

God's witnesses.



God's witnesses.

Acts 5:27-32.

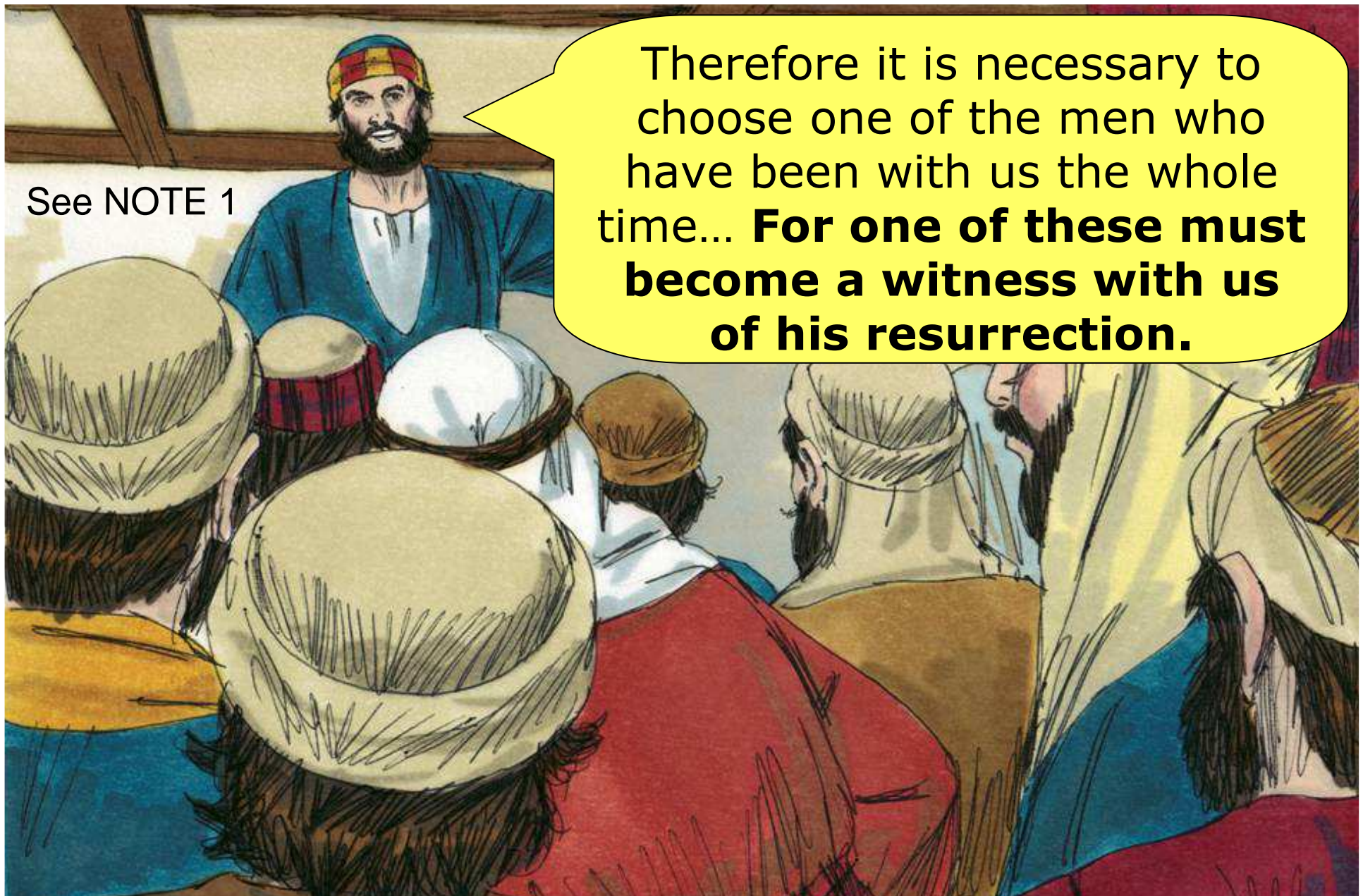
The apostles were brought in and made to appear before the Sanhedrin to be questioned by the high priest. We gave you strict orders not to teach in this name, he said. Yet you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and are determined to make us guilty of this man's blood. Peter and the other apostles replied: We must obey God rather than human beings! The God of our ancestors raised Jesus from the dead whom you killed by hanging him on a cross. God exalted him to his own right hand as Prince and Saviour that he might bring Israel to repentance and forgive their sins. We are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him.



