

The Vastness of the Testimony of Jesus

Our intelligence services talk about times, certain times and seasons, when they hear a lot of chatter, chatter on line is an indication that something evil is going to happen. The enemy is infiltrating, getting ready for some kind of terrorist act. And I am reminded that two days ago Brother Sparks in his Daily Devotion had a wonderful devotion which I would like for us to think about for just a moment. He was sharing from that Scripture; "Him who hears what the Spirit is saying to the churches," and in this devotion he basically said, "If we do not have an inner ear that can become silent and hear the Lord, it is almost impossible for us to get through these times. There is so much chatter, and even over this last week there was tremendous chatter going on in the world just like it says in Psalm 2: "The nations are all in an uproar." There is so much chatter. Now can we be silent and with that inner ear hear what the Spirit says to the church? I think it is so vital in this time.

So let's pray, asking the Lord to silence our wearied hearts, silence our worried hearts, and help us to see what is important in these last days.

Our Father, we come to You and before Your throne even as we have worshipped. We ask that You would give us a silent ear, a silent heart that can hear You speak to us in the inner depths of our being. We realize that when all is said and done, we are actually spirit beings, spirit, soul and body. Lord, we want to loose the precious treasure of that which is within us. We do not want the enemy to capture our inner ear. So we would cut him off in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by His precious blood ask for Your Holy Spirit to speak to us in this important hour. We are so thankful to be together and for giving us this opportunity. For those who are here for the first time, for those who have been here for forty-five years, Lord, may You help us all to see more of the glory of the testimony of Jesus. And we pray in His precious name. Amen.

As you know we have three speakers. I am glad that I go first because we are speaking on the same subject, speaking from different angles, but it would be impossible for us not to tread all over each other's messages. So I am glad I get to go first. Unfortunately, I feel (of course we are all very self-centered,) that my message is the most impossible one because it says in brief that I am to explain the testimony of Jesus. Now that at first may sound like a very simple thing, but let me tell you. I remember, and I do not know why the Lord sovereignly arranged this thing, but I went to that first Randolph Macon Conference.

I was a young pastor in a church down in Raleigh, thirty-one years old, and some precious saints in Raleigh asked me if I would come to that conference. I did not know much about who Lance or Stephen Kaung were, but I came along. Now all I can say is, and here is my point, I am going to share things today as much as the Lord helps me, but the Lord has to sovereignly unveil the testimony of Jesus.

So I would just like to confess that I, as a thirty-one year old minister, had never seen the reality of the testimony of Jesus when I came to the conference that year in 1975. However, the Lord sovereignly opened it up, and I saw something that has caught me ever since. So how do you explain something that has to be caught? But my hope is that some of you like myself was sovereignly appointed to be here. Now the wonderful thing about the testimony of Jesus is for

those who would see it even this year for the very first time, it is absolutely devastatingly wonderful. It will change your life and your worldview. And the good news is that no matter how long ago you saw the testimony of Jesus there is more to be seen, and so with that hope I want to share with you all in these days my bit. And I hope I can take as much of David's and Lucio's material as possible, because I always remember the days when Lance and Stephen had eaten up all my messages and left me with a bunch of jokes to share in my remaining time.

I Am Doing a Great Work

The verse that is before us which is the theme for the conference is from Nehemiah 6:3: "So I sent messengers to them saying, 'I am doing a great work and I am unable to come down.'"

In sharing the testimony of Jesus, I want to quickly look at the five portions within Revelation where the testimony of Jesus is mentioned. This is just a little phrase, 'the testimony of Jesus,' but I think it uncovers something tremendous.

In Revelation chapter 1:1-3 we find the first one: "The revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave Him to show to His bond-servants, the things which must soon take place; and He sent and communicated it by His angel to His bond-servant John, who testified to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw. Blessed is the one who reads and hears the words of the prophecy, and keep the things which are written; for the time is near."

Chapter 1:9: "I, John your brother and fellow participant in the tribulation and kingdom and perseverance in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus."

In Chapter 12:17 we find some saints overcoming the dragon even upon this earth. "So the dragon was enraged with the woman and went off to make war with the rest of her children, who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus."

Revelation 19:10: "Then I fell at His feet to worship him. But he said to me, 'Do not do that; I am a fellow servant of yours and your brothers and sisters who hold the testimony of Jesus; worship God. For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.'"

Revelation 20:4: "Then I saw a thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshipped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark on their forehead and on their hand; and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years."

Deconstructed Christianity

We are experiencing this day as I said a lot of chatter and there is even a lot of chatter in the Christian world over a growing concern if you read Christianity Today, Christian Post, Christian social media, but there is a lot of chatter going on and there is great concern regarding the loss of what is called 'the Christian worldview.' There are some Christian colleges that sort of boast if

you go to them you will learn the Christian worldview. And people are concerned today for three reasons primarily.

Number one, because of post modern thought that has infiltrated into the Christian Church and taken the inspiration out of the Bible. Post modern thought basically says, "Well, every man writes according to his opinion even in the Bible. And we now know that Jesus could not have been sinless; His is just like all the rest of us. We no longer really believe in hell; it is sort of an outmoded scare tactic, an ancient religion. We do not believe that Jesus is the only way to salvation. There must be another way. So they have a Christianity now and it is called deconstructed Christianity for those who want to know the technical term. And they are very concerned about that.

Second of all, they are concerned because there are some preachers going around who twist Bible verses to promote their agenda whether it is Maga or Bill Back Better or abortion rights or prosperity gospel, sexual liberty, they all find that within the Scriptures and they are twisting the Scriptures and the Christian worldview. It is now become secular. So the Christians now are secular, this worldly worldview of how to succeed, how to become rich as a Christian, how to live a happy Christian life, this kind of thing. But the most concerning thing is really a true thing. The young generation is now addicted to social media, and with it are being brainwashed with the worldly and destructive worldviews, antichristian worldviews. And the thing that disturbs me, I read these things is that neuro-scientists are saying that the young people's brains are actually being reprogrammed. There are some neurological variations that is occurring because of this constant addition to their iPhones and other things.

