Witnesses For The Lord

by

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Luke 12:48

Who is a witness for the Lord?

Who can qualify as a "witness" of the Lord?

There were men who were designated as witnesses of Christ in the first century. Jesus makes this clear in Luke 24:48 and Acts 1:8.

- Luke 24:48, "*And ye are witnesses of these things.*"
- Acts 1:8, "*But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."*

Now, the question is, do these scriptures apply to you and me today?

I was not present during the post resurrection appearance of Jesus, which is recorded in Luke 24:48, when Jesus designated certain disciples as witnesses of those very particular things. Were you?

I was not present on the Mount of Olivet that great day of His ascension, when He called the apostles to be His witnesses. Were you there then? Obviously, not!

Yet, we have thousands of sincere people today who imagine themselves to be modern day witnesses for God and Jesus.

Many who claim to be witnesses for God and Jesus are not very good witnesses when the Bible is used for testimony.

But, what better testimony could there possibly be, other than the divine testimony of God's word?

The modern witnesses for God and Jesus Christ will not always accept the divine testimony of God's word, which so often is in conflict with their personal, uninspired testimonies.

Often, such witnesses totally reject God's testimony because of self-incrimination! Why should anyone be pleased to accept testimony of a witness who is a false witness for God!

Mistaken Witnesses

Today, many sincere people may pride themselves on being witnesses for Christ, but know almost nothing about the Bible; yet presume to be witnessing to people about the Lord.

Some "witnesses" cannot very intelligently discuss the Bible, or find specific passages in it with ease, especially if a Bible passage is not in their memorized and rehearsed Bible passage which may be used to make men believe that they are witnesses for God.

I have had the opportunity to talk with some good people who thought that they were witnesses for God and Jesus Christ, but when appealed to the Bible for divine testimony, from divine witnesses, they proved to be poor witnesses, knowing very little about divine testimony from true witnesses revealed in the Bible.

True witnesses for the Lord were identified in the Bible — some 2000 years ago. Don't you think it rather strange that some of the mistaken witnesses testify of their so-called religious experience that they had **only a few days previously**? And their testimony was in direct conflict with divine testimony revealed in the Bible.

I want to present some questions for you to think about!

- Do we really have modern day witnesses for Christ?
- Has anybody living today seen Christ, so as to be a true witness of Him?
- Are people today in position to be witnesses of Christ, as we find in the Bible?
- When testimonies of modern witnesses of God or of Jesus are in direct conflict with the Bible witnesses, which do you choose?

There is one thing about it, the testimonies of God's witnesses, revealed in the Bible, are unimpeachable. God cannot lie!

It is well at this time to consider some definitions of the subject under consideration.

Mr. Thayer in the Greek-English Lexicon gives this definition of a witness: "To be witness, to bear witness, testify, i.e., to affirm that one has seen or heard or experienced something, or that he knows it because taught by divine revelation or inspiration … to give testimony … to prove or confirm by testimony."

W. E. Vine in his "Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words, defines a true witness: "Denotes one who can or does aver what he has seen or heard or knows."

Surely, we can understand that the apostles and other eyewitnesses of the first century were really qualified witnesses of the Lord.

But, honestly, don't you know that no person on earth today could qualify to be such witnesses! Who now living has seen the Lord?

Witnesses For Christ

Now let us observe how the term "witnesses for Christ" is used in the Bible.

How did Jesus employ the term? He surely knew what the term meant and what its qualifications demanded.

According to John 15:27, Jesus said, "*And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning.*"

Have the modern witnesses of Jesus seen Him, just as the apostles did 2000 years ago? Have the modern witnesses been with Jesus from the beginning?

Oh, yes, there are those today who think that everything in John, chapters 14, 15, and 16, applies to them, just as much as it did to the apostles in the first century.

But this is obviously false, for **no one today has been with Jesus from the beginning of His personal ministry**, as were the apostles.

Some have concluded that John 5:32 gives tacit approval for "witnessing" today.

John 5:32, "*There is another that beareth witness of me; and I know that the witness which he witnesseth of me is true.*"

This scripture has no bearing on the so-called "witnessing" of today. In the preceding verses Jesus shows that He was reading the Pharisees' minds that they were thinking that since Jesus was talking of Himself that He was the Son of God, His witness could not possibly be true.

