

A Faithful and True Witness

“To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.”

—John 18:37

There are many standpoints

from which we may view the life of Jesus. From each of them we observe essential qualities of character that we as Christians must endeavor to emulate if we would be pleasing to our Heavenly Father. The Apostle Paul

writes of growing up into Jesus “in all things.” (Eph. 4:15) If we are to do this it is necessary to consider every phase of the Master’s life of faithfulness, not merely that we may become familiar with his superb qualities, but also that in coming to know him we may seek, with all the energy we possess, to be like him.

In this study of the life of Jesus we will concern ourselves particularly with the statement he made to Pilate found in our opening text. Here he affirmed that one of the purposes of his birth was that he might “bear witness unto the truth.” The context of this assertion clearly indicates that the

great Truth he referred to was his own kingship, and of necessity, the entire plan of God of which he was the central figure. In other words, it was the kingdom message of Truth of which Jesus was speaking. His words further indicate that all who would desire to follow in his footsteps would be attracted by the kingdom teaching. By devoting their lives to the divine cause, as Jesus did, they would become joint-heirs with him in his kingdom. —Rom. 8:17

“As he is, so are we in this world,” wrote John. (I John 4:17) One of the ways that we become like the Master is in our association with him in the kingdom arrangements. Millions throughout the age have been called Christians. All of these have known something of Jesus, and to whatever extent his life has influenced their lives they have been made better men and women. How few, though, have recognized in him the future King of earth, and of these how few have been so inspired by the prospect of reigning with him that they have been willing to devote their entire lives to the kingdom cause.

“To this end was I born,” said the Master. He was the King of promise, the one through whom the Father’s plan to bless all nations will be accomplished. (Gal. 3:8,16) It was to this great Truth that Jesus bore witness. This was the great light that shone in the darkness. (II Cor. 4:6) In essence it was the fact that the great Creator, in sending his Son into the world to die as man’s Redeemer and to reign as King in due time, had passed over all of the failed human plans to establish righteousness in the earth. It was to be through the risen and glorified Christ that God would bring to an

end this present evil world and establish a “new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.”—Gal. 1:4; II Pet. 3:12,13

For this great Truth Jesus died, not merely because he cherished it in his heart, but because he proclaimed it from the housetops. His entire life was governed by it. It caused him to refuse the devil’s offer of all the kingdoms of this world, for he knew that it was not the Father’s plan that he should reign through these kingdoms, but that ultimately he would bring them to an end. (Matt. 4:8-10; John 18:36) He knew, furthermore, that eventually he would receive a worldwide kingdom, not from the devil, but from his Father.—Ps. 2:6-8

“What Is Truth?”

When Jesus told Pilate that he had come into the world to bear witness to the Truth, Pilate asked, “What is truth?” Jesus did not honor this Roman ruler with an answer, but in his earlier prayer to God on behalf of his followers he said, “Thy word is truth.” (John 17:17) What is the Word of God but the outline of the Father’s kingdom plan through Christ to exalt his church and to redeem and restore the human race to life. It was the theme of all God’s holy prophets. (Luke 24:25-27; Acts 3:18-25) All of the Master’s teachings were concerned directly or indirectly with it, and it is the background of the apostolic writings. The book of Revelation would be but a relating of woes resulting from the misrule of ungodly institutions were it not for its glorious theme—that the Lamb was slain, then exalted to Mount Zion, and that a hundred and forty-four thousand are to be exalted

with him, and together they will live and reign for a thousand years for the blessing of the people.—Rev. 5:6,12; 14:1; 20:4,6; 21:1-5

It is through the Gospel of the kingdom message that we are sanctified or set apart to divine service. When we present our bodies a living sacrifice and endeavor not to be conformed to this world, but to be transformed by the renewing of our minds, it is the belief in the kingdom Truth that activates the transforming work. (Rom. 12:1,2) We cannot yield to the influence of this Truth and at the same time be conformed to this present world. God's will is to bring an end to this present order and bless the people through Christ and his church, who by God's authority, will reign as kings and priests in a new world.—Rev. 1:5,6; 20:6

Dying for the Truth

When Jesus said to Pilate that he came to bear witness to the Truth, the phrase “bear witness” is derived from a Greek word meaning “martyr.” A martyr is one who dies as a testimony of his or her belief. This is what actually occurred in the case of Jesus. The condition of our being privileged to reign with him is our willingness to die for the same thing that caused his death, which was faithfulness in bearing witness to the Truth. It may not be our privilege to die as dramatically as Jesus died, but we must be willing to do so. We demonstrate our willingness by using up our strength and means in bearing witness to the Truth. No matter how faithful we may be in emulating Jesus in other ways—all of which are equally important—if we do not bear witness to the Truth as he did,

we will not be counted worthy to live and reign with him.