A True Christian Worldview is Centered in Christ

So the Christian leaders, all the Bible believing ones, all say what we need is a basis of the Christian worldview which is a true belief in the Bible. And of course, we know that is true. A society that is built on Biblical truths, family values, rule of law, sacredness of life, respect of authority, godly wisdom is a country that will be blessed because these things surely are true. And if one abides by them there will be blessing. But the Bible itself shows us clearly that if we just adhere to an outward letter of the Bible, we do not truly come into a Christian worldview because a Christian worldview is centered around the testimony of Jesus. So we may do outward things, and we might believe certain things about the Bible. and of course each theological school, all these nonorthodox and others. All these schools that are out there now say we have the Christian worldview, but the fact of the matter is theology will not give us a Christian worldview. A revelation of Jesus Christ will give us a Christian worldview.

Revelation 19:10 show us that in its simplest form of this verse it says, "The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." In other words there is something prophetic when you see life in the testimony of Jesus. It is not just something laid out as logos; there is some rhema there. There is some ferment there. There is something of the spirit there that keeps on showing us the things of Jesus. And so we see that if we are truly to have a Christian worldview, Jesus has to be in the center and on His throne.

So we want to begin sharing and praying that the Lord would give us a revelation. And what I am going to try to share, (fool that I am) is to give us a sort of introduction as I am trying to explain the vastness and the power of the testimony of Jesus. Now is that an impossible task? Of course it is.

This revelation of the testimony of Jesus is frankly not only unseen but over looked by most contemporary scholars and preachers. Why is it? There is one reason for it. It is because scholars and preachers are trying to develop a theology that is compatible with this worldview of things. So they are interested in constructing but not realizing that their truly Christ-centered worldview is not compatible with this worldview.

As an example, Jesus implies when He shared this revelation of the kingdom of God that He came to testify of it. Jesus says in effect that the revelation of the kingdom of God cannot even be seen unless you understand the context that the kingdom of God is now at hand, and the soon coming of the Son of Man should be at the center of our worldview. So if you think you can devise a theology that implies that life just continues to go on endlessly as in the days of Noah where people are marrying and partying and feasting or even in the days of Lot where things were financial and you were talking about building and working and doing things. If that is our worldview that this life just keeps going on and on and on, we are missing the fact that our worldview has to do with the soon appearing of the Son of Man.

Paul said, "Your life is now risen from the dead, so keep seeking the things above where Christ is seated at the right hand of God." That is the beginning of our worldview as it works out. And John basically says in this letter that this world and all of its schemes and lusts are passing away, so develop a Christianity that works in this world which is fatal because it is passing away.

Nehemiah's Christian Worldview

So a Christian worldview that is a secular Christian view is not truly a Christian worldview. By contrast imagine the worldview that inspired Nehemiah to do this great work of building the wall around Jerusalem. Now this guy was the cupbearer for the king of Persia living in Susa, a very fancy, elaborate capital. He was a man of great nobility, high up. He had a very comfortable life, but he was not interested in that at all because this great work had laid hold of him. He said, "No, no, I am doing a great work." He was not burdened about being a better Persian or burdened about being a good Jew in Persia. No, he was about the great work. Listen to Nehemiah. Nehemiah mentions this word 'work' twenty-two times in this little book. That is how preoccupied he was with this work. Let me just give you five verses where this work is mentioned so you can see how absolutely enthralled he was with this great work.

Nehemiah 2:18 talks about the noble work. "Then they said, "Let's arise and build so they put their hands to the noble work." It says good work, but the Hebrew word does not just mean good like, "Yeah, this is okay. This is cool." No, this is a noble work. Isn't that wonderful!

Nehemiah 4:6 and he talks about the work that must be done from the heart, out of first love. "So we built the wall and the entire wall was joined together to half its height for the people had a heart to work." It is 'mind' in my version, but it is actually 'heart' in the Hebrew. You have to have to have a heart to work this great work.

The third thing is that it is a vast work. No wonder he was preoccupied with it. Nehemiah 4:19 says, "I said to the nobles, the officials and the rest of the people, this work is vast and extensive." He is talking about the wall. We had to go out that way a mile and that way a mile and a half, and that way two miles. This great work he was involved in was a vast work, and he sensed the importance in that vastness.

Nehemiah 6:3 actually implies that this great work is an important work. I sent the messengers saying, "I am doing an important work, and I am not able to come down." "What? If you are just a cupbearer for the king, that is tiny-mite business." "I am doing something great here."

The final one. They acknowledge that even the enemies acknowledged. Nehemiah 6:15-16: "That it was in fact a great work because it was God's work. "So the wall was completed in fifty-two days." When all our enemies heard about this and all the nations surrounding us saw it, they lost their confidence for they realized that this work had been (Hebrew) done from our God." My version says: "It was accomplished with the help of our God." No, it is not like we were helping God; He was helping us. This came from the work of our God. And the great work is when you see that it is God's work. And thank God, we have a privilege of sharing it.

Let's ask this question: Who on this whole earth besides this small remnant of people would possibly think that building those busted down walls of Jerusalem was a great work? Sanballat and the enemies of Nehemiah laughed about this work. "Are you kidding me," they said. "Even if a fox could climb upon the wall it would fall over. What are you engaged in here.? This is folly."

