jesus?”, *Academia.edu*, https://www.academia.edu/42692445/Is_the_Shroud_of_Turin_the_Actual_Burial_Cloth_of_Jesus.

¹¹⁶ 1 Cor 2:14

¹¹⁷ 1 John 5:10

What a strong assertion! Note the chiastic structure of verses 9-10 below.¹¹⁸ This is a second reason why “*the witness*” of verse 10a is different from “*the witness of God that He testified*” of verse 9.

- A This is ***the testimony of God: that He has testified*** (μεμαρτύρηκεν) concerning His Son (v. 9c).
- B The one believing into the Son of God has the witness in himself (v. 10a);
- B’ the one not believing has made God a liar (v. 10b),
- A’ because he has not believed in ***the testimony that God testified*** (μεμαρτύρηκεν) concerning His Son (v. 10c).

If “*the witness of God that He testified*” is the incredible and miraculous *image* seen on the Shroud of Turin today, with its visible and prominent water-blood spear-stain, then John is asserting that an unwavering rejection of this testimony is, in effect, calling God a liar! The verb defending that charge is in the perfect tense: “*because he has not believed...!*” The likely idea intended concerns a person who is deliberately “refusing to believe.”¹¹⁹ One dynamic translation renders the clause accordingly: “*The man who will not believe God is making him out to be a liar, because he is deliberately refusing to accept the testimony that God has given concerning his own Son.*”¹²⁰ Sadly, Shroud researchers are quite familiar with some opponents who continue to reject the evidence of authenticity, even though the evidence for such continues to accumulate. No amount of evidence will persuade them to change their minds! On the other hand, the believer who possesses the Spirit of God welcomes the evidence and finds it to be quite persuasive!

Here is how the *New Living Translation* renders verse ten, which this author thinks accurately conveys the intent of the Biblical author:

All who believe in the Son of God know in their hearts that this testimony is true. Those who don't believe this are actually calling God a liar because they don't believe what God has testified about his Son.

Based on the historical context behind John's Letter (2:19), we can conclude that the non-believer who is “calling God a liar” (v. 10b) is plausibly not simply rejecting the image on the burial Cloth (signified by the ongoing aspect of the perfect-tense verbs “testified” in 5:9-10) but is also rejecting the humanity of Christ (4:2-3) and the bodily Resurrection of Christ (signified in the passage by the past-tense aspect of those twice occurring perfect-tense verbs in verses 9-10).

¹¹⁸ The contrasting, parenthetical sentence found in verse ten occurs at the focal point of a larger chiastic structure. A chiasmus is an inverted literary pattern (a b/b a) that was common in Hebrew and “fits Johannine style” [Brown, R. (1966) *The Anchor Bible: The Gospel According to John I-XX* (Doubleday & Company: Garden City, NY), vol. 29, p. 320]. The two paths share several parallel features corresponding to each other. The pattern can be helpful in clarifying the author’s intent, meaning, or emphasis. The apex in the center of the pattern is often the focal point.

¹¹⁹ Brown, *The Epistles of John*, op. cit., p. 591.

¹²⁰ 1 John 5:10b, (1972) *The New Testament in Modern English by J.B. Phillips*. Sometimes the *Phillips New Testament* is called a paraphrase, but this is not accurate according to his translation philosophy.

8. “And the witness is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His son” (v. 11).

In verse eleven, we find yet another assertion regarding God’s testimony. “*And the witness is this, that God has given...*” The writer is now commenting about the *result* or *effect* of God’s testimony, not its *content*. This particular “that” (ὅτι) (*hoti*) clause is not epexegetical (explanatory).

*The **content** of the “testimony” is not that God has given us “eternal life” (v. 11b); such is the **result** of the witness that God has borne to Jesus (cf. Marshall, The Epistles of John, NICNT, 241 n. 42).*¹²¹

John is not now identifying the witness but, rather, discussing its importance. What significance does God’s testimony have for the believer? Why does it matter? What is the result? John’s answer focuses on “*eternal life*.” (vv. 11, 13, 20). If John has the miraculous *image* on the Shroud in mind, an image that formed at time of time of the Resurrection, then God’s testimony gives assurance to the believer—not solely about the truth of Jesus being the resurrected Son of God but—regarding his or her own resurrection. As John states two verses later, “*These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, in order that you may be assured that you have eternal life.*”¹²² **The image provides the believer with assurance regarding “the blessed hope”¹²³ of eternal life!**

Yes, the entire passage supports the thesis that “*the greater witness of God that He testified concerning His Son*” is the miraculous *image* on Jesus’ burial Shroud, the crucified yet resurrected Son of God! No other interpretation of the passage so satisfyingly checks all the boxes.