The repository of divine Truth has been the hearts of the humble followers of the Master, the “children of the kingdom.” (Matt. 13:38) Those faithful few have seen the vision of God’s plan for a new world. They have dared to tell the people that all human plans will fail, that nothing but God’s kingdom will solve the problems of a fear-filled world. They have not had the help of the world in telling this story, but to the contrary, have been handicapped by the world’s opposition.—John 15:18-20

It was the same with Jesus. “Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on him?” the people asked. (John 7:48) They soon realized that their recognized leaders frowned upon the Master and his teachings, so much so that they desired to kill him. While “the common people heard him gladly,” only a few really believed—one here, one there—and these, by divine appointment, became the means through which the kingdom message was imparted to others. (Mark 12:37) Thus it has been throughout the age since Pentecost. The kingdom message has been as a light in a dark place. (II Pet. 1:19) It has not enlightened the world in general, but it has served as a beacon light to point individuals to Christ and to show them the way by which they might enter into and enjoy the blessings of the kingdom of heaven.

The Marvelous Light of Truth

It is through the witness of the Truth, given first by Jesus and continued by his consecrated followers

from generation to generation throughout the Gospel Age, that each and all of the prospective joint-heirs of the kingdom are separated from the world. God has called them "out of darkness into his marvellous light." The apostle explains that the purpose of this calling is to show forth the "praises of him who hath called" us. In order that we may do this effectively, we have been made a "chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people." (I Pet. 2:9) Through this arrangement, the knowledge of God's glory will eventually be caused to fill the earth as the waters cover the sea.—Hab. 2:14

In the great economy of God's plan this witnessing for the Truth is the means both for calling his people and testing them. It tested Jesus and demonstrated his loyalty to the Heavenly Father, a demonstration of faithfulness that called for endurance against Satan's attacks all along the line. At the beginning of his faithful ministry, Satan endeavored to lure him away from his fidelity to God. (Matt. 4:1-11) Failing in this, he began his attack against Jesus with the result that this "faithful and true witness" was despised, rejected, stricken, smitten, afflicted, wounded, bruised, chastised, betrayed, condemned, and finally crucified.—Isa. 53:3-5; Matt. 20:18

Darkness Hateth the Light

It is well to remember that animosity toward Jesus was due to his faithfulness in bearing witness to the Truth. It was because he proclaimed unpopular Truth and exposed popular error. He was not persecuted because he was kind and gracious,

sympathetic, and loving. These qualities were elements of his perfection, and we should strive to copy them in our own daily lives and thus become more and more like him. (Rom. 8:29; II Cor. 3:18) It was his faithful testimony of the Truth, however, that incurred the opposition of Satan and Satan's world.

Because he let his light shine, Jesus was oppressed, but he bore it patiently. He was despised, but he did not seek to avoid oppression by compromising the Truth. He was rejected by men, but he rejoiced in the assurance of acceptance by God. He was betrayed, but he had the grace to refer to his betrayer as a "comrade." (Matt. 26:50, *Young's Literal Translation*) He was condemned, but he did not endeavor to justify himself. He was reviled, but he "reviled not again." (I Pet. 2:23) He was scourged, but he bore it patiently. He was mocked, but he displayed only pity and love toward those who derided him. He was wounded, but he accepted it as his Father's will, knowing that it was "for our transgressions." (Isa. 53:5) He was "bruised," and while the people thought he was "smitten of God," he triumphed in the experience, knowing that through it he was learning and demonstrating obedience to God by his faithfulness in bearing witness to the Truth.—Heb. 5:8

Only in his Heavenly Father did Jesus find that all-sufficient source of fellowship and comfort required to sustain him amidst the most trying hours of his strivings against the darkness and sin of Satan's world. Finally, he was crucified, put to death, even the cruel, ignominious death of the

cross. (Phil. 2:8) Above his head was displayed the information that he was “King of the Jews.” (John 19:19) Although intended to be derisive, it was true. He was the king of the Jews, and of the Gentiles as well—the King whom God had selected to rule over and bless all nations.—Ps. 72:8-11; Isa. 9:6,7

Still the people did not believe. Some cried out, saying, “He saved others; let him save himself.” (Luke 23:35) How little did they realize that by Jesus’ refusal to save himself, he was providing salvation for them, and for all the families of the earth. Indeed, Jesus was a faithful and true witness, and he was now being honored with the privilege of dying for his persecutors and all mankind. Could we have a better demonstration of divine love for the human race—a love demonstrated both by the Father and the Son?

On the morning of the third day, this faithful witness of the Truth was raised from the dead by the mighty power of God. The Apostle Paul later wrote, “Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, ... And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”—Phil. 2:9-11

As Jesus was that “faithful and true witness,” so we should rejoice the more each day that it is our privilege to do as he did. If this be our happy portion, and if we are “faithful unto death,” we will be among those who live and reign “with Christ a thousand years.”—Rev. 2:10; 20:4 ■