The king allowed Nehemiah to go back but it was mainly because his wife convinced him. It was not like the king saw that there was something valuable to it necessarily. But the main thing was this. The majority of Jewish rabbis, priests and scholars remained in Babylon with no apparent burden for this great work in Jerusalem. Now this is an eye opener. A small remnant of 50,000 out of two million went back to engage in this recovery work. But where were all those great scholars? Well, of course, we will understand in just a moment. Because the Jewish worldview during the captivity had become linear, earthbound without vision, or as Solomon puts it, "A whole to-do about life under the sun." And so the scholars were taking apart the Torah and talking about what this verse means and how many steps you could take on the Sabbath. That is what they were interested in because they thought life was just going to go on and on and on.

So here they were in Babylon, and now they had to build synagogues because the temple was out. It was over. "We are going to have to adjust our religion because we used to have a religion that involved sacrifices, but no, no that has to go too. We have to alter our understanding of how our sins will be forgiven because we do not have the sacrifices. We have to modernize, we have to adapt, we have to change sacrifices into giving money to the synagogue and worshipping in the synagogue. We will make changes here because after all we are living in this world."

The Modern Christian View is not a Sacrifice of Your Life

I guess that would imply now as we bring it down to modern times. This conference on the great work is irrelevant to most of Christianity. What are you talking about? A Christianity that involves the total sacrifice of your life? To do something for the Lord that gives no glory to you and all the glory to Him? It involves a promise of a lot of sacrifice, heart aches and hard work. The Lord gets all the glory, and you get the sacrifice more once the temple gets built. So this conference is irrelevant, isn't it? Of course, not to everybody, thank God! But there are those who believe in making the Christian life a school of success, writing books on how to succeed and be rich. A couple of days ago I was out on the gulf course playing golf with a guy who is an ex-marine. He is kind of a local hero for many reasons, but I am just playing with this man, and he said to me, "Yeah, those Christians! You know I do not understand it. All the Christian talk I hear is Christians talking about how to get rich. All the pastors are talking about how to get rich, and you know something. He misquoted this Scripture, "It is hard for the eye of the needle to go through the camel's eye than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." Now isn't that what the Bible says? So I had to correct him on the Scripture, but I had to admit that for most of Christianity that is what is important. Hey, come on. I want to be a Christian and prove that God prospers me and makes me rich. I am a testimony.

Somehow Nehemiah and this remnant was convinced that they were involved in a great work of building. How did they come to that? Now I am not going to say that all those 50,00 that came back clearly saw what was going on. Some of them came back because they missed Jerusalem. Some came back because maybe they remembered the past days, and they were nostalgic. Some came back because they were pressed with wondering why Cyrus would suddenly say, "I am saying, go back and build." So some went back because they were amazed at the miracle that happened in Cyrus's life.

What Stirs People to Enter into the Great Work?

However, something more was going on there. What stirred these people to get involved in this great work? Well, it was the God of heaven that did something sovereign. Now this is what makes the testimony of Jesus and the testimony of recovering the house of God, something that has to be seen by an unveiling of a sovereign God. And by a sovereign God we mean that God unveils to whom He unveils. It is something quite sovereign. I am sure that I could say that for those with a real heart for God He wants to unveil Himself.

But there was something else in the heart of God. He wanted a house in which man could dwell with Him. But He was now called the God of heavens, if you notice in Exilic literature He was called the God of the heavens because He was no longer the God of heaven and earth, because there was no temple or testimony on earth. Of course, every individual Jew I guess you could say was a testimony, but nothing that the world could see. God on this earth was missing, and so the God of heaven was longing for a habitation for His people. He was longing for a place where there could be an earthly throne for His Son to reign. He was looking for a city that would be the administrative center of a kingdom that He wanted to create all over the earth.

And of course, in the great mystery of this plan He needed Jerusalem rebuilt so that the Lamb of God could die in Jerusalem for the sins of the whole world. What would have happened if Jerusalem had never been rebuilt? Where would His Son have ever been born and then die, and then offer the whole system of law to become a system of grace. So much was at stake, but who would know these things unless there was some sovereign unveiling of God's heart for a recovery of the testimony of the house of God? But somehow Nehemiah and Ezra and Zerubbabel and Jeshua the high priest and others involved in this recovery saw something and said, "This is the most important thing because it is what is on God's heart, and this is what we are trying to introduce.

God's Sovereign Unveiling of His Testimony

God sovereignly unveiled a testimony to Himself upon this earth. We remember when we first saw this happen among the dear children of Israel when they came out of Egypt and began to go from place to place. He set up a Tent of Testimony. Why? There was the cloud by day and fire by night to say, "God is here on this earth. And within that Tent of Testimony was the ark of testimony. Why? Because it told of a testimony to the children of Israel. "God is here in the midst." Inside of the ark of testimony were the tablets of testimony where God's righteousness could be revealed. You see, there is always the necessity of a testimony here on this earth for God. Now these outward things, the tent, the ark, the stones are the outward things, but they had some transcendent value because they did testify to the Lord God. The tabernacle testified as God said, "That I may dwell with man." The love of God was seen by the tent. And the holiness of God was seen by the ark, and the righteousness of God was seen by the tablets. You see, God has a testimony on this earth. That is what He desires.

So we come to these last days, and we ask the question: where is the testimony of the house of God? Where is the testimony of Jesus on earth today? Now we know by right it should be the church. Well, do we see the living God in the church today? Do we see His holiness, His righteousness, and His love? When people look from the outside, do they see the presence of God? Is He dwelling among His people? Thank God, I think in many assemblies the answer would be a humble 'yes,' at least at times. But in these last days the Lord wants to sovereignly unveil the testimony of Jesus, to recover the testimony of the house of God among America's churches.

So having said that I do not want to discourage you now, but you know there is a lot of places where I do not think Jesus is very clearly seen. They call themselves Christians, but here is the good news. Bible history 101, have you taken that course? Bible history 101 says that whenever the end of an age or dispensation is about to take place and before the next age enters in, God sovereignly unveils a testimony of Jesus. So that brings us to this matter that all down through history we have seen God unveiling Himself just before some great change took place.

