

THE TESTIMONY OF JESUS

Revelation 1:1-3—Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him, to shew to his bondmen what must shortly take place; and he signified it, sending by His angel, to his bondman John, who testified the word of God, and the testimony of Jesus Christ, all things that he saw. Blessed is he that reads, and they that hear the words of the prophecy, and keep the things written in it; for the time is near.

Revelation 1:17-18—And when I saw him I fell at his feet as dead; and he laid his right hand upon me, saying, Fear not; I am the first and the last, and the living one: and I became dead, and behold, I am living to the ages of ages, and have the keys of death and of hades.

Revelation 19:10—And I fell before his feet to do him homage. And he says to me, See thou do it not. I am thy fellow-bondman, and the fellow-bondman of thy brethren who have the testimony of Jesus. Do homage to God. For the spirit of prophecy is the testimony of Jesus.

Let's have a word of prayer.

Dear Lord, as we gather here in Thy presence our hearts are full of gratitude. We thank Thee that in these troublous days that Thou should grant us this opportunity of peacefully gathering before Thee. We thank Thee for Thy love for us. Thou dost want to prepare us for Thy imminent return. We look to Thee to speak to us. May Thy Spirit speak directly to our spirit. Reveal Christ in us that we may not only hear about the testimony of Jesus, but we may have the testimony of Jesus. We praise and thank Thee because it is Thy desire that we should be those who bear Thy testimony. But Lord, we cannot do it except Thou do it for us. So we want to open ourselves to Thee. May Thy word fall into fallow ground, that there may be fruit unto Thyself. We want to give Thee all the glory. We ask humbly in the name of the Lord Jesus. Amen.

The burden for this time is the recovering of the testimony of Jesus. This is the most vital and important theme in the word of God, and it is our prayer that this may not be just a theme for our time together, but that it will be life and reality to us and in us. May it not be just something for us to talk about. We want to open our hearts to the Lord that the Holy Spirit will send God's word into the depths of our being in order that, by the grace of God, we may be among those who have the testimony of Jesus.

THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST TO HIS BONDMEN

What is the testimony of Jesus? And to whom is that testimony entrusted? In the book of Revelation, we see this term, *the testimony of Jesus Christ*, and we also find the word *testimony* with the implication that it is the testimony of Jesus. This is repeated seven times in the book of Revelation. For instance, in the very beginning of this book it says, "Revelation of Jesus Christ." This revelation of Jesus Christ is given by none other than God the Father for His Son to pass on to His brethren—His bondmen. It was for the purpose of showing His bondmen what must shortly take place. Are we not His bondmen? Are we not those who are being redeemed by His precious blood? Are we not

those who are bought with a price? We do not belong to ourselves. We belong to Him who loved us, and gave Himself for us. We are His bondmen; therefore, we have no right or liberty of our own but have surrendered ourselves completely to Him. It is to such a people that the revelation of Jesus Christ is given.

When John received such a revelation, he began to testify of it—"the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ." In other words, the revelation of Jesus Christ is the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.

Probably, when we read the book of Revelation, our chief interest will be on the prophecies in that book. I remember as a young Christian that I spent much time studying prophecies because I felt they were very interesting. I wanted to know what was going to happen and what God had revealed about coming events. It really satisfied my curiosity. But is that the real reason why God gives us the revelation of Jesus Christ?

If we read very carefully, we see that God's interest is not just to tell us what is going to happen because these things will just satisfy our curiosity. And there is always that temptation when we start to study prophecy and become a student of prophecy, that gradually, we will become almost a prophet. But this is not the reason God gives us the book of Revelation. He reveals all these coming events for one purpose—to reveal Jesus Christ. The whole book of Revelation is to tell us who Jesus is, and what He is. What is He going to be? God's purpose is to exalt His beloved Son. That is the purpose of the book of Revelation.

THE WHOLE BIBLE IS THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST

In a sense, the whole Bible is the revelation of Jesus Christ. The sixty-six books of the Bible seem to include so much, but simply put, it is just the revelation of Jesus Christ—God's eternal purpose. Even before the foundation of the world, even before there was time and space, God had already made up His mind according to His good pleasure. There is something that pleases His heart more than anything else. And according to His good pleasure, He purposed a purpose, and with that in mind, He began to work. He worked through time in order to accomplish His own purpose, and it is none other than the revelation of Jesus Christ. He wants everybody to know about His Son and to know Him as much as He is revealed. He wants to tell everyone what is going to happen to His Son, and that is what the whole Bible is talking about. If we lay hold of the Son, then the whole Bible is an open book. If we are bogged down with all kind of details, then we will be totally confused.