Furthermore, this visual testimony of the image from the Father Himself is both the strongest and the earliest evidence we have for the validity of the Resurrection! The most extensive scientific investigation of the image (i.e., STuRP) concluded it was “*not the work of an artist.*”¹²⁴ Today the image is both inexplicable and irreproducible.¹²⁵ It is, profoundly, “*the testimony of God concerning His Son.*”

9. Author’s Suggested Translation

⁴ *This is the conquering power that has defeated this evil world: our faith.* ⁵ *Now who is the person who has conquered the world except the one believing that Jesus is the Son of God?* ⁶ *Messiah Jesus is the one who passed through water and blood; He came not with the water only, but with the water and with the blood. And the Spirit, who is truth, confirms it with his testimony.* ⁷ *So we have these three witnesses—* ⁸ *the Spirit, the water, and the blood—and all three agree.* ⁹ *Since we believe human testimony, surely we can believe the greater testimony that comes from God; for the testimony of God is this, that He has testified concerning His Son.* (¹⁰ *All who believe in the Son of God know in their hearts that this testimony is true. Those*

¹²¹ Smalley, 1, 2, and 3 John, op. cit., p. 274

¹²² 1 John 5:13

¹²³ Cf. Tit 2:13

¹²⁴ See fn. 30.

¹²⁵ See the author’s book, *Divine Testimony*, op. cit., chapter 5.

who don't believe this are calling God a liar because they refuse to accept the testimony God has given concerning His Son. ¹¹*And the result of the testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son.* ¹²*The one who has the Son has eternal life; the one who does not have the Son of God does not have the life.* ¹³*I have written these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.*
 - 1 John 5:4-13¹²⁶

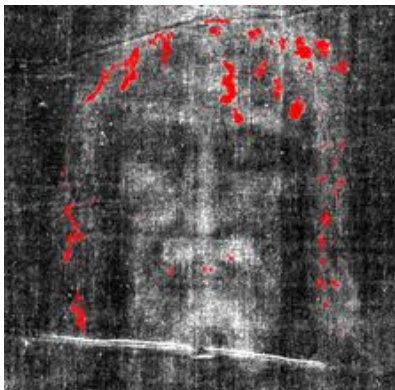
10. Conclusion

A puzzling passage in the final chapter of John's *First Letter* raises several difficult questions:

When (Birth? Baptism? The Cross? The Resurrection? Pentecost? Other?), how, and why did John perceive the Christ as having "**passed through water and blood**" ... and what specifically (past and present) was John writing about when he then spoke of "**the testimony** (or witness) **of God that He has testified** (Greek verb in the perfect tense) **concerning His Son**"—(a) a testimony regarding Jesus that is "*greater than the testimony of men*" (i.e., a stronger or more persuasive apologetic than the testimony of John himself and the other Apostles), (b) a testimony providing assurance regarding "*eternal life*," and (c) a testimony buttressed **in the present time** by "*the three that are bearing witness: the Spirit and the water and the blood; and these three are in reference to the one thing*"?

The exegetical analysis provided within this paper has demonstrated how those questions are plausibly and best explained by the water-blood-spear-stained image on the linen burial cloth known today as the Shroud of Turin and its association with the Resurrection. This passage provides humanity with textual evidence within the Biblical canon itself that the Holy Shroud existed in the first century and was known by the Apostle John.

Today we can discern this image better than any previous generation ever could!



Picture 3.¹²⁷

¹²⁶ Much of this translation is based either on the *New English Translation* (Biblical Studies Press: 2005) or the *New Living Translation* (Tyndale House Foundation: 2015). However, the current author has altered the translation from both versions where he thought it was best, based on the Greek text and what he thinks the author was seeking to communicate.