The Old Testament's Unveilings of the Testimony

I will just mention some Old Testament moments. At the end when God was going to have to judge mankind because it was so evil, God unveiled the testimony to Noah, and he had a great work to do. He built that stupid ship for a hundred years. You talk about a great work, but what

it did was save the family of God. Think about that. How important it was that God sovereignly unveiled that to him.

Or when God wanted to people His house. What did He do? He sovereignly unveiled the glory of God to Abraham that his seed might become the children that would bear Jesus the Son of God.

How about when it was time once again for there to be the house of God establishing Jerusalem. God sovereignly unveiled His testimony for the house of God in David's heart. This became David's desire for the house of God.

And then we have here in Nehemiah which is part of a hundred year recovery of the testimony of the house and the city of God, and they were doing this great work the whole time.

The New Testament's Unveilings of Christ

Which brings us to the New Testament and the unveiling of Jesus Christ and the coming of His kingdom. We sang last night "Crown Him the Lord of years, the Potentate of time." I like that statement, 'The Potentate of time.' Sounds good to a New Yorker's ear for some reason.

We are at the first stage now of talking about the testimony of Jesus, and so the first question that we must face is this: Do we see the throne? We will not see the great work unless we see the throne. The Potentate of time reveals to us that the Lamb of God is sitting on the throne of God holding the scrolls of history in His hands. Again the question is: regardless of all the chatter you hear that is going on around us, who is in control of this world? It is a vital issue if we would do a great work. If we think others are in control then we are in a lot of trouble. We might do some kind of hidden work in our little assemblies, but we do not want to go outside for fear of some kind of problem coming up. If it is near the end of an age, then the Lord is about to sovereignly unveil the testimony of Jesus further. That is an indication in the Bible. Whenever the age is coming to an end, suddenly people see, "Wow, look at the Lord's burden for the house of God.

When Jesus came, what problems He caused! In Jesus' day Israel had no sense of any great change which was about to take place. So even the tribulations that they were going through which Jeremiah clearly said was Jacob's trouble, they just thought was part of life. All of those troubles and persecutions that the Jews went through, they did not think that had anything to do with God's burden or God's testimony. They were just trying to make it as best they could whatever the situation was, and yet when Jesus came to the face of the earth, there was a remnant who sensed the times were changing. They were called in the Old Testament, Daughters of Zion, those who feared the Lord, those whose spirit the Lord had stirred, those looking for the constellation of Israel, those who were waiting the promise of the Father. These people sensed the change.

So we start by asking this question: Do we sense that we are near the edge of the age, that this dispensation is all but over, that Jesus is very near, that the Perusia has taken stages closer and closer to this age? Because if that is the case, then the sovereign unveiling of the Lord is what is needed today, that the testimony of Jesus would be born. That testimony of Jesus, which

initiates the great work, is necessary for the great transition to occur. For the Lord to come back to this earth there must be a great work that is finally done in the church.

What is the Testimony of Jesus?

We still have not defined what the testimony of Jesus is yet. Imagine that powerful effect that the testimony of Jesus had when He came as the kingdom of God. There He came, and Jesus and John the Baptist were pronouncing a great work. God was building His kingdom. God was drawing His people in. Repent, the Kingdom of God is at hand. John the Baptist and Jesus proclaimed these things, and it was so powerful it split Israel in two. That is how powerful the testimony of that age was that was coming. Now most of Israel was living under the Roman rule. They did not like it, but they were doing it, and they were living according to the institutional practices of Judaism with temple worship and the rituals, and all those kind of things. The leaders just wanted to maintain the status quo. They did not have any sense that the whole change was about to happen. Nevertheless, there was a small remnant. We see them at the beginning of Luke. They were waiting for the coming of the Lord and for something to happen. So they began to sense the chatter of the angels as things were being prepared for the change of that age. What was the great vessel that could change the age from the law to this age of grace and finally to the age of the kingdom? It was the spiritual unveiling of the testimony of Jesus. And when the testimony of Jesus was unveiled, a great vast powerful epic changing work began to be done just before the end of the age. Now what was that?

First of all let's define this word 'witness,' this word 'testimony.' There is a Greek word that is used that we all probably know. Now I know for some of you this is elementary kid stuff, but maybe some people have not heard this before. When we are dealing with this word of being a witness, bearing testimony, we are talking about a Greek word 'marturia' from which we get the word martyr. And it can mean one of two things, the same word. If it is talking about a person then that marturia is a witness. If it is talking about the content that is spoken, then it is called the testimony. It is the same word. If it is the person, it is a witness. If it is the content, it is a testimony or the King James 5 uses 'record.' "The record is this, that God has given us eternal life and this life is in His Son." That is a testimony.

Then there is the Greek word that comes from martyr which means to bear testimony which is usually in our English translations. Now the word means a witness, an eyewitness. You cannot be a martyr unless you can bear witness because you saw it with your own eyes. And so it involves an eyewitness, but there is a second connotation within this word and it means this. Not only are you an eyewitness, but you are willing to lay down your life to testify to what you have seen. And that is why marturia became used in Latin for the martyrs, those who died for their faith. They spoke a testimony, and there was a life behind their testimony because they staked their life on their testimony.

