

4.08.18 ~ "Being Witnesses like John"

See Acts 1:1-5... Former book? Theophilus? [*loved by God*] (cf. Luke 1:1-4) Most excellent? Title for a Roman Official, influential Gentile, lawyer defending Paul. Luke provides a legal brief and testimony of Christ's life, death, resurrection (Paul - Felix Acts 23:26; 24:3; Festus 26:25).

There were 10 appearances of Christ recorded during the 40-days between His resurrection and His ascension:

1. Mary Magdalene at the tomb (Mark 16:9; John 20:11-18)
2. The women leaving the tomb (Matthew 28:9-10)
3. Two disciples on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-32), one named Cleopas
4. Peter (1Corinthians 15:5; Luke 24:33-34)
5. Ten disciples, Thomas absent (Luke 24:36-43; Mark 16:14; John 20:19-25)
6. Eleven disciples, Thomas present (John 20:26-29)
7. Seven disciples by the Sea of Galilee (John 21:1-14)
8. 500 disciples on a mountain in Galilee (1Corinthians 15:6; Matthew 28:16)
9. James (1Corinthians 15:7)
10. The apostles at Christ's ascension back into heaven (Acts 1:10-11).

See **Mark 1:1-5...** John called people to confess and repent of sin, as they were immersed in water, so as to identify their need for forgiveness, basically saying, "God help me, I'm a sinner!" **8**, John's baptism of repentance, is contrasted with Jesus' baptism of the Holy Spirit.

Romans 6:3-4, "*Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with Him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.*"

Spiritual baptism immerses [places] us into the Body of Christ by the Holy Spirit, setting us apart as God's children, when we confess our sins and believe in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord (**John 1:12-13; Romans 10:9-10; Ephesians 1:13-14; 1Corinthians 12:13**).

At salvation we are spiritually placed into the Body of Christ, of which (**Colossians 1:18**), "*He [Jesus] is the head of the body, the church.*"

See Acts 1:6-8... Jesus' followers wanted Him to rule over Israel now; Jesus tells them the kingdom will come, but before it does, the gospel message of forgiveness and salvation will be preached to all the world.

The followers of Christ are the ones who are to testify to the Truth of God's forgiveness and eternal life through His One and Only Son, Jesus Christ.

See Acts 1:9-11... Jesus returns to heaven, His followers must wait for the power and presence of God to come to them at Pentecost (**Acts 2:1-4**), when they would receive God's Spirit, equipping and enabling them to serve as eye witnesses of God's divine plan and provision through Christ.

See Matthew 28:19-20... The Greek word used in **verse 19** is *matheteuo* [make disciples], with the meaning of believing, learning, and following; saving faith brings obedience; if you believe, you will seek to behave!

Genuine belief in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior brings immediate salvation (death to life), immediate spiritual baptism (relationship with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit), and immediate discipleship (believing, following, and learning God's Word); for the purpose of going and proclaiming it to unbelievers, because they won't be coming to us.

We are to immerse those who confess Christ into everything the Bible says about Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, teaching them God's Word: equipping, encouraging and exhorting them to serve God with their lives (**Romans 12:1-2; 2Timothy 3:16-17**).

True salvation obeys God's Word, honors the Father, exemplifies the Son, and walks in the power of the Holy Spirit, reaching out with the Love of God - the Message of Christ - to all who will hear and believe.

See 1John 1:1-3... John was an eyewitness to what Jesus said and did, including His death and resurrection. John was not only an Apostle, but he was one of Christ's most intimate followers and friends, along with Peter & James.

Notice how John states that he personally (and the other Apostles) has heard, has seen, and has touched Christ during His earthly ministry - both before and after His resurrection.

John says God came in flesh, providing forgiveness and eternal life. John declares that we have genuine fellowship with the Father through Christ, therefore, we believe, obey and teach what is recorded here.

1John was written 50-60 years after Christ's death, resurrection and ascension; and yet, John has a vivid recollection of what Jesus did and said. How is that possible? (see **John 14:15-17, 25-26**).

John's first-person testimony about God's Son in human flesh, is very important, especially in light of all the false teachers of that day who arrogantly and erroneously proclaimed about a Christ they did not know or believe in, let alone had they seen, heard, or touched him; much like false teachers today who teach heresy.

John 20:29-31, *"Because you have seen Me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name."*

You and I, as God's people, are His ambassadors, our purpose is to testify to others about Jesus Christ, as we prayerfully communicate with God, reading, studying and applying His Word to our life, learning to trust Him for what we need and thanking Him for all that He provides for us.

Everyone who genuinely seeks forgiveness for their sins has eternal life and fellowship with God the Father through Christ the Son (see **2Corinthians 5:18-21**).

God's people are to be witnesses, as was John; we must be ready to share the message of Christ with anyone and everyone who will listen.

God's people are messengers; Christ is the Message. God's people are "table waiters" or servers, Christ is the Bread of Life and the Living Water, freely given.

God has provided all the necessary resources, so that anyone can know Him personally and intimately:

The Bible records and reveals the truth of God's plan, purpose, and provision through Jesus Christ, for He is the only means of salvation.

John 14:6, *"I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."*

The Holy Spirit convicts us that we are all sinners, in need of the Savior.

John 16:8-9, *"When He comes, He will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment: because men do not believe in Me."*

The Believer testifies to God's truth [the Bible] by the power of the Holy Spirit, proclaiming that everyone who genuinely repents and trusts in Christ belongs to God and is saved by God (see **Romans 10:13-15**).

Jesus said (**John 10:27-28**), *"My sheep listen to My voice; I know them, and they follow Me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish."*

How does your personal witness [your life] reflect God's presence, power, and pleasure? Are you following and witnessing for Christ? Are you eager to do so?

1Peter 2:12, *"Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day He visits us."* **15**, *"For it is God's will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish men."*

You and I will not (this side of heaven) hear, see, or touch Jesus, as did John; but we are just as responsible to bear witness and testify about Christ as John did.

You and I must allow the truth of God's Word to change us internally, if we expect for the changes to have an effect externally, where people see us.

It is my prayer that, in the weeks and months to come, we will all increase in our desire to know, to grow in, to stand upon, and to declare, the Message of God through Christ to all who will listen; only God can give peace that surpasses all understanding, only God can forgive sins, only God can grant eternal life, and only God can enable and empower us to be His witnesses

1Peter 3:15, *"in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect."*

And all God's people said? Amen!

Pastor Mike ~ <'(((><