Witnesses to the resurrection.

One of the criteria used for an apostle was that they had to be a witness of the resurrection.

- ❑ The apostles were the first witnesses to the resurrection of Jesus:
 - ... the apostles were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead. (Acts 4:2)
 - With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus... (Acts 4:33)
 - ... Paul was preaching the good news about Jesus and the resurrection. (Acts 17:18)



Therefore it is necessary to choose one of the men who have been with us the whole time... **For one of these must become a witness with us of his resurrection.**

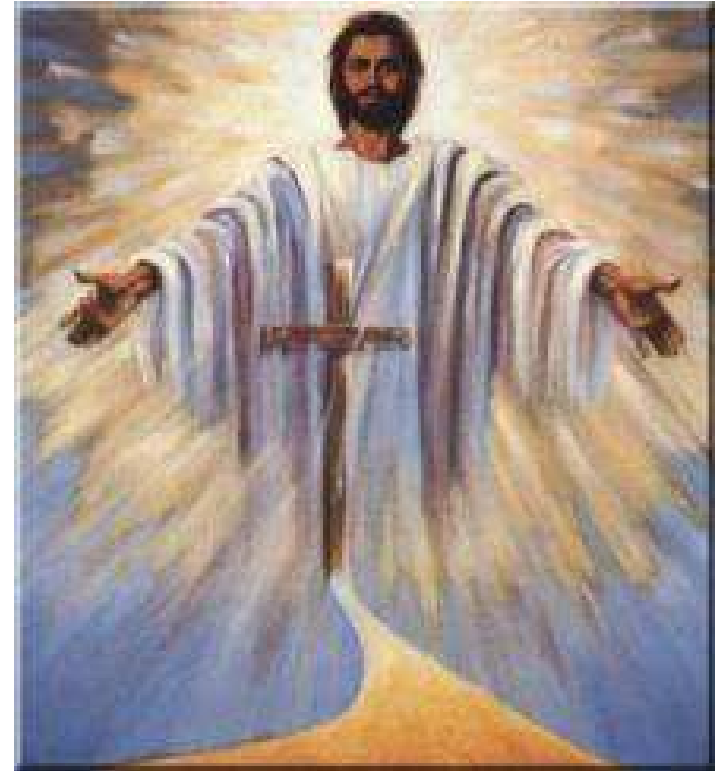
See NOTE 1

When the apostles replace Judas with another apostle the stated criteria is as follows (Acts 1:21-22)