We have a testimony, but do we stake our lives on that testimony? It makes all the difference in the world. John uses this word 'witness' the most of anybody in the New Testament, fifty-seven times in all, thirty-seven in the Gospel, six times in I John and fourteen in Revelation. The other Gospels and Acts use witness twenty-six times just for your information. As in Acts 1:8 we all know this one: "And you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit is come upon you, and you

shall be my marturia in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, to the uttermost parts of the earth.” The Holy Spirit came upon them, unveiled the Lord Jesus, and they were sent out in the power of the Holy Spirit. So we know of course that to be a witness of Jesus is the first simple meaning of the testimony of Jesus. They were witnesses to Jesus, and they went out with that testimony

If we would be the testimony of Jesus in these last days it involves unabashed witnessing that we are willing to stake our lives on. It is not some kind of soft hand-pedaed kind of innocent Jesus because we do not want to stir up the ranks. The power of the Holy Spirit comes upon them who witness to who Jesus truly is, and they are willing to stake their lives upon it. Now we know that, but we also know that if that is the only meaning of the testimony of Jesus, then we have lost some of its deeper meaning. And unfortunately in some of the modern translations they have actually changed this phrase in English. As an example, some have changed it to the ‘Message of Jesus.’ They say that John was on the Isle of Patmos because of the ‘Message of Jesus.’ Or that the martyrs were killed and beheaded because of the ‘Message of Jesus.’ Of course, this is true. They shared a message that caused them to either die or be exiled, so of course that is true but it means something more than that. There is another relative modern translation that says, “They were beheaded for their testimony of Jesus.’ But actually the Greek does not say, ‘their testimony.’ It says, “They were beheaded for *the* testimony of Jesus.” Now why am I making such a distinction like that? It is because before we get to our testimony of Jesus, we need to understand the primary meaning of the testimony of Jesus. It is so simple that I did not see it until I was thirty-one years old. The testimony of Jesus is what Jesus bore out of His own life and works. That is the primary first meaning of the testimony of Jesus which I would like us to consider now.

All of us are witnesses, eye-witnesses of something. We have a witness to give, a testimony to give. The Lord also had a testimony to give.

In John 3:31, he has a little section there among many parts of the Gospel of John where he talks about his testimony. Why did Jesus come to this earth? He has something to say. There is something He wants to testify to. So when Jesus came from heaven to earth, He came to bear a particular testimony.

The Testimony that Jesus Bore

John 3:31-32 which is after John 3:16 and His talking to Nicodemus about being born again, here he says in verse 31 speaking of himself: “He who comes from above is above all; he who is of the earth is from earth and speaks of the earth. He who comes from heaven is above all, and what He has seen and heard of that He bears witness, and no man receives His witness.”

What was this witness that He bore? It is so vast; it goes even beyond just what He preached and taught. Of course, His preaching of the Gospel of the kingdom was so powerful because it was so true. The kingdom was almost there, and the heavens opened as the people heard His kingdom worldview. Wow! How that unsettled the Jewish population when Jesus brought forth an alternative kingdom worldview. But it was not only the content that He preached of the Gospel, the thing about it that was so powerful is that He was the embodiment of what He preached. So He preached the coming of the kingdom of God, and He was the King who was

coming. Just think of the vastness of that testimony. He said, "The kingdom of God is at hand, and you are standing there looking at the King." Now the King determines the kingdom; He rules the kingdom. They were looking and not only hearing a message, but they were seeing the reality in Jesus' life. That is the testimony of Jesus. When the eyes of the people were opened to see who Jesus was, their worldview changed dramatically in two ways. Now we are thinking of the disciples, those who heard Him preach, those who received His testimony. Now you notice He said, "People did not receive His testimony." But those who received, two things happened that were absolutely mind altering. First, when Jesus came to bear testimony, it was to the kind of Person God was, the true God, what God was like, God's love, God's mind, God's will, God's mercy. He not only spoke words about who God was, but when you look at Jesus, that is who God is. What a powerful, vast testimony!

The disciples had no idea what they were getting into. But as John looks back on it and he shares his Gospel, he puts it this way in John 1:18: "Now no one has seen God at any time, but God the only Son who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him."

All these people, worshippers of God offering sacrifices, going to the temple and feasting and rejoicing, but no one had seen God at any time. Then God comes to the earth. Wow! If that is not impactful, I do not know what is. Now it is interesting that not everybody saw who He was. There is a sovereignty in the unveiling of the King to those whom God had chosen. But at the same moment Jesus came with this testimony. Imagine testifying about who God is and for the first time people could see and hear who God is. But along with that and simultaneous at the same time, they saw what man is because the Logos was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten of the Father full of grace and truth. So when we looked at Him, we saw what a man was supposed to be. A Man can cry, a Man can be humble, and a Man had authority, A Man took dominion, and a Man had a spirit, soul and a body. He was humble and He was loving, and He was angry, and He was human, and He was glorious. No wonder that when He preached, people were riveted. It is almost unfair, isn't it to actually see God and Man right in front of you as He spoke? But many did not receive His testimony. Only the Holy Spirit could unveil that testimony to those open to receive.

Now we want to talk about that testimony and how vast it was that Jesus came to speak about. So when we look at this, let's go back and look for a minute as we see the testimony of Jesus spoken of throughout the Old Testament and throughout the New Testament. Now I am not taking you through the whole Bible, but just to look at it a little bit.

Let's start with this phrase, "the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." Let's take it at its simplest value. All the prophets who spoke prophecy were somehow directly or indirectly speaking about Jesus. That is the value of all the prophecies whether it is Micah, or Isaiah. They speak about Jesus. More than that, the whole Old Testament spoke about Jesus. Martin Luther had a very quaint way of putting it where he says, "The Bible is the manger in which Christ was laid." The whole Bible is the manger where Christ is laid." The phrase that we read before, the testimony of Jesus we find that four of the five times the testimony of Jesus is mentioned, it is "the word of God and the testimony of Jesus." Now the Word of God back in those days was the

Old Testament. They did not have a New Testament, and so what they were saying is, “The word of God is a testimony of Jesus as well as the testimony of Jesus Himself.

Heaven and Earth

Let’s just take one example in John 3:31: “He who comes from above is above all, he who is of the earth is from the earth and speaks of the earth, he who comes from heaven is above all.”

