

Witnesses to Our Generation



Resurrection (Part 10)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again as we draw near to the close of another week. Today I'll continue, and complete, the theme that I've been following for the past two weeks: "Resurrection."

In my previous talks this week I've outlined some of the tremendous blessings that are made available to us through the resurrection of Jesus: how we can be begotten again, or born again; how we can be justified, or made completely righteous; how the resurrection offers us total victory over all our enemies, particularly the last enemy, Death; and how Christ's resurrection is the guarantee of our resurrection. He was the head and we are the body. And how, in being born out of death, He, the Head, preceded the body, the Church, but is also the guarantee that the body, the Church, will follow Him, follow Him in resurrection.

Now in my closing talk today I'm going to share with you something very practical that arises out of my teaching. I want to share with you how the knowledge of Christ's resurrection places us under a solemn personal obligation to be witnesses of this fact to our generation. I want to turn to a passage in the first chapter of Acts, Acts 1:6-8, which is a conversation between Jesus and His disciples after He was resurrected. It says this:

> "Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, 'Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?' And He said to them, 'It is not for you to know the times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority. But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.'" (NKJ)

You see Jesus adjusted their priorities. They were primarily concerned in the restoration of the earthly kingdom of Israel. Now Jesus did not say that would not happen, but He said the time and the way in which it would be brought about is something that the Father has put under His own authority. And He said in essence, "That's not the thing about which I want you to be primarily concerned. You have a personal

responsibility and I want you to be faithful in discharging that responsibility."

What is responsibility? He states it there in Acts 1:8:

> "You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses of Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." (NKJ)

The responsibility that Jesus placed upon His disciples was to be His witnesses; witnesses of Him where they were and then in an ever-extending circle that would not cease until it reached the end of the earth.

But He pointed out that in order to be effective witnesses they needed to experience a supernatural infilling of the Holy Spirit. You see, the resurrection of Christ is something totally supernatural. And it needs a supernatural power to bear effective witness to this supernatural event. So Jesus said, in effect, "You're going to be witnesses, but don't go out and start trying to do the job in your own ability, in your own cleverness. Even in your own intellectual knowledge of Me and My teaching. Wait until you receive supernatural power which will make your testimony to this supernatural event fully convincing." Then He said, "You will be witnesses to Me in this ever-extending circle of which the center was Jerusalem and the circumference was the end of the earth."

So He adjusted their priorities, as I have said. He said, "Prophetic insight isn't the first thing. Doctrinal knowledge isn't the first thing. The first thing is to lead such a life that you will be witnesses to Me wherever you go."

I think it is important that we see that is still true today. Christianity is primarily not a matter of doctrinal or intellectual knowledge or knowledge of prophecy. But it is a matter of how we live.

In the book of Acts the first description given to Christianity is in the phrase "the way." People that were related to the early church saw Christians as people not representing some theory, but as representing a way of life. And that's what Christianity is primarily today, it's a way of life that makes us witnesses to Jesus and particularly to His resurrection.

This is set forth before us both by the function and the example of the apostles. For instance, when they decided that they had to appoint a successor to Judas Iscariot, this is how they expressed it in Acts 1:21-22:

> "Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he [Jesus] was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection." (KJV)

So you see that was the primary function of an apostle. It wasn't primarily to be a preacher or a teacher. It was primarily to be a witness together with the other apostles of the resurrection of Jesus. And the essential point of the witness was that Jesus had risen from the dead.

And then again a little further on in the book of Acts, in Acts 4:33, we have the same emphasis again. The writer says there:

> "And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all." (KJV)

Notice the power, the supernatural power, that Jesus had promised them that made their testimony effective. And notice they were not primarily preaching. They were giving witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. You see, I believe every person on the face of the earth has a right to know that Jesus rose from the dead. It's our responsibility to convey that to them. What they do with the knowledge becomes their responsibility. But if they never hear, that's our responsibility. We are responsible to be witnesses.