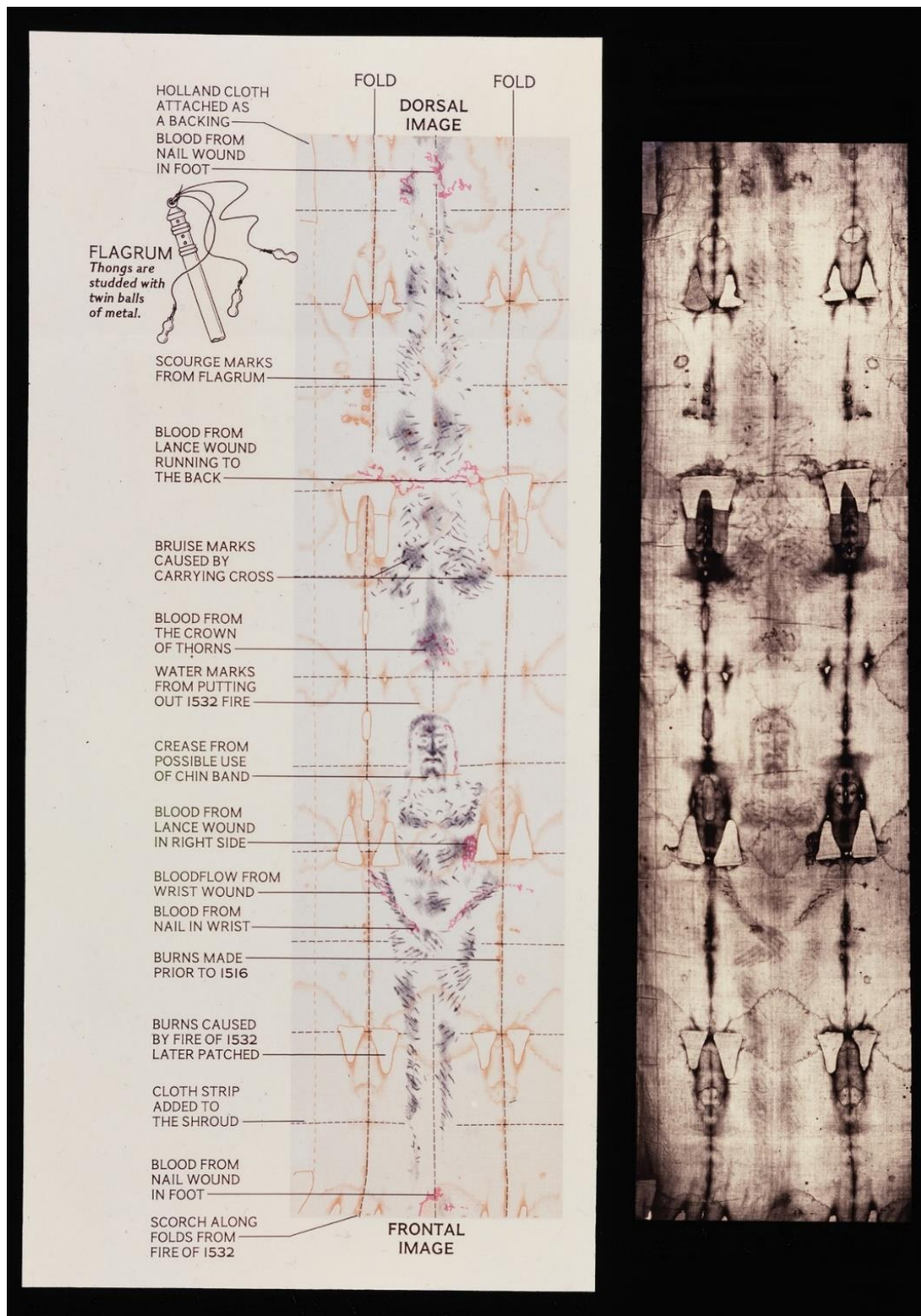
¹²⁷ Picture 3. See fn. 1. Modern photography and technology allow us to see the image in ways former generations never could. This only heightens the importance of the questions addressed in this paper.



Picture 4. Photo courtesy © 1978 Barrie M. Schwartz Collection, STERA, Inc.

A serious question for contemplation is raised whenever a person views the unique and remarkable image on the Shroud of Turin: *Who is this?* Only one person in recorded history suffered all the terrible wounds depicted by the image. And it is as if “the man of the cloth” is asking the observer this question: *Who do you say I am?* And a similar question is also asked, *Can I get a witness?* And the answer is, yes! The image is the unique and powerful witness of the heavenly Father Himself regarding His Son. And we know that divine testimony is greater than human testimony. God Almighty is the one who provided this visual and historical “witness” that has survived down through the centuries, testifying to what happened one dark day at Golgotha and then the miracle that took place three days later inside the tomb. *“Jesus is my Son who died for your sins, and I raised Him back to life on the third day!”*

Having that visible, divine witness today still testifying to the Resurrection event of God’s Son long ago assures believers of their own Resurrection in the future and that, even now, they possess “eternal life.”



128

¹²⁸ Picture 5: © Vernon Miller, 1978. No unauthorized reproduction of Material on other Websites is allowed without prior written permission from the shroudphotos.com copyright holder. Original photos are available for free at www.shroudphotos.com.