Now we know that Genesis opens up: “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” And this is talking about two physical realms, the heavens being the sky, stars, sun, and the earth; it is a very physical thing. But by chapter 2 we realize that the worldview presented to us is that heaven and earth corresponded to each other at the beginning of this creation. What do I mean by that? There was both a heaven and an earth, and of course man was on this earth. He was made of clay, but he had correspondence with heaven. Do you know that before there was sin, man walked on this earth, but he was very aware of heaven. He was aware of cherubim and angels. He talked to God in the cool of the day. There was not the separation of heaven being up there, spiritually speaking now, and earth is down here. But Jesus said, “I have come to bear witness of the things of heaven. Now you bear witness of things on earth, but I tell you I have come to tell you that heaven is part of your worldview. The reality is our view of life if it does not include the whole heavenly sphere, it is missing a full dimension of reality. So much cut off of course because of sin.

In the Old Testament it is so important to understand that. Paul said, “Even though man has sinned, when man looks at creation he still can see a testimony of God. There is something transcendent in creation itself. Paul said, “For His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature have been clearly perceived. Ever since the creation of the world man is without excuse. Every man, sinner or saved, every man who looks at creation, unless he suppresses the truth, can see God’s nature in power. Of course, because of sin man has been cut off from heaven, as it were, and lives a life under the sun. But God in His mercy down through Old Testament times sovereignly unveiled Himself. So God is up in the heavens. Of course, the Jews believed that there was a God up there, and He was a transcendent God. He is up there and we are down here, but every once in a while in the Scriptures we see that God would burst through and sovereignly unveil Himself. And when the Passover happened and the first born children were spared, and when they went through the Red Sea, God’s was on this earth and when God came down on Mt. Sinai, God was here. When the cloud and the fire came down, God was on the earth. They always sang a song once they got through the Red Sea, “I will sing unto the Lord, He has triumphed gloriously.” God is here. God is always here, but because of sin it made a separation between ourselves and Him. It was only by His sovereign unveiling that the Jews could see it and express it again, and worship the testimony of God at the banks of Jericho. When God destroyed the banks of the Jordan, when He destroyed Jericho, they could see the testimony of a God in a present world. That is what I am trying to say first of all. Jesus came to witness that this is a God-present world.

The old saints like Moses saw and said at the end of his life: “Lord, You have been my dwelling place.” He had seen something through the veil between heaven and earth. “We have been wandering in the wilderness but all this time You have been our dwelling place through all

generations. He understood that God is present in this world. Even though sin binds us and we become those without vision and heaven seems to be sealed up, when Jesus came, He basically opened up heaven. Over Jesus was an open heaven, and people could see God and see humanity and they said, "This is not the way we should be living. Why are we living this way? There is a much better way for us. All Jesus had to do was talk to the woman at the well, and she immediately said, "Why am I living this terrible life? There is a higher life for me. I have seen it in the Messiah. Something is happening, "There is more, there is more! And wherever Jesus went, people sensed there was more, there was more! And so He talked and it was so powerfully as He went from place to place.

I do not know how long ago the matrix was made as a movie. Maybe twenty years? The people who were in the matrix had been asleep the whole time, and suddenly they realized, "No, no, this is not real life." That is how our view of the world gets altered when there is a sovereign unveiling of who Jesus really is. We are not content to say, "Oh, He is up there in heaven; we praise the Lamb of God." No, no, He is very much God-present on this earth. So the people awoke from their dreams. Of course, the Jewish leaders did not receive this testimony of the kingdom, but Jesus came with a testimony off light. The key to our witness is not to talk about darkness; the key to our testimony is to talk about the light. John 1:9: "This was the true light that coming into the world enlightens every person."

Listen to this, and isn't this kind of sad in a way? "He was in the world, the world came into being through Him, yet the world did not know Him." He came to His own, and His own people did not receive Him. He is talking about the Jews. What blindness we have of the reality! But to those who received Him the unveiling came, and they saw something wonderful. The testimony of Jesus did have a powerful effect on sin and on exposure. It brought in the cross in the end, didn't it? Because it brought in the testimony of the light of a true worldview, of a God present worldview. It is the truth about righteousness, the truth about holiness, the truth about love, and it is rejected by a world when its sin is exposed. Jesus said, "You are a wicked and unbelieving generation." Wow! That must have cut like a knife. And the people who thought they were religious and righteous and pretty cool in the eyes of God, but man would not receive Him because of the darkness.

I had a particular New Testament scholar when I was in seminary who had studied the book of Acts, and he was convinced that the testimony of Stephen's message was one of the greatest sermons ever preached. So he would always talk to us about it. Just look at it this way. Stephen had such a Christ-centered worldview that he critiqued the life of the children of Israel saying, "You have rejected the God-present view that Moses spoke of, the God-present view that David spoke of, the God-present view that Solomon spoke of, the God-present view that the prophets spoke of. You rejected them all. But Jesus has come and revealed the kingdom of God. At that they began stoning him, and of course, wasn't it wonderful that the last thing that happened in Stephen's life was he saw heaven and earth together. The heavens opened up, but it is always there. How far are the heavens away from us? Maybe two feet over your head right now. Do you realize it? We are talking about a lot of activity in the heavenly realms going on all around us. There are angels, demons, spiritual forces of all kinds trying to distract us and trying to help us. Now I do not want to get into angelology, that is not my point. I am trying to say that there is a

vast worldview that Stephen had grasped when he believed in Jesus Christ. It changed his whole view because the rabbis who were incited the people believed that they always loved God, and they always loved God's people. So Stephen said, "Oh yeah, then why did you persecute and stone the prophets? And then build memorials to them? Yeah, yeah, your religious righteousness is as filthy rags. And the proof of it is that Jesus the King stood in your midst, and you would not receive Him. For that he got stoned, but for that he saw heaven. What a wonderful testimony!

