



Called to Be Witnesses

IN A WOODED AREA not far down the street, there is a small church with a large sign in front. Written on the sign is the message, “We Are Called to Be Witnesses, Not Judges.” Deeply thoughtful! Profoundly true!

Now that we have arrived at the postmodern world, where the only recognized authority is *me, myself* and *I*, it is time for us to ponder the judgment of the Christ event. At Calvary Jesus paid the price for his own necessary use of authoritative command, possession and power. He paid the price for the negative effects of natural free process and human free will. Furthermore, he paid the price for what he himself had earlier done — namely, “. . . [to] form the light, and create darkness: . . . [to] make peace, and create evil . . .” (Isaiah 45:7; cf. 1 Corinthians 6:20; 7:23).¹

In his climactic act at Calvary, God, acting as Jesus Christ, constituted both the Judge and the Judgment (John 12:31; cf. 5:22, 27; 9:39; 16:8, 11). For nearly 2,000 years he has been calling for witnesses to represent him and to stand on his behalf. As wise men, shepherds, and Simeon and Anna in the Temple, were representative witnesses at Christ’s First Coming (Matthew 2:1, 2; Luke 2:8-21, 25-38), so we are called to be representative witnesses in anticipation of his promised Second Coming (*parousia*) (Acts 1:8; cf. Deuteronomy 19:15; Matthew 18:16; 2 Corinthians 13:1).

What, then, should we be and do as God’s authentic witnesses at this time of crisis?

1. We should hear, accept and eagerly respond to God’s call for witnesses.

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2. We should surrender to God all our propensities to command, possess and exert power over “others.” As Jesus relinquished command, possession and power at Calvary and then rose to manifest his everlasting self-emptying love, so he calls us to yield to him all our personal self-inflating inclinations.

3. Jesus invites us to accept all his gifts — faith, hope, love, peace, rest, tranquility, truth, life, breath, and all his other gifts. We do not have these attributes — that is, we do not possess, nor do we have the power to manifest, any of these gifts in and of ourselves.

4. Jesus asks us to respond to his gracious gifts by returning and sharing them with all “others” — family, friends, neighbors, enemies and all! As Jesus declared, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself” (Luke 10:27; cf. Matthew 5:43-45).

5. Having shared God’s gifts, let us together celebrate his presence and his imminent appearing.

6. As members of the living community of witnesses, let us eagerly anticipate the final resurrection of all the dead.

7. Finally, let us rejoice in the forthcoming eternal transformation of all Creation.

As we stand on the threshold of eternity, God is calling us to be his witnesses. Will you, will we —

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Tell it to every kindred and nation,
Tell it far and near;
Earth’s darkest night will fade with the dawning
Jesus will soon appear.

Nations again in strife and commotion,
Warnings by the way;
Signs in the heavens,
Unerring omens,
Herald the glorious day.

Children of God look up with rejoicing;
Shout and sing His praise;
Blessed are they who, waiting and watching,
Look for the dawning rays.

Refrain:

Hail Him the King of glory,
Once the Lamb for sinners slain;
Tell, tell the wondrous story,
Jesus comes to reign.”²

Endnotes

1. See “The Gospel for the Postmodern World III: The ‘Other Side’ of God,” *Outlook* (January 2008); “The Gospel for the Postmodern World IV: The Gift of God,” *Outlook* (February 2008); “The Gospel for the Postmodern World V: The Gift Abused,” *Outlook* (March 2008).
2. Henry de Fluter, “Tell It to Every Kindred and Nation” (1916), at cyberhymnal.org/htm/h/a/hailhimk.htm

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