I want to point out there's a difference between being a witness and being a preacher. A preacher unfolds biblical truths. He has, I believe, to have a special calling to do that. But a witness merely speaks out of personal experience. He relates what has happened in his own experience through God, through Jesus Christ, through the Holy Spirit, through the message of the Gospel. I've heard this definition, "To be a witness means to lead a life that can only be explained by the fact that Jesus is alive." That's what God requires of all of us. Whether we be preachers or not is secondary. Whether we understand all prophecies and all doctrines is secondary. But the primary requirement is that we personally be witnesses of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Just to close this series of talks, I'm going to do what I've been talking about. I'm going to close with a brief personal testimony of my own. I was educated in Britain. I was privileged to enjoy the very highest education that Britain could offer between the two world wars. I was educated at two of Britain's most prestigious institutions: Eton College and

Cambridge University. I studied Latin from the age of 9; Greek from the age of 10. I obtained many scholarships, and at a very early age I was elected into a resident professorship in Kings College in Cambridge University. I say all that not to boast, but simply to give you an idea that if intellectual education could satisfy the needs of man's heart, my needs would have been satisfied. But they were not. I was an unfulfilled, searching person.

I studied philosophy because I wanted to find the meaning and the purpose of life and yet I was frustrated. I didn't find it although I was successful first as a student and then as a professor.

Then, by an unplanned set of circumstances during World War II, I met some people who really were witnesses. They were humble, not highly educated, but their lives spoke to me of the fact that they knew Jesus personally as being alive today. And that created in me a desperate desire to have what they had. I didn't have any doctrinal knowledge. I didn't understand the message of the Gospel, I just knew that these people had something that I'd been looking for all my life.

And so eventually in desperation in an army barrack room in the middle of the night, I prayed and asked God in the simplest way to give me what they had. And I thank God forever, He gave it to me. He revealed Jesus to me directly, personally, in an extremely powerful way so that there was no room left for doubt in my mind that Jesus Christ was alive and that I knew Him. From that day to this I have never been able to doubt that Jesus Christ is alive. And that revelation of Jesus did for me all that the New Testament declares it will do. It totally and radically and permanently changed me, my character, my attitudes, my ambitions, my purposes in life. It gave me a reason for living which has kept me active and full of life and vigor and with a purpose to pursue until this very day. I want to tell you out of experience: JESUS IS ALIVE!

Our time is up for today. I'll be back with you again next week at this same time, Monday through Friday. Next week I'll be sharing with you on another exciting theme from the Word of God.

Radio Program

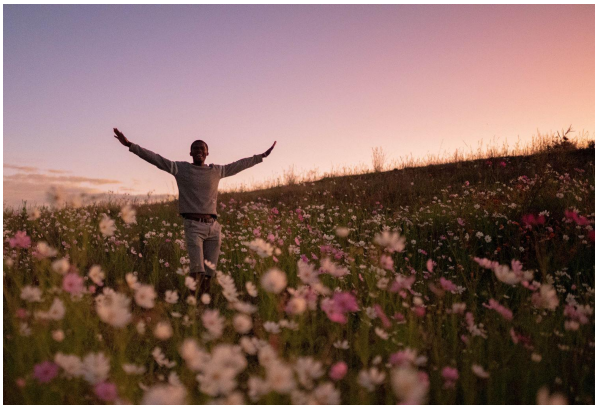
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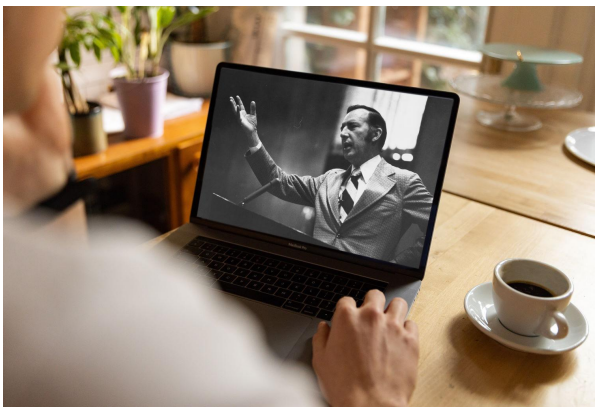
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