

1 John 5:6-13 Living the new life that the Son of God gives

Receiving and believing who Jesus is, is to receive life now and eternal life

6-8 This is the one who came by water and blood – Jesus Christ. He did not come by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth. For there are three that testify: the Spirit, the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement.

9 We accept human testimony, but God's testimony is greater because it is the testimony of God, which He has given about his Son.

"Human testimony" – Verse 9 needs 6-8 to be understood. Generally two or three witnesses were required for human testimony. John calls two widely known works of God, Jesus' baptism and crucifixion, to join the Holy Spirit, John 15:26, as ultra-reliable witnesses.

10 Whoever believes in the Son of God accepts this testimony. Whoever does not

In practice The Jewish religious leaders didn't want to believe who Jesus was, let alone Jesus resurrected and alive, and seeking who would invite Him into their lives.

We get that today. There's a lot of Christian religion that's more about observances and doing 'good things' than recognising that the Lordship of Jesus and personal submission to Him comes first.

The baptism of Jesus happened, and the voice of God was heard affirming His Son. But as we turn to Jesus and believe in Him, we find we have our own inward witness; the Holy Spirit brings revelation and understanding beyond what can be understood. We just know – held by the love of God in our new life now, and eternal life too.

Question *Have you been invited to pray this prayer? It's always good to pray it again:* Lord Jesus, I turn to You now, believing that You are the only Son of God, born as man, living in perfectly obedience to Your heavenly Father, and then willingly going to a shameful execution for me and for my sins. I ask that all my independence from God, my rebellion against God, my selfishness in wanting to be master of my own destiny – all my sin, past present and future – be put under the cleansing of Your blood shed in Your death on that Cross. I ask that you fill me with Your Holy Spirit now, to give me revelation of what I do not understand, that I might know the fullness of new life with Your peace, as I learn to walk with You and join You on Your mission. Thank You, Jesus. Amen.

believe God has made Him out to be a liar, because they have not believed the testimony God has given about His Son.

"Whoever believes in..." – There's a big difference between believing that Jesus was a historical figure who did good and set an example to follow, and believing in Jesus, Son of God and crucified Saviour as personal Saviour and Lord.

11 And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son.

12 Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.

To have the Son comes simply through turning to and believing in the Son. It is through faith in Christ, not any observances, that we gain new life – life now, as well as assurance of eternal life (v.13), John 14:6, Acts 4:12.

13 I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.

The Living Word

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The Bible readings for Sunday May 13, 2018 with notes

Church calendar readings for Sunday, May 13 in Bible order.

Prepare for Sunday by reading and reflecting on the Word for the week

Ezekiel 36:24-28 – Living God's way from within

John 17:6-19 – Living as those united by Jesus

Acts 1:15-17, 21-26 – Living witnesses of the resurrection

1 John 5:9-13 – Living the new life that the Son of God gives

Ezekiel 36:24-28 A new heart that's living, not dead

The Holy Spirit is promised to exiles to be the enabler of righteous living

24 "For I will take you out of the nations; I will gather you from all the countries and bring you back into your own land.

"Out of the nations" – out of a pagan land.

25 I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols.

"I will cleanse you" – as Jews in exile, they saw themselves as defiled; also by their disobedience to God that had caused the fall of Jerusalem.

26 I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.

"New heart... new spirit" – a repeated

revelation of Ezekiel – Ezekiel 11:19, 18:31.

27 And I will put My Spirit in you and move you to follow My decrees and be careful to keep My laws.

"Keep My laws" – The Law instituted by Moses turned into a detailed 'do this, don't do that' religious system. It was difficult to keep – as any religious system is. To be empowered by the Holy Spirit to WANT to live right by God was to be a seismic change at Pentecost.

28 Then you will live in the land I gave your ancestors; you will be My people, and I will be your God.

"Your God...My people" – the language reminds hearers of God's promise of kind, not harsh, intentions. The relationship between God and His people would be renewed.

In practice When the relationship breaks down, God takes the initiative to restore it. The covenant called for obedience, but also promised grace, better-than-deserved treatment, when things went wrong. God never writes off, but always renews and restores.

These verses also promised a heart change – and a change of heart. We are created with free will and therefore have an inbuilt tendency to be independent and at times wayward – struggling with the Law and all its rules. This new promise of the Holy Spirit for everyone would enable us to know, and desire to follow, God's ways.

Question Is God's gift of new life about a decision only, or the start of a renewal process?

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John 17:6-19

Living as those united by Christ Jesus

Jesus' prays for those that are His to be protected from the danger of division

6-7 "I have revealed You to those whom You gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to Me and they have obeyed Your word. Now they know that everything You have given Me comes from You.