As the last book of the Bible, Revelation sums up all that has been revealed in the preceding sixty-five books, and it is summed up with this term: *the testimony of Jesus*. We see very clearly that unless we know what the testimony of Jesus is, we will miss the whole meaning of the word of God. And if our life is not governed by the testimony of Jesus, then our life is out of the will of God. The testimony of Jesus is to be our very life, and it is that which we testify before the world. Therefore, it is intensely important.

JOHN'S TESTIMONY OF JESUS

We should know what the testimony of Jesus is. Of course, it is impossible to go through the sixty-six books of the Bible and try to tell what the testimony of Jesus is, so we would like to choose one witness. Through that witness, we will see what the testimony of Jesus is. Of the twelve disciples of the Lord Jesus, there is one who was

closest to our Lord. He was the disciple whom Jesus loved. He followed the Lord Jesus from the very beginning to the very end, and he received much revelation from God. From that revelation he has testified to us the testimony of Jesus.

THE WORD WAS IN THE BEGINNING

This disciple wrote one of the four Gospels—the Gospel according to John. And he began in this way: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things received being through Him, and without him not one thing received being which has received being. In him was life, and the life was the light of men” (John 1:1-5a).

This beginning was the beginning of everything. It was even before the beginning we see in Genesis 1, because this was the very beginning. Before the beginning of the heavens and the earth, before there was time, there was a beginning and there was the Word. The Word here is the very expression of God. This Word was with God and was God. Not only that, everything that was created was by Him. He also was life, and the life was the light of man.

THE WORD BECAME FLESH

“And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us (and we have contemplated his glory, a glory as of the only-begotten with a father), full of grace and truth” (v. 14).

One day, the Word became flesh, and we all know this as the incarnation. He came into this world full of grace and truth. The apostle John said, “We have contemplated Him.” It is not just a matter of knowing Him casually, but we pay special attention to Him and study Him. The more we think on Him, the more we see that He has the glory of the Son of God. And this is what we find in the whole Gospel of John.

JOHN’S TESTIMONY OF JESUS IN HIS EPISTLE

“That which was from the beginning, that which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes; that which we have contemplated, and our hands handled, concerning the word of life” (I John 1:1).

“That which was from the beginning” refers to His eternity. Before there was creation, He was already there with His Father.

“That which we have heard” refers to the Old Testament, because in our study of the Old Testament, we have heard about Him.

“That which we have seen with our eyes” refers to the time of His incarnation. When He came in the likeness of man, He was seen, and the apostle John was an eyewitness.

“That which we contemplated” refers to the many people who saw our Lord Jesus when He was on earth but did not know Him. But here we see some who have truly contemplated Him, who have put their hearts into searching and found in that Man the glory of God. He has the glory as of the Son with the Father.

“And our hands handled” refers to His resurrection. After He was resurrected, people could handle Him—some women touched Him.

All this refers to one Person, the Lord Jesus. He is the Word of life, and this is what we see in I John.

JESUS’ TESTIMONY AND REVELATION OF HIMSELF

John was exiled to the island of Patmos for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus (see Revelation 1:9). The word of God and the testimony of Jesus is worthy for a person to suffer. John was willing to suffer exile to a desert island for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. It was while he was in exile that the Lord Jesus gave him what we call the Patmos vision.

John knew the Lord so well. When our Lord was on earth, he was the one who lay upon the bosom of our Lord Jesus and drew out the secret of Judas' betrayal from the Lord. Yet on the island of Patmos, when the heavenly vision was revealed to him, he saw a revelation of our Lord Jesus that he had never seen before. He saw the Lord in glory as the great High Priest over His church. When He saw that vision, he fell down as dead. Then our Lord touched him and raised him up and began to say something very important to him. This is what our Lord testified of Himself.

He is First

The Lord said in Revelation 1:17b, "I am the first and the last." He is the first. But in Revelation 1:8 it says, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, saith the Lord God, he who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty." This is a description given by God, and yet it is the same as proclaimed by the Son. He is the beginning of all things, and this is the will of God. Let's put it another way: if anything does not begin with Christ, it is something unworthy. Every beginning has to be Christ, and He has to have the first place in all things.

