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Certainty: Absolute Truths that Produce Joyful Assurance

Certainty; Incarnation; Crucifixion; Jesus Christ as Second Yahweh; Holy Spirit; Son of God; Truth

In the video world, there is an editing process. Typically, this happens when someone forgets a line or makes a mistake. That part of the video is edited out and/or retaped. If there were one part of Christianity that we would remove, humanly speaking, it would be the crucifixion.

(i) It is gruesome and barbaric:

The unnatural position used in crucifixion made every movement painful; the lacerated veins and crushed tendons throbbed with incessant anguish; the wounds, inflamed by exposure, gradually gangrened; the arteries—especially at the head and stomach—became swollen and oppressed with surcharged blood; and while each variety of misery went on gradually increasing, there was added to them the intolerable pang of a burning and raging thirst; and all these physical complications caused an internal excitement and anxiety, which made the prospect of death itself—of death, the unknown enemy, at whose approach man usually shudders most—bear the aspect of a delicious and exquisite release. [Michael P. Green. *1500 Illustrations for Biblical Preaching*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000.]

(ii) It is counterintuitive:

The crucifixion is the death of the One we call God in the flesh. Yet, this is precisely what John is making sure is NOT removed.

[1 John 5:6–8](#) (KJV 1900)

⁶ This is he that came by water and **blood**, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and **blood**. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth. ⁷ For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. ⁸ And

there are three that bear witness in earth, the spirit, and the water, and the **blood**: and these three agree in one.

The word blood is a reference to the death of Jesus Christ, whereby He shed his blood for the atonement of sin. But why would John want to make sure that this not only stays in the Christian message but is central to it?

(1) The Spirit has witnessed to the Jesus of the Cross - [I John 5:6](#)

1 John 5:6 KJV 1900

⁶ This is he that came by water and blood, *even* Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth.

This is not new to the writings of John. The Spirit of God had witnessed to who Jesus was at Jesus' baptism ([John 1:29-33](#)).

(2) The Spirit is in agreement with Heaven and Earth - [I John 5:7-8](#)

1 John 5:7-8 KJV 1900

⁷ For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. ⁸ And there are three that bear witness in earth, the spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one.

The importance of these verses lies in what John is trying to get across — that God has become flesh and has been attested to by both baptism and the crucifixion. There is agreement between Heaven and Earth in One Person — Jesus.

(3) The Son is God's appointed means for eternal life - [I John 5:9-12](#)

1 John 5:9-12 KJV 1900

⁹ If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son. ¹⁰ He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son. ¹¹ And this is the record, that God hath

given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. ¹² He that hath the Son hath life; *and* he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.

This is really the summarizing point here — that this is God’s record. God has testified Who the Son is, and God has provided eternal life through the Son.

John 5:33–47 KJV 1900

³³ Ye sent unto John, and he bare witness unto the truth. ³⁴ But I receive not testimony from man: but these things I say, that ye might be saved. ³⁵ He was a burning and a shining light: and ye were willing for a season to rejoice in his light. ³⁶ But I have greater witness than *that* of John: for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me. ³⁷ And the Father himself, which hath sent me, hath borne witness of me. Ye have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape. ³⁸ And ye have not his word abiding in you: for whom he hath sent, him ye believe not. ³⁹ Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me. ⁴⁰ And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life. ⁴¹ I receive not honour from men. ⁴² But I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you. ⁴³ I am come in my Father’s name, and ye receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive. ⁴⁴ How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that *cometh* from God only? ⁴⁵ Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father: there is *one* that accuseth you, *even* Moses, in whom ye trust. ⁴⁶ For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me. ⁴⁷ But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?

Vincent Van Gogh first began to experiment with impressionist techniques during his Parisian period, the time from 1886 until 1888. “Last year,” the Dutch artist wrote to his sister in 1887, “I painted almost nothing but flowers to accustom myself to colors other than grey, namely pink, soft or vivid green, light blue, violet, yellow, orange, beautiful red.”

Last week, the Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam announced that it had authenticated a previously unknown work of the painter’s from the

Parisian period. Purchased at a French flea market after World War II by a Swiss family and kept in their attic, Still Life (Vase With Flowers) is expected to fetch millions of dollars at auction.

U.S. News & World Report, December 19, 1994, p.19 [Galaxie Software. (2002). *10,000 Sermon Illustrations*. Biblical Studies Press.]

God has authenticated this crucified Jesus as His Son through whom there is eternal life.

In spite of what John says, there are reasons why removing the crucifixion might be tempting:

(i) For the Jewish, the crucifixion does not align with the kind of Messiah they anticipated.

By implication, these disciples saw the crucifixion as contrary to God's plan of redemption ([Luke 24:21](#)). This is not too far removed from today. What does the crucifixion do to the Jewish expectation? It turns upside down any idea we have about ethnic or racial superiority. Whatever our expectation may be, it is upended by the Cross.

We might think that we are more civilized, but Jesus was Perfect, yet he was crucified. We might think that we have a better pedigree, but Jesus was the lineage of David, yet he was crucified. We might think that we have better blood running through our veins. We might think that we have a greater history. We might think that we have a greater nation. But at the Cross, the One Who had the better everything was crucified. So where does that leave our expectations?

(ii) For the Gentile, the crucifixion of a deity does not align with the general standard for deities ([1 Corinthians 1:23](#)).

What does the Cross do to our idea of strength and power? The Cross turns it completely upon its head.

Within the Postmodern mindset, language is power. Hence, if you control the language, then you control the culture. What does the Cross do to this

ideology? The Cross confirms that the greatest in the kingdom will be the least, even as the Son of Man came to GIVE his life a ransom.

