

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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Witnesses Who Were Chosen Beforehand by God

The apostle Peter was residing in a sea-side house in Joppa when servants of a certain man in Caesarea, Cornelius by name, came to him, requesting that he return with them to the house of Cornelius. Peter, assured by divine approval, went with them, where an occasion was provided for Peter to preach the gospel of Christ to a Gentile household. Peter said to them:

“You know of Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power, and how He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him. We are witnesses of all the things He did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They also put Him to death by hanging Him on a cross. God raised Him up on the third day and granted that He become visible, not to all the people, but to witnesses who were chosen beforehand by God, that is, to us who ate and drank with Him after He arose from the dead. And He ordered us to preach to the people, and solemnly to testify that this is the One who has been appointed by God as Judge of the living and the dead.” (Acts 10:38-42)

In the passage mentioned, “witnesses” were people who could confirm the authenticity of their testimony because they saw it and heard it. They could attest to the facts of exactly what took place, the precise truth of what actually happened, because of their personal knowledge of it.

The reliability of these witnesses cannot be successfully contested. They were stable in faculties and flawless in memory, thus their written testimony is just as valid as if we were there and saw it ourselves. They were men of spotless character. Present day attorneys discredit some witnesses for their lack of morals and frequent deceptions, and it is difficult to accept as true the statements, even under oath, of habitual liars. No evidence against these witnesses was ever presented that condemned their character or morals. And certainly the enemies of the gospel of Christ diligently searched for it. The apostles of Christ were falsely accused of drunkenness while they were under the influence of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:13, 15). The apostle Paul, a witness chosen for that role by Christ Himself (Acts 26:16), made his defense before King Agrippa, following an attack from certain Jews who brought “many and serious charges against him which they could not prove” (Acts 25:7). When Paul mentioned the resurrection of Christ, Festus loudly countered his testimony, stating: “Paul, you are out of your mind! Your great learning is driving you mad” (Acts 26:24). An attorney named Tertullus accused Paul thusly: “For we have found this man a real pest and a fellow who stirs up dissension among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes” (Acts 24:5). This is typical of the best that the enemies of the gospel could come up with in their attempts to discredit this witness. Why do you suppose they did not attack the character of the witnesses, charging that they were liars, hypocrites, or immoral men? They had to know that such charges would never stick!

Notice in Acts 10:38-42, that Peter refers twice to “witnesses.” He spoke of “witnesses” of all things that Jesus did and “witnesses” of the resurrected Christ. First, there were many witnesses to the things that Jesus did in a public manner. His mighty signs, wonders and various miracles were openly done, and thus were available for scrutiny and investigation by skeptics. Certainly most of these witnesses were capable of sensory perception and thus could authenticate what they saw and heard. This is exactly what they did (cf. Luke 7:22; Acts 4:20; 22:15; 1 John 1:3).

Second, Peter acknowledged that eye-witnesses of the resurrected Christ were not as plentiful: “God raised Him up on the third day and granted that He become visible, not to all the people, but to witnesses who were chosen beforehand by God, that is, to us who ate and drank with Him after He arose from the dead” (Acts 10:40-41). Thousands of witnesses would not be necessary to establish the truth of Christ’s resurrection from the dead. But the ones who were chosen by God had experienced a very close association with Him for three years prior to His resurrection and continued that intimacy after His resurrection. These witnesses gave the highest caliber testimony. They were not fools, nor could they be fooled. They had every opportunity to examine the resurrected Christ, and they verbally verified His resurrection. All of them did. Luke said of the apostles: “To these He also presented Himself alive after His suffering, by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a period of forty days and speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God” (Acts 1:3). Jesus allowed these chosen witnesses to see “many infallible proofs” [KJV] of His resurrection; these were decisively convincing! The faith of the apostles was grounded upon the hard facts of verifiable experience.

As Peter declared to Cornelius in Acts 10, God was truly with Jesus in everything He did and everything He said. Jesus was seen and heard, and trustworthy witnesses reported enough of it for the world to believe. John wrote: “Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name” (John 20:30-31). Unlike other religions, Christianity is based upon solidly verified historical truth.