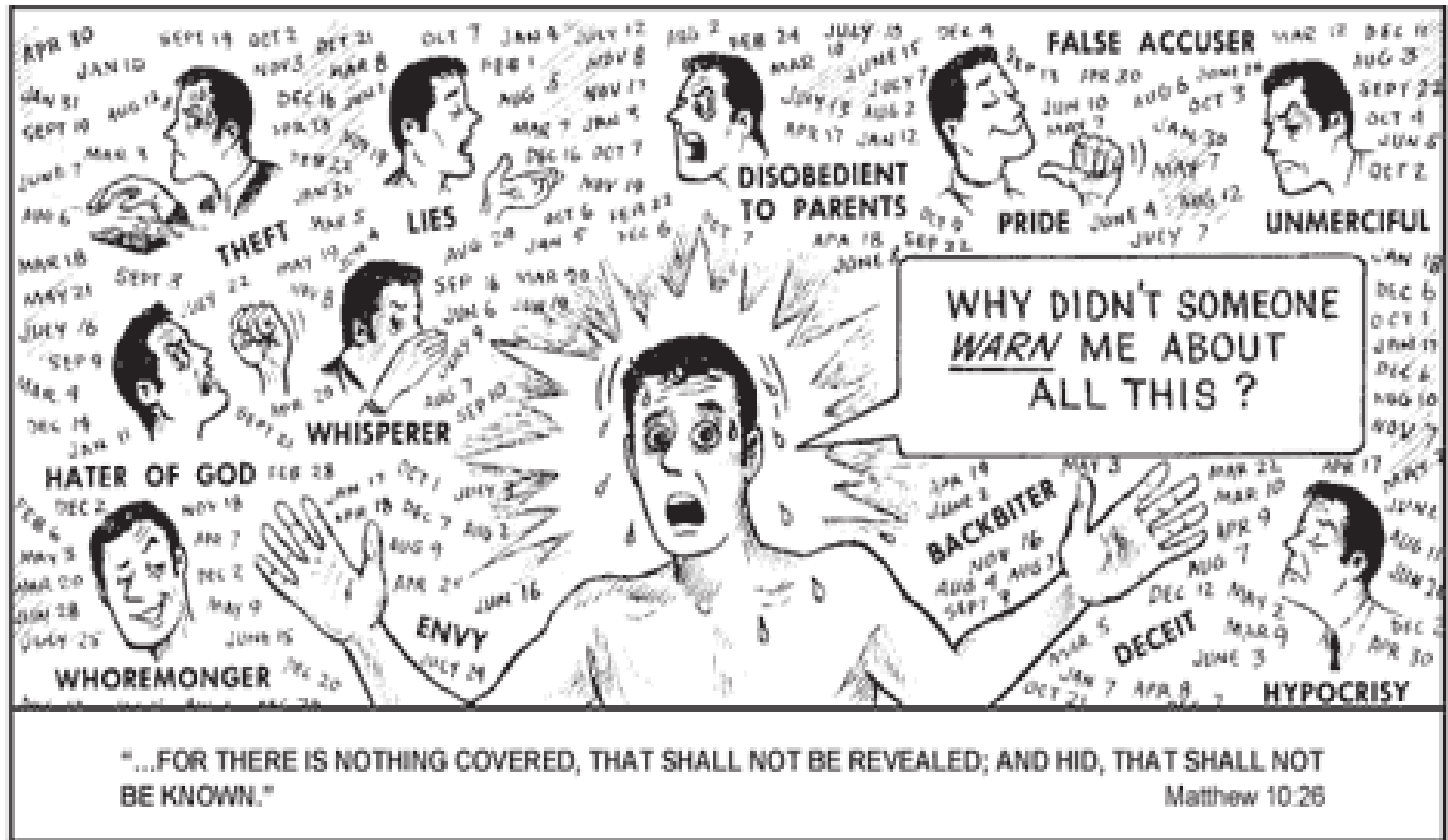
Witnesses to the resurrection.

1 Corinthians 15:3-9.

The first thing I did was place before you what was placed so emphatically before me: that the Messiah died for our sins, exactly as Scripture tells it; that he was buried; that he was raised from death on the third day, again exactly as Scripture says; that he presented himself alive to Peter, then to his closest followers, and later to more than five hundred of his followers all at the same time, most of them still around (although a few have since died); that he then spent time with James and the rest of those he commissioned to represent him; and that he finally presented himself alive to me. It was fitting that I bring up the rear. I don't deserve to be included in that inner circle, as you well know, having spent all those early years trying my best to stamp God's church right out of existence.



God's witnesses.



See
NOTE 2

1. Creation bears witness.

The unbeliever who stands before God on Judgement day, will find out that God has witnesses to call on to testify against them.

Romans 1:18-22.

The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people, who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities his eternal power and divine nature have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse. For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools.



2. Our conscience bears witness.

Romans 2:12-16.

All who sin apart from the law will also perish apart from the law, and all who sin under the law will be judged by the law. For it is not those who hear the law who are righteous in God's sight, but it is those who obey the law who will be declared righteous.

(Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law. They show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts sometimes accusing them and at other times even defending them.)

This will take place on the day when God judges people's secrets through Jesus Christ, as my gospel declares.

1 John 3:19-21.

This is how we know that we belong to the truth and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence:

If our hearts condemn us, we know that God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything. Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God

3. God's Word bears witness.

John 12:46-48.

I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness. If anyone hears my words but does not keep them, I do not judge that person. For I did not come to judge the world, but to save the world. There is a judge for the one who rejects me and does not accept my words; the very words I have spoken will condemn them at the last day.

Hebrews 4:12-14.

For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight.

Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.



3. God's Word bears witness.

2 Peter 1:16-21.

For we did not follow cleverly devised stories when we told you about the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in power, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. He received honour and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying, This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain. We also have the prophetic message as something completely reliable, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.



Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation of things. For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

4. Preachers of the Gospel are God's witnesses.

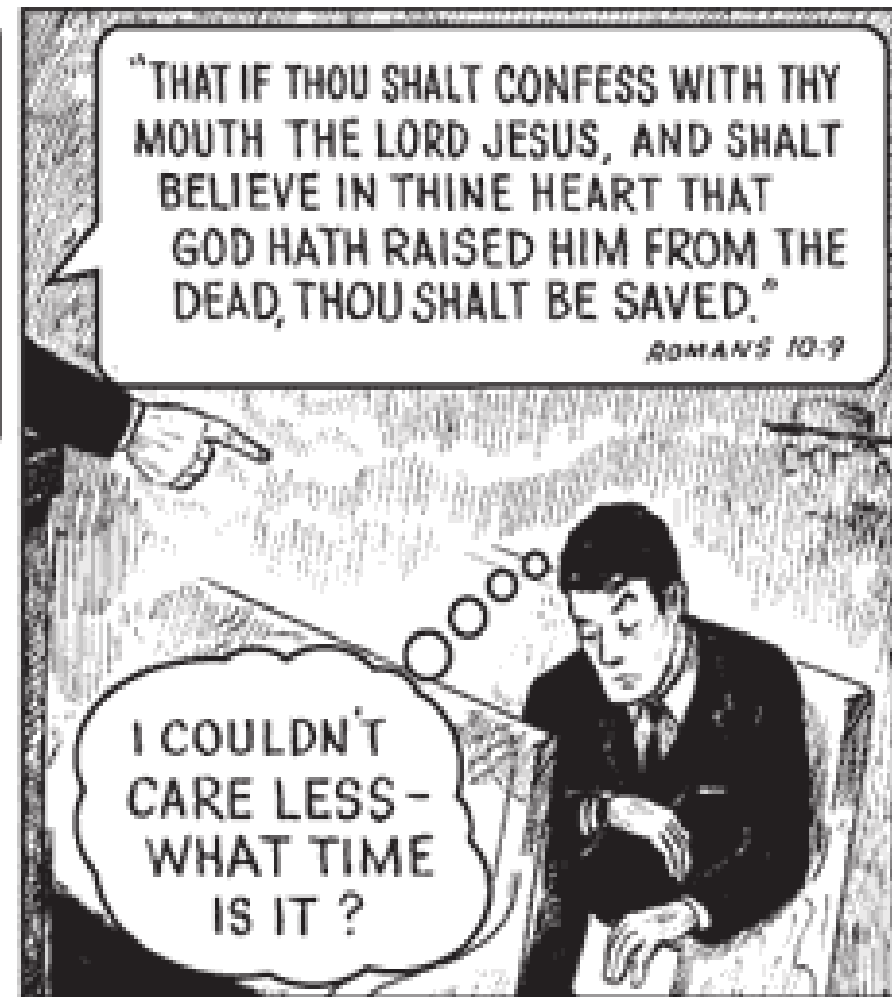
Acts 4:18-20.

Then they called them in again and commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John replied, Which is right in God's eyes: to listen to you, or to him? You be the judges! As for us, we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard.

Romans 10:14-15.

Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"

4. Preachers of the Gospel are God's witnesses.