Now do we see such a vast worldview that Jesus proclaimed in which the spiritual and the heavenly are very involved in everything in our lives here on earth. Do we indeed find ourselves caught up in heaven seated with Christ in the heavenly places? Are we seeking the things above? Are they at all important to us? Do we realize that there are battles and principalities and powers? Is our Christian worldview just so earthly that we do not even know this whole layer of our lives going on? Jesus' testimony opens all of these things to us.

That is my Old Testament review. Now I will go and unsuccessfully try my New Testament review. I want to just say that when we hear the testimony of Jesus, what Jesus testified to, when we come to the book of Revelation, basically the whole book of Revelation is a revelation of Jesus from the first opening line to the last.

"the revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave him to show to His bondservants the things which must soon take place. He sent and communicated it to His angel by His bondservant John, who testified the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even everything that he saw." The book of Revelation is basically part of the worldview of the testimony of Jesus. In Revelation 1:3 it says, "Blessed is the one who reads, those who hear the words of the prophecy, and keep the things which are written for the time is near."

There is our context. If our context is not the time is near, then we will bother ourselves about many things that will pass away. But these bondservants will see things about Jesus that will help them realize the time is near. Let's be aware of the Christ-centered worldview. What is the Christ-centered worldview? Well, let's use the book of Revelation that will give us a couple of helpful hints.

The Throne of God and the Lamb of God

The testimony of Jesus declares that there is a throne in heaven where God sits and the Lamb of God is in the center of the throne. This should be part of our worldview. There are angels praising, there are elders, special spiritual beings surrounding Him, there is a commotion of worship going on in heaven. And because God is on His throne, it is done in heaven. Then out of the throne comes the Lamb of God. He is the center of the whole business. What is the center of our lives? Do we see that this throne is the center of reality? I know it is easy to say reality is what I am seeing down here with my own eyes, but there is a Lamb and the picture of Him should not be passed over, that He was holding a scroll and unrolling it seal by seal. In other words, He was bringing history to its completion. Step by step tells of the seals, the first seal is broken, the second seal is broken, etc., but the basic idea is this: in whose hand is the destiny? In whose hand is the end of time? In whose hand is the moving from time into eternity? It is in the hands of the Lamb of God. Nobody can snatch us out of His hand. He is unraveling things in His due time and

though it may be a mystery to us, our worldview needs to be a Lamb-centered scroll-holding, King of kings and Lord of lords who is in total control of our lives. Don't you believe that the enemy has laid hold of your life. You get under that precious blood and be in the same place where those precious overcomers are in Revelation 12. Can you imagine fighting the dragon himself?

The Overcomers

It is clear in Revelation 12 that those overcomers, who are none other than human beings like you and I, overcame the dragon's onslaught and their attacks were three things. They were under the blood of the Lamb. When we bear the testimony of Jesus, we are under the blood of the Lamb. Let the dragon take a swipe at us. He cannot catch us.

And it was the word of their testimony. Why? Because they were willing to stake their lives on it. They were simple people defeating the dragon. The Scripture says that the dragon fell down to earth because of their overcoming. And the angels celebrated the overcoming of those saints who saw what was going on, who saw that there was a dragon. You do not want to make light of this. Some think the devil is the dragon with a little tail. No! When the Lord opens up the truth of these kinds of things, it is scary business. The enemy is like a lion prowling about, but it is okay because the Lamb is on the throne, and we have to start there.

In the prayer meeting in a most simple way, I believe anybody who goes to a Christian prayer meeting already has the reward. Just for going I give you a silver star because it means you have had to overcome something to get there. I am sure the devil wants you not to go. So just to go there is great resistance. So we come together to pray, but you know there are some prayers which are frightening prayers. There are some prayers that are almost unbelieving prayers. But then there are some prayers that come starting from the fact that Jesus has gained the victory, and we are under His blood. He is the Lamb of God and His victory can be applied here on earth. What a difference in the prayer that comes from that perspective! But now we are all saints, and we all love the Lord and have been saved, but do we have this fuller view based on the testimony of Jesus?

As we look into the book of Revelation, who is Jesus? In chapter 1 there is the glorious Son of God with eyes of fire. That is Jesus; that is who He is now. Don't think He is still wearing the linen garments of Galilee. If you do, you have a whole other think coming. He is the glorious Warrior, the Word of God on a horse coming back to receive His kingdom. He is the mighty Angel as He is revealed in the book of Revelation. He is the Judge sitting on the throne at the end, and finally He is God and the Lamb in the middle of the house of God when the new Jerusalem is formed. You talk about the greatness of Jesus, I do not think anyone of us can comprehend the full meaning of these words. It is so humbling even as I studied. Lord, just show me some things that I cannot even explain. How big He is! When you see how big He is, all that small stuff melts off. Come on, we only have so long to live on this earth. Are we about the great work? Or are there things that are more important? May the Lord sovereignly open up our eyes to see these things.

Think about John as he writes his Gospel. Mark writes his Gospel and says, “Bingo, chapter 1, Jesus heals a bunch of people and says the Gospel has come. John says, “From what I see I am going to start my testimony about Jesus from before the foundation of the world. I am going to have to go there. If we are going to talk about Jesus, I have to say, “In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God. All things were made by Him.” I have to start there because if you want to know who Jesus is I am telling you right from the start. He is the Logos, and I want you to know it. What a great testimony!

Let me make one more point here in John 3:31-35. Here He is testifying at the very beginning according to John.

“Now he who received His witness has set His seal to this that God is true, for He whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for He gives the Spirit without measure. The Father loves the Son and has given all things into His hands.”