Let every Christian thank God for these competent, reliable and truthful witnesses who fulfilled their calling to report what they had seen and heard with great accuracy and in the fear of Almighty God! God ordered them “to preach to the people, and solemnly to testify that this is the One who has been appointed by God as Judge of the living and the dead. Of Him all the prophets bear witness that through His name everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins” (Acts 10:42-43). Friend, do you believe in

Jesus? Are your sins forgiven? Are you prepared to meet Him in judgment?
Can we assist you in our Bible studies and worship assemblies?

- Gary Smalley

Looking In All The Wrong Places

"Then I looked on all the works that my hands had done And on the labor in which I had toiled; And indeed all was vanity and grasping for the wind. There was no profit under the sun" (Ecclesiastes 2:11).

Some years ago, there was a song about "looking for love in all the wrong places." King Solomon is a good example of one making a diligent search to find true happiness and peace in all the wrong places. He experimented with the pleasures of this world, including laughter and mirth (Ecclesiastes 2:1-2); he tried accumulating things — he built houses, planted vineyards, gardens and orchards of all kinds; he tried wine, women, and song (Ecclesiastes 1:3, 8) (I Kings 11:3-4). In his own words, he stated, "Whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them. I did not withhold my heart from any pleasure" (Ecclesiastes 2:10). He acknowledged that all was "vanity and grasping for the wind...no profit under the sun" (Ecclesiastes 2:11).

Because of his great wealth, Solomon began agonizing over what would happen to his possessions after he died. He became concerned over who would inherit them and what they would do with them (Ecclesiastes 2:18-19). Hence, the writer of Ecclesiastes clearly teaches us that most people, like Solomon, are looking in the in the wrong places for happiness and peace.

Our Lord, while still on this earth, set the record straight concerning where happiness and peace can be found. Notice His words: "These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). He also told us to "Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses" (Luke 12:15). Oh if many could come to realize this truth! The Apostle Paul also taught us that the peace of God is found in living for the Lord rather than pursuing after the things of this world (Philippians 4:4-7).

We definitely live in a pleasure-mad society. Multitudes are devoting themselves to the "things" of this world. The cares of this life dominate the lives of so many in today's culture. But all we have to do is go back and look at Solomon — all is vanity and grasping for the wind.

It is so sad to see people "grasping for the wind" to find peace and happiness and always coming up empty. If people would just do what the prophet Jeremiah preached in his day —that they should "ask for the old paths where the good way is, And walk in them" Then, notice what he went on to say: "Then you will find rest for your souls" (Jeremiah 6:16). These words are just as true now as they were in the days of Jeremiah. We need to get back to the old paths of putting the Lord and His kingdom first in our lives (Matthew 6:33); we need to get back to the old paths of parents teaching and disciplining their children and children obeying their parents (Ephesians 6:1-4); we need to get back to the old paths of preaching the word, and stop entertaining, i.e., telling stories and jokes as "sermons" (II Timothy 4:1-4); we need to get back to the old paths of keeping our hearts and lives pure — dressing modestly (I Timothy 2:9), refraining from licentiousness (such as modern dancing), lusts, drunkenness, revelries and drinking parties (I Peter 4:3).

There is no need, nor is there any sense, for us to waste our whole life looking for happiness and peace in the wrong places. Solomon can save us from a life of wasted years. After telling us where not to look for happiness and peace, he then tells us where it is found, "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, For this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every work into judgment, Including every secret thing, Whether it is good or whether it is evil" (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14).

- R.J. Evans

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- > "You can trust a Man who died for you!"
 - > "We don't change God's message -- His message changes us!"
 - > "Suffering from truth decay? Brush up on your Bible!"
 - > "Exposure to the Son may prevent burning!"
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THIS WEEK'S LESSONS: Sunday morning: *"The Foundation of Marriage!"* (Lesson #2, Text: Matt. 19:4-6); Sunday evening: *"Christianity: Caution and Confidence!"* (Heb. 4:15-16).