Within political conservatism, capitalism and individualism is power. If you work hard, earn a living, and support yourself, then you have a say. What does the Cross do to this ideology? The Cross confirms that strength actually comes through weakness — that life comes through death — that healing comes through hurting, etc.

(iii) For the Gnostic or Docetists of this time, it is inconceivable that God would take on an evil material body, let alone die.

The opposing teachers had denied aspects of who Jesus was. The apparent teaching of some of these false teachers included the teaching that Jesus was a mere human upon whom the Christ Spirit descended upon at his baptism and from whom the Christ Spirit left just before Jesus' death.

What does the Cross do to our idea of a conceivable God? The Cross turns this idea on its head.

Letters of John (Contemporary Significance)

This was most apparent in a conference sponsored by the World Council of Churches and underwritten in large part by the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). From November 4–7, 1994, 2,200 people from 49 states and 27 countries filled the Minneapolis Convention Center to “reimage” God. The conference called for a “Second Reformation” that would begin radical theological surgery on the church’s belief systems.

Essentially the conference developed a new anchor for truth. The foundation for Christian theology would no longer be in the historic events of salvation recorded in the Bible. The star of the show, instead, was Sophia (Wisdom)—a long-suppressed feature of the biblical tradition, which resides principally within the female psyche. To the reimagers, Sophia never takes a historic, particularistic form, but appears in many ways and in many spiritual traditions. South Dakota Indian tribal dances and Zulu rituals are equal contributors for theological reflection. The conference program was explicit: Sophia is

the place in us where the entire universe resides. For a multicultural, therapeutic society like ours, this is religion made-to-order. **Self-discovery is the platform for divine revelation.**

It is most important to note that in this church setting, historic Christology was totally dismantled. The target of the conferees was the cross. Christian soteriology promoted violence, they claimed. A father killing his son is a formula for child abuse. One speaker (Delores Williams) did not disguise her convictions at all, “I don’t think we need a theory of atonement at all. I don’t think we need folks hanging on crosses and blood dripping and weird stuff... **We just need to listen to the god within.**” [Burge, Gary M. *Letters of John*. The NIV Application Commentary. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996.]

The Cross grips our attention. If there were ever anyone worthy of self-discovery, it is the One who hung on the Cross; yet He lived for the will of another, confessed to the true God, and declared all other lesser gods false through his Resurrection.

Why make sure that the Cross is central to the Christian message? More importantly, how would the crucifixion bring any hope to the Christians receiving John’s letter?

The crucifixion of Jesus:

- (1) confirms Jesus’ humanity
- (2) confirms Jesus’ deity (He’s God)
- (3) brings eternal life
 - (i) He was raised ([Acts 10:38-40](#))
 - (ii) He was accepted by the Father
 - (iii) He is eternally sufficient ([Hebrews 7:22-25](#))

To edit out the crucifixion of Jesus is to edit out the assurance of eternal life ([Hebrews 7:22-25](#)).

How do we avoid editing out the Cross?

- (1) We must receive it as the record of God — [1 John 5:9](#) (by faith)
- (2) We must have memorable creeds to guard against its denial — [1 John 5:6, 8](#)

(3) We must recognize what our response is saying about God — [1 John 5:10](#)

Believing does not come by trying. If a person were to make a statement of something that happened this day, I should not tell him that I would try to believe him. If I believed in the truthfulness of the man who told the incident to me and said that he saw it, I should accept the statement at once. If I did not think him a true man, I should, of course, disbelieve him; but there would be no trying in the matter. Now, when God declares that there is salvation in Christ Jesus, I must either believe Him at once, or make Him a liar. (Charles Spurgeon)

(4) We must consider our lives (emotions, decisions...etc.) through the Cross ethic — [Galatians 2:20](#) (by the faith of the Son of God)

- Fathers: love your wife as Christ loved the church and gave himself for it.
- Fathers: provoke not but raise up children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord — Cross ethic.

In the end, we must keep the crucifixion. It must not be edited out. It is through the Cross that we obtain life.

The Structure of the Tabernacle

The tabernacle was the structure ordered built by God so that He might dwell among His people ([Ex. 25:8](#)). It was to be mobile and constructed to exacting specifications. It is referred to in [Ex. 25-27, 30-31, 35-40](#); [Num. 3:25ff; 4:4 ff; 7:1ff](#). In all of scripture more space is devoted to the tabernacle than any other topic.

Many books have been written on the spiritual significance of the tabernacle, how it represented Christ, and how it foretold the gospel. The tabernacle consisted of the outer court and the tabernacle. The outer court was entered from the East in which were the altar of burnt offering ([Ex. 27:1-8](#)) and the bronze laver ([Ex. 30:17-21](#)). The tabernacle stood within the court ([Ex. 26:1 ff](#)). It was divided into two main divisions: the holy place and the holy of holies which were separated by a veil ([Ex. 26:31 ff](#)), the same veil that was torn from top to bottom at the crucifixion of Jesus ([Matt. 27:51](#)). Where the veil had represented the barrier separating sinful man from a holy God ([Heb. 9:8](#)), its destruction

represented the free access sinners have to God through the blood of Christ ([Heb. 10:19 ff](#)).

Source unknown [Galaxie Software. (2002). *10,000 Sermon Illustrations*. Biblical Studies Press.]

When our hearts maintain a perspective of the Cross, we are given assurance that Jesus is the Son of God, and that we absolutely have eternal life in Him. The message of the crucifixion is eternal life through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.