Colossians 1 tells us that it is the will of God that Christ should have the first place in everything. Everything has to begin with Him. Our life begins with Him, everything that we do begins with Him. He *must* have the first place in our lives, and this will bring glory to our Lord Jesus. Therefore, it has to be a reality—not just a word, because this is a testimony. We need to testify to the world that our Lord Jesus is the first in our life.

Have we really considered this matter before the Lord? Is the Lord first in our life? What is first in our life? It is easy for us to say that Jesus is first; but is it a false testimony or a true testimony? Can we stand before Him and say, "Lord, You are the first in my life"? Today, how often we put other things first before the Lord—even ourselves. Is He my first consideration, or am I my first consideration? Or maybe it is my family, my children, my future, my own business that I have put first in my life.

How this testimony tests us! Is Christ Jesus really the first in my life? This is the testimony of Jesus. If we really allow the Lord Jesus to be first in our life, then we have the testimony of Jesus. It is true that we may suffer because of that testimony but it is worthwhile. And the word of the testimony is true because if we really have such a life, then it will overcome the enemy. Revelation 12:11 tells us that the manchild—those overcomers among Christians—overcame their accuser, Satan, because of the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony. They testified that Jesus was first in their life; therefore, their word was powerful and shut the mouth of the accuser. The testimony of Jesus is a real thing, but it has to be true in each of our lives. We need to give Him that first place in our life.

He is Last

The Lord said, “I am not only the first, I am also the last.” This does not mean that He is the last one in my life, nor does it mean that He is in the last place. In other words, I am the first, my family second, my job third, church fourth, and the last is Christ. No, the last here means that He is the end. Everything has to be summed up in Him. Everything has to have Him as the One who has the last word. To put it in another way: He is the purpose of my life. This is what our Lord Jesus testified of Himself, and this testimony is entrusted to us.

He is the Living One

He is the living One. This speaks of His essence, how He is life itself. “In him was life, and the life was the light of man” (John 1:4). Outside of Him there is no life; everything is death. He is the living One. Thank God, He lives in us; but are we really living by His life in this world? What is Christian life? What is spiritual life? It is not living by our life. You may be trying to live the best you can and even appear to people to be most godly, but if it is from yourself, it is dead work. Dead work is something we have to repent of because Christ is our life. We have to live by His life day by day. Thank God, He ever liveth to make intercession for us unceasingly that He may save us to the uttermost. Therefore, the most important thing in knowing Christ is to know that He is the living One. How much do we really experience of Him as life?

His Death

“And I became dead.” This speaks of His first coming into this world. It is the strangest thing that the living One became dead. Why did He become dead? He was the opposite of death. Yet He came to this world and experienced death. That speaks of His crucifixion. He entered into death, robbed death of its power, and delivered all those who throughout their lives are under the bondage of the fear of death. That is the finished work of Christ on Calvary’s cross. No one can take His life. He said, “I lay down my life of Myself. I have authority to lay it down and I have authority to take it up” (see John 10:18). He is the only One who has entered into death and come out victorious.

He is Living to the Ages of Ages

Then He said, “Behold, I am living to the ages of ages.” This speaks of the present state of the Lord Jesus. After He accomplished the work of redemption, He ascended on high and is now living to the ages of ages, because He has overcome.

He Has the Keys of Death and Hades

Then He said, “I have the keys of death and of Hades.” The keys of death and of Hades were formerly in the hands of Satan, the adversary of God, and he used them to put people into bondage. But thank God, the keys of death and Hades are now in the hand of the victorious Lord, and we find that it is a present ministry of our Lord Jesus to us. Although He is now in heaven, He is still busily ministering to His church. He is applying all that He has accomplished on Calvary’s cross upon each one of us personally, in order for us to live a victorious life, glorify His name, and bear His testimony, that we may be those who bring back the King. This is the testimony of Jesus, and this testimony has been entrusted to the church.

THE PROMISE OF THE COMFORTER

“But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes forth from with the Father, he shall bear witness concerning me; and ye too bear witness, because ye are with me from the beginning” (John 15:26-27).

After the last supper of our Lord Jesus with His disciples, He poured out His heart to them. While He was talking to the ones whom He loved—and loved to the uttermost—He gave them a precious promise. It was the promise of another Comforter; another One like Him. While He was with them, He was their Comforter. In other words, He was alongside with them and took care of them. However, it came time for Him to leave them; but He did not leave them as orphans. He said, “I go, but I will send you another Comforter, One who is like Me. I could only be alongside with you, but this another Comforter that is coming, will be in you, and He will never leave you. And this Comforter is the Holy Spirit.