John 5:30-31, "*I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me. If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true.*"

Jesus had more that His own words to back up His statement that He was the Son of God. He had the witness of John, the Baptist, but the witness of which He referred in John 5:32 was God, Himself.

John 5:36-37, "*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. 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.*"

When Jesus was baptized by John, God, Himself, had made it known that Jesus was His beloved Son.

Matt. 3:16-17, "*And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.*"

God was Jesus' other witness of John 5:32, not those of a later time.

Between His resurrection and His amazing ascension, the Lord said in Luke 24:48 and in Acts 1:8, as follows:

- Luke 24:48, "*And ye are witnesses of these things.*"
- Acts 1:8, "*But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.*"

Such language as this cannot fit the modern day witnesses for Christ by any stretch of one's imagination!

You must understand that Jesus said that they, the disciples living then, would "receive power, when the Holy Spirit is come upon you."

When Jesus appeared to Saul on the Damascus road, He said, in Acts 26:16, "*But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee;*"

Paul had to see Jesus before he was qualified to be a witness.

How utterly different from modern day witnessing in our age!

How many today have literally seen Jesus? None, my friends; not one!

Apostle's Identification Of Witnesses

Let us observe how the apostles used the term **witnesses**, after Jesus returned to heaven.

In choosing one to take the place of the fallen traitor, they declared, in Acts 1:21-22, "*Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection.*"

Now honestly, does this sound like the qualifications of the modern day "witnesses" for God and for Jesus? The answer is obvious!

Peter and John were real witnesses for the Lord.

They said in Acts 4:19-20, "*But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.*"

That cannot be said of the modern day witnesses for God and Jesus Christ. What they do is a far cry from simply telling what Peter and John recorded, as written testimony about Jesus. They talk about their feelings and experiences.

Before the Sanhedrin, the apostles said in Acts 5:32, "*And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him.*"

The Bible says, "*we are witnesses*"; but who were the "*we*" that he was referring?

The context identifies the speakers as the apostles. There's no doubt about it!

To the household of Cornelius, Peter declared, in Acts 10:41, "*Not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before God, even to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead.*"

Are any of the "*witnesses*" today especially chosen by God, as were these in Bible times? Could it be said of them that they did actually "*eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead*"? The answer is obviously and positively, "No!"

In Acts 4:33, Luke said, "And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all."

Who gave the witness? The apostles!

But, don't you know, we have no apostles today — none! There is no one today who has seen the Lord, nor witnessed His resurrection!

No Witnesses Of God Today

In sharp and decisive contrast, I present some of the ways that modern witnesses go about their work of witnessing.

Some claim to be witnesses of God; yet, the Bible says in John 1:18, "*No man hath seen God at any time, the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.*"

Such claims, therefore, today are false!

Even if there were real witnesses of God in our world today, they surely would not deny the deity of Jesus and simply make him a created being.

The Bible says, in John 14:8-11, "*Philip saith unto him, Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father? Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works. Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake.*"

My friends, no one but Deity could truthfully make such a declaration of truth — a true witness of God! There is no such witness for God, or Christ, on earth today!

Many people today imagine themselves to be modern witnesses for Christ. But, again I ask, how many living today saw Jesus before His death? Did anyone today see Him in one of His post resurrection appearances mentioned in the closing parts of Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John? No, my friends! Not one!

Has anyone seen Jesus in a special meeting, like Saul of Tarsus, as recorded in Acts, chapter 9? Of course not!

Has anyone seen Jesus, as John, the apostle, did on the isle of Patmos, near the end of the first century? No!

Are modern-day witnesses inspired? No!

Has anyone today received a personal commission from Christ in order to qualify as a witness for the Lord? Surely not!

With so many negative qualifications and the lack of Bible knowledge, it is nothing short of amazing to observe how positive many people can be who claim to be modern day witnesses for Jesus!

Contradiction of Witnesses

My friends, I ask you that if today's modern witnesses have all been called by the Lord to be His witnesses, why is it that they contradict each other so much, and all of them contradict the Bible?