The Trinity

Here we have a couple of sentences, and what have we learned from it already? First we learned that God is a Trinity. In verse 34: “For He whom God has sent speaks the word of God, for He gives the Spirit without measure.” So there is the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in chapter 3 of the Gospel of John. That is who God really is, and when we have an unveiling of it, we say, “Wait a minute. I got saved believing that Jesus is my Saviour, but then seeing that He is God was a whole other step. What an amazing thing!

Another thing we see in this is what He says in Verse 35: “The Father loves the Son.” Can you imagine that revelation when Jesus spoke to the disciples and they said, “Jesus, would you teach us how to pray?” And He said, “Abba, Daddy,” And they said, “Wait, no, no. We are talking to God.” He said, “Yes, that is who God is, our Father.” I do not know if you can realize this, but when you look in the Bible, you do not see the Father spoken in this familiar way, in a family way until Jesus comes.

Now many religions call Him ‘Father,’ but they are cheating because they are just using their Christian terminology. The disciples had to learn that God was their Father. It is the Father’s house that Jesus was preparing. That was the sovereign unveiling of Jesus in John chapter 14 in which God has a testimony in the house as He prepares the Father’s house for us to live there forever. These are tremendous unveilings, right?

So there is a Father, but not only a Father, there is a Son. Jesus is the Son of God. Were the disciples quite willing to receive that at the time John spoke to them? They had walked with Jesus for a little while, but do you think they were ready to hear, “I am the Son of God”? But Jesus testified: “The Father loves the Son and given all things into His hands.” Well, the disciples had to admit that Jesus could do an awful lot of stuff. You cannot blame Philip, right? In John 14 as Jesus is about to depart Philip said, “Okay, Jesus, you are going, you make me feel bad, but listen. Just show us the Father and that will be enough.” Jesus said, “Have I been with you so long?” I think Philip’s eyes went bonkers. But I wonder how much you could comprehend. Unless it is by spiritual unveiling it seems like too much. No wonder when the apostle Thomas doubted, which is about eighty percent of all you doubting Thomas’s. Then Jesus comes into the room through

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the wall and Thomas said, "What is happening here?" Then He said, "I am Jesus." He said, "No, no, You cannot be Jesus. Jesus is dead. He said, "Oh yeah, look at My hands, look at My side. Put your hands right in here and stop being unbelieving." What did Thomas say? "My Lord, my God; now he was not talking slippery talk when Jehovah's witnesses say that and does not really mean God. Can you imagine what happened when Jesus went to His brother James who had rejected His testimony? And now the resurrected Jesus first goes to His brother and says, "Hey bro, I am Jesus resurrected from the dead." So James writes a letter saying, "I am a bondservant of my Brother because He is the Son of God."

I am just talking about the vastness of this revelation when it apprehends people. It is just more than we can possibly understand. Not only that but in His incarnation, He showed, of course, the humanity of God.

Let's listen to this great work. I am avoiding the great work as much as possible because the other brothers are going to take this up. But let's just talk for a moment about the great work that Jesus did. What was the great work? Of course, going to Calvary. Now listen, that is His great work. That is what possessed Him all His life. That is what from the time He came out of the baptismal Jordan River, the cross was upon Him. This was His great work. You say that His healings were great. Indeed, they were. He raised the dead, indeed it was. His teachings were great; indeed they were. But His great work was going to Calvary as the Lamb of God.

Listen to what He prays there in John 17:3 "This is eternal life that they may know You the only true God in Jesus Christ whom You had sent. I glorified You on the earth; I finished the work which You have given me to do." What was that? To reveal the Father; I was sent to reveal the Father that they may know You; that is eternal life. "But now, Father, glorify Me together with Yourself with the glory which I had with You before the foundation of the world." To finish the work of revealing the Father Jesus now had to come to that final stage where He would die on the cross. We go all the way back because it is reminiscent in a way of Nehemiah where he says, "I am doing a great work, and I cannot come down." Lord knows what else He could have done if He wanted to, but this greatest moment of the testimony of Jesus was at Calvary. And frankly that is the beginning place for an unveiling of who the Lord Jesus really is, of what heaven and earth really is, of what God really is. It is right there at Calvary, the cross of our Lord where a spiritual unveiling of the testimony of Jesus is given to us.

I am sure most of you in here are believers in the Lord, but we are carrying an awful small testimony about Him. We need a further unveiling. And let me say this, John received the testimony of Jesus while Jesus was upon this earth, but He still had to grow more as he saw the testimony of the further Jesus, Jesus 201 in the book of Revelation. So we see Jesus, but now we need to see Jesus. He is the center of everything, and out of that the Lord can cause the great work and His burden for the house of God to be finished and for the Lord to come back. How great is this work that the Lord is doing, and we just want to thank Him. I just pray that we might have a spiritual unveiling of these things of God.

Let's pray:

Oh Lord, we sing, "How great Thou art, how great Thou art, How great Thou art." And then in our hearts sometimes we make You so small. We get so peckish; we get so worried about things. We get to the place where we no longer have a heavenly view of things, and we only see things under the sun. Oh Lord, forgive our sinfulness, forgive our foolishness. Oh Lord, we do not want to hold You small because there is a great work to be done. There are many things that involve our lives, our vocations, our raising children, going to school and all kind of things that seem primary in our lives. The fact of the matter is there is only one great work, and that is the testimony of the house of God being recovered, and it can only be done by seeing the vastness of the King who has ordered the great work to be done. Oh Lord, we know that it is not by might nor by power but by Your Spirit that You can accomplish these things, and we pray that You would unveil to us more of Yourself that we may see the glory of who You are. We may not be bashful about this God that we witness of and stake our lives upon. Oh God, help us in these last days to be strong and to stand because even as You have overcome, You give us grace to overcome as well.

Thank You, in Jesus' name.