THE TESTIMONY IS ENTRUSTED TO THE SPIRIT AND THE CHURCH

When the Comforter, the Spirit of truth, came, His mission was to bear witness concerning the Lord Jesus. The Holy Spirit came for one purpose, and that is to testify to our Lord Jesus. He is the Custodian, as it were, of the testimony of Jesus. But not only did our Lord Jesus entrust His own testimony to the Holy Spirit, He also said: “And ye too bear witness, because ye are with Me from the beginning.” This means that the testimony of Jesus is not only entrusted to the Holy Spirit, but it is also entrusted to the church. Before the Lord Jesus ascended, He told His disciples: “The Holy Spirit having come upon you, and ye shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

The Lord Jesus told his disciples to wait in Jerusalem. Naturally speaking, the disciples had seen the Lord Jesus risen from the dead, and now they were going to see Him ascend to heaven. Knowing all these glorious facts, they were most anxious to go out and bear witness for the Lord. They thought they were well equipped for it, but strangely, our Lord Jesus said, “Wait. Go back to Jerusalem, and wait for the Holy Spirit to come. And when He shall come, you will receive power and be My witnesses, both in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

Thank God, one hundred and twenty of His disciples listened to the Lord. They returned to Jerusalem and gathered together in the upper room. They spent ten days waiting for the coming of the Holy Spirit, but they did not just wait passively. They waited actively, because they gave themselves to continuous prayer with one accord. When the day of Pentecost came, the Holy Spirit came down, and they were all filled and began to bear witness of the Lord Jesus. Here you find the secret of fulfilling the mission of bearing the testimony of Jesus.

THE SECRET OF THE EARLY CHURCH

As we read the book of Acts, we see how powerful and glorious their testimony was. How successfully they bore the testimony of Jesus! Not only that, within thirty years, the gospel had spread to the end of the earth—not only in Jerusalem, but in all Judea, Samaria, and even to the end of the world which was Rome at that time.

More than that, we see how those who believed in the Lord Jesus gathered together in the name of the Lord Jesus. They persevered in the teaching and the fellowship of the apostles, in the breaking of bread and in prayer. They loved one another, and they were delivered from their self-possessiveness. They began to live a way of life that was never known in the world before.

Every nation has its own way of life. The Jews have their way of life, the Gentiles have their way of life; every nation has its own way of life. But here was a new heavenly way of life that was never seen on earth before. It surpassed all the barriers and all the distinctions of this world. They overcame the distinctions of race, and Jews and Gentiles came together as one. In this body, there is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision, neither bondman nor freeman. They were all one in Christ Jesus. How they exalted the Lord Jesus! Their way of life was the way of Christ because Christ said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father but by Me." In the early church, they really walked in the way of Christ. How could it be?

Their secret is the fact that the Holy Spirit was with them. They were filled with the Holy Spirit. They were under the whole control of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the power of God, and He is the only One who is able to bear the testimony of Jesus. How faithful He is! How glorious He is! If we lean upon Him, and if we truly are under His full control, it is "not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the Lord." That was the secret of the church in the early days. They did not depend upon themselves. They were people just like us and had their problems just like us. Yet there is one thing that was prominent with them. The presence of the Holy Spirit was real and living and totally in charge in their midst. All of those believers surrendered themselves to God. No wonder they were able to bear the testimony of Jesus. This is what you find in the beginning.

The testimony of Jesus has been entrusted to the church; therefore, the church is supposed to be responsible for that testimony. And that is what we find in Revelation 2 and 3. In chapter 1 we see the heavenly vision. Then in chapters 2 and 3, in the beginning of every letter to the seven churches in Asia, there is a portion from the heavenly vision in chapter 1. In other words, Christ has committed His testimony to His church, and today He is the great High Priest ministering to the church. He is to see whether the church is able to fulfill His testimony. And He is well able to supply the oil and the discipline that is needed for the church to be brought into a place where we are able to fulfill the testimony of Jesus.

Let's have a word of prayer.

Dear Lord, we do praise and thank Thee that Thou would reveal Thyself to us, that Thou would commit Thyself to us. Oh Lord, we do confess that in ourselves there is neither strength nor wisdom. Teach us how to really trust Thy Spirit to bring us into that fullness. Reveal Thyself to us, oh Lord, and bring us into submission to Thee, that Thou mayest be able to fulfill what Thou has entrusted to us. We want to give Thee all the glory. We ask in Thy precious name. Amen.