It is seldom that the modern day "witnesses" for God and Jesus Christ give the same testimony.

Their testimonies are sometimes very contradictory.

Those who announce themselves to be modern day witnesses for Christ, almost without exception, believe they have had a special working of grace that has given them (according to their own estimate) a direct operation of the Holy Spirit, who has had a direct impact upon their hearts.

Most of them feel the Spirit directly leads them and their testimony is just as valid as God's own written and confirmed testimony revealed in the Bible!

In fact, the modern witnesses usually place their testimony over and above Bible testimony because they prefer relating their own feelings and experiences over what the Bible says.

One of my own brothers became a Catholic because of his "hot rock" experience. He said he saw an unusual-looking rock lying on the ground and picked it up. He said it was so hot that he almost dropped it. He claimed it was God giving him a message that he needed to do something about his spiritual life, and since he found the rock near a Catholic church, he thought God was telling him that was where he needed to be. It was not God's Holy scriptures that told him where he needed to be.

True Witnesses With True Testimony

The book of Acts is a book of conversions.

The apostles depended upon the preaching of the gospel to convert people; not the telling of some highly emotional experience that is subjective from beginning to end.

The apostles depended fully upon objective truth to move men to gospel obedience.

On Pentecost, Acts, chapter 2, the apostles gave the divine testimony of Christ and His gospel.

In Acts 2:37, it is said, "*Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?*"

You must observe that the Bible says, "when they heard this" — **not** when they "felt this."

If the modern day witnesses are really commissioned to testify for the Lord Jesus Christ, we have some questions that must have some concrete answers:

Why do so many "*witnesses*" not know the Bible answer to the question, "*What must I do to be saved?*"

Why have so many of them never obeyed the gospel, as the people did in New Testament times, when they heard divine witnesses, as revealed in the book of Acts, during the first century?

Why do so many of them believe that salvation is by "faith only"; yet on Pentecost when the 3000 were saved they were answering the call as recorded in Acts 2:38, "*Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.*"?

Why do so many witnesses today think that Jesus will come into the sinner's heart the moment the sinner says, "Lord, save me"? Yet there is not a word of divine testimony like that, promising "remission of sins," found in the Bible from any of the Lord's true witnesses!

But, let us consider another question: Why do so few modern "*witnesses*" seem not to know anything about God's plan of salvation and the Lord's church for which Jesus died?

You know, that's what the New Testament is all about!

The scriptures, the divine testimony of God's witnesses, always, without exception, testify accurately about these matters.

Yet the modern "*witnesses*" know little about the scriptures relating to these matters, and often repudiate, or refuse to accept that which is pointed out to them. What a difference!

Why are the modern "*witnesses*" far more interested in relating their feelings and experiences than they are in relating how people were saved in Bible times; people like those on Pentecost, to which I have referred?

- Or, like the example of the eunuch, in Acts, 8th chapter?
- Or, the jailer, Acts, chapter 16?
- Or, Saul, Acts, chapter 9?
- And all the others recorded in the book of Acts?

Did you ever hear modern day "*witnesses*" who wanted to use the conversions, recorded in the book of Acts, as examples of true conversions and examples of true witnesses for the Lord?

Why is there such a disinterest among the modern day "witnesses" in regard to book, chapter, and verse preaching from the Bible?

These are questions the modern day "witnesses" cannot answer.

What is the solution to the problem?

We need to get back to the Bible and speak where it speaks, be silent where it is silent; call Bible things by Bible names and do Bible things in Bible ways.

We need to speak as the oracles directs, as Peter commanded, in 1 Pet. 4:11, "*If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.*"

There is a very great need today to return to New Testament teaching and practice.

We need to return to the type of preaching and teaching that was done within the first century by true witnesses for Christ.

We need to return to the practices of the New Testament church in its zeal to preach the gospel to the lost and prove our willingness to help those in need.

We need to have abiding interest in keeping the saved, saved.

Conclusion.

The world today desperately needs the gospel of Christ; the presentation of divine truth, the gospel truth and nothing but the truth! But remember, divine truth and testimony comes only from divinely authorized witnesses found in the Bible!