

## Sabbath School Lesson #1 – You Will Be My Witnesses – 30 June-6 July 2018

**C**hrist wants us to be His witnesses, as were His disciples to whom He said, “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” (Acts 1:8). Christ is “the faithful and true Witness” (Revelation 3:14). We are to be joined with Him in witnessing for God, for we read these words: “Ye are My witnesses saith the Lord, and My Servant whom I have chosen” (Isaiah 43:10). The Servant whom God has chosen as His chief witness is the Lord Jesus (Isaiah 42:1-4). If we learn how He testifies, we shall know what kind of testimony is expected of us. Hear what He says: “He that sent Me is true; and I speak to the world those things which I have heard of Him” (John 8:26). “The word which ye hear is not Mine, but the Father’s which sent Me” (John 14:24). “For I have not spoken of Myself; but the Father which sent Me, He gave Me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak” (John 12:49). It is clear, therefore, that our witness is to consist only of the words which God teaches us. The Apostle Paul writes: “Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth” (1 Corinthians 2:12-13). Quoting Isaiah 54:13, Christ said, “It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto Me” (John 6:45).

Sunday: The Restoration of Israel – What a marvelous change the Holy Spirit is able to work in those of whom it takes possession! We have a striking example of this in the case of the apostles. On the morning of the ascension day they asked Jesus: “Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?” (Acts 1:6). Even with the instruction that they had received since Christ’s resurrection, they clung with childish pertinacity to their own crude ideas of His work. They still looked for a temporal kingdom, and a speedy deliverance from the Roman yoke. They were familiar with the prophecies, yet they did not understand them. Look at them ten days later, and note the difference. When the multitude began to inquire the meaning of what they saw, and others began to ridicule, the apostles at once rebuked the scoffers with dignity, and began to unfold the prophecies. There was no hesitation, no apologies. They spoke with authority, as though they had long been familiar with what they were teaching. What made this difference? They were “filled with the Holy Ghost” (Acts 2:4). This was all. But let no one think that the Holy Spirit can accomplish such results for all indiscriminately, and do away with the necessity of the exertion on the part of the individual. By no means. These men had been with one mind persevering in prayer for this very object. They were also of that class mentioned in John 7:17 – they had been, and and were still, followers of Christ; so it was to be expected that they should “know of the doctrine, whether it be of God.” Lastly, they had studied the word of God for themselves, and had done all that they could to understand it. In country living illustration, the wood was laid in position, and the kindlings were all prepared for a fire; all that was needed was the application of the spark to set the whole into a blaze. The Holy Spirit accomplished these wonderful results, because the way was prepared for it to work. Let us remember that that same Spirit will be given as freely to-day, if the necessary conditions are only fulfilled. Many professed Christians still have no understanding of kingdom of Christ, for they have not His Spirit. Whose fault is it that Christians do not have more of the Spirit?

Monday: The Disciples’ Mission – The mission of the disciples, was, as is ours, to preach the word of God. It was to fulfil that mission that the Saviour promised, “Ye shall receive power,” and then “ye shall be witnesses unto Me.” Peter writes, “But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvellous light.” What is our witness to be? For answer we may inquire what it was that Christ witnessed when He was a mortal like ourselves? for His life is our example. And Christ said, when He stood before Pilate, “To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth” (John 18:37). We also, then, are to bear witness unto the truth. But what is the truth? This question is answered in the prayer of Jesus for His disciples, recorded in John 17:17: “Sanctify them through Thy truth; Thy word is truth.” There is a great controversy raging between truth and error, represented by the forces of God and of Satan.

Our lives are a constant testimony either for the principles maintained by God, or for the assertions maintained by Satan. The life of Christ was a constant and unvarying testimony to the truth of the words of God and the perfection of His character and government; our lives give a testimony that is strangely inconsistent with itself. At one time we witness for God; at another time we deny Him. How deny Him? We read of some who “profess that they know Him, but in works

they deny Him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate” (Titus 1:16). We deny God by sinning against Him. Every transgression is a testimony on the side of Satan. But when we obey God, and when we exercise faith and claim His promised power to enable us to do His will, we testify that sin is without excuse; that God’s government is just and right, and that in it every provision is made for the welfare and happiness of His creatures. This is that which we are to witness for God. What an honour to glorify Him before all the universe!

Tuesday: He Will Come Again – The coming of Christ will be visible and personal. There will be no ‘secret rapture,’ no coming secretly and snatching the saints away while others are entirely unconscious of it. Such an idea is a fabrication of a disordered human imagination, with not the slightest foundation in Scripture. He will come like a thief in the night, it is true, in that He will come when people are not expecting Him; but “He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him” (Revelation 1:7). He ascended to heaven in full view of the disciples, until a cloud received Him out of their sight; and as they stood gazing up at the place where they had last seen Him, two angels appeared to them, and said, “This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven” (Acts 1:11). When Christ comes He will come in all the glory of heaven, so it is said to us, “Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory” (Colossians 3:3-4). At the representation of His coming, in the mount, two saints appeared with Him in glory, as representatives of the multitude of glorified saints at the last day. At that time there will be two classes – those who have been asleep in the graves, and those “which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord.” “We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed” (1 Corinthians 15:51-53). “For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the Archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord” (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17). Of those who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, so that they are taken to heaven without ever having died, Elijah was the representative on the mount of transfiguration. In the second chapter of Second Kings we have the account of the translation of Elijah. He never died, but was taken to heaven just as the righteous will be who are alive at the coming of Christ. On the other hand, Moses died, and the Lord buried him in the land of Moab (Deuteronomy 34:1-7). Yet he was present in glory on the mount of transfiguration. How did he get there? Evidently by a resurrection, for there is no other way by which a person once dead can come to life, and go to heaven. “So shall we ever be with the Lord,” wrote the apostle after saying that the dead should be raised first at the coming of the Lord, and then the living should be changed. The only way to be with the Lord is by the translation of the living or by the resurrection of the dead. But let no one get the idea that death is translation. It is not. Those who die are never translated, but if they are righteous they will be translated at the second coming. Moses, however, like Elijah, was taken to heaven before the mass of the saints.

Wednesday: Preparing for Pentecost – Unanimous action is one preparation expected of us as was with the disciples. Note the following texts: “These all continued with one accord” (Acts 1:14); “And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place” (Acts 2:1); “And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul” (Acts 4:32). When there was a question under consideration in the church at Jerusalem, “the apostles and elders, with the whole church” were of one mind in regard to it (Acts 15:22). The Apostle Paul wrote: “Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.” “Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus; that ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 15:5-6). The secret of unanimity: it must come from God. “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 2:5).

Thursday: The Twelfth Apostle – It was through prayers that the disciples chose the twelfth to replace Judas. After Jesus had ascended, the eleven returned to the upper room where they dwelt, and “these all continued *with one accord* in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus” (Acts 1:14). It was while they were thus daily joining in prayer, that Peter stood up in the midst of them (and there were a hundred and twenty gathered together, Acts 1:15) and laid before them the necessity of having another apostle chosen; and after appointing two men, they prayed and asked the Lord to show which one he had chosen; and their prayer was answered (Acts 1:24-26). Like prayers should settle the affairs that concern the church of Christ.