"I have revealed You..." Jesus revealed the Father firstly, by being God in human form – God incarnate, John 1:14, and secondly, by being the Way to the Father, John 14:6.

8 For I gave them the words You gave me and they accepted them. They knew with certainty that I came from You, and they believed that You sent Me.

"They knew with certainty" – that what Jesus taught was truth from the Father. They would need more time to understand Jesus' death and resurrection, and Jesus' fulfilment of passover lamb, priest, temple and suffering servant.

9-10 I pray for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given Me, for they are Yours. All I have is Yours, and all You have is mine. And glory has come to Me through them.

11 I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to You. Holy Father, protect them by the power of Your name, the name you gave Me, so that they may be one as We are one.

"That they may be one" – of one mind and heart about God's purpose and their mission.

In practice Jesus revealed the Father by giving us a way to first come to Him, and then know the Father: "I am the way... no one comes to the Father except through Me. If you really know Me, you will know my Father as well...", John 14:6-7. Once we take that decision, we share something special with all other believers.

Jesus knew that control and competition and division would creep in – that is man's way – but His Way was not to allow that.

12 While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by that name You gave Me. None has been lost except the one doomed to destruction so that Scripture would be fulfilled.

13-14 "I am coming to You now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of My joy within them. I have given them Your Word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world.

"The world has hated them" – which is why we need the joy of belonging to Jesus to sustain us.

15-16 My prayer is not that You take them out of the world but that You protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of it.

Following Jesus brings its own protection, the New Covenant, and it also brings its own attack. Satan does not give up ground easily. We have to learn to live in our world of contrary values, while drawing strength and guidance from the Holy Spirit as those not of the world.

17-19 Sanctify them by the truth; Your Word is truth. As you sent Me into the world, I have sent them into the world. For them I sanctify Myself, that they too may be truly sanctified.

Our coming to know Jesus, who is the truth, sets in train an empowering by the Spirit of Truth to set us apart for God – being sanctified, or made holy, in Bible language.

As soon as we step out in faith and witness, we meet the enemy of freedom and life, Satan. Then our one-ness becomes vital.

Question What more could we do to bring out the oneness we have as those who belong to Jesus?

Acts 1:15-17, 21-26 Living witnesses of the resurrection

The Twelve are to be witnesses of the Resurrection – Jesus alive for us, now.

15-17 In those days Peter stood up among the believers (a group numbering about 120) and said, "Brothers and sisters, the Scripture had to be fulfilled in which the Holy Spirit spoke long ago through David concerning Judas, who served as guide for those who arrested Jesus. He was one of our number and shared in our ministry."

Peter was esteemed as leader of the apostles in the gospel accounts and especially in the early years of the church that the first few chapters of Acts describes. He had (v.20) spoken two well-known sayings from Psalm 69:25 and Psalm 109:8 "May his place be deserted... may another take his place of leadership" which they took as a prophetic word to make the Twelve complete in number.

21-22 Therefore it is necessary to choose one of the men who have been with us the whole time the Lord Jesus was living among us, beginning from John's baptism to the time when Jesus was taken up from us. For one of these must become a witness with us of his resurrection."

In practice Here we see God restoring the Twelve who keenly felt the loss and shame following Judas' betrayal of Jesus and death in the field he bought with the bounty. Here we see God's hand in bringing restoration out of a messy situation.

Seeking God's guidance is something we seek with the help and guidance of prayer and the Holy Spirit; the casting of lots is strange to us although no doubt it was done prayerfully. When the Spirit came, they were much more confident in their mission.

God uses many ways to guide, and if we give Him time and listen – like in the Upper Room – He does speak to us.

Question How do we choose leaders? Does it matter what way, if it is done prayerfully?

"Witness with us" – The two particular requirements were that the person was a witness to Jesus' resurrection – many people encountered Him at this time, so that was not too difficult. But the other requirement was for their experience of Jesus to be similar to the remaining eleven, knowing Him for the three years of His ministry. The first apostles needed to be authoritative eyewitnesses of how Jesus showed Himself to be Messiah, against the denial and threats of the Jewish rulers.

23 So they nominated two men: Joseph called Barsabbas (also known as Justus) and Matthias.

24-26 Then they prayed, "Lord, You know everyone's heart. Show us which of these two You have chosen to take over this apostolic ministry, which Judas left to go where he belongs." Then they cast lots, and the lot fell to Matthias; so he was added to the eleven apostles.

"Casting lots" – possibly shaking marked stones in a jar until one fell out, a bit like our 'heads or tails' – is never mentioned again. It became obsolete at the coming of the Holy Spirit who Himself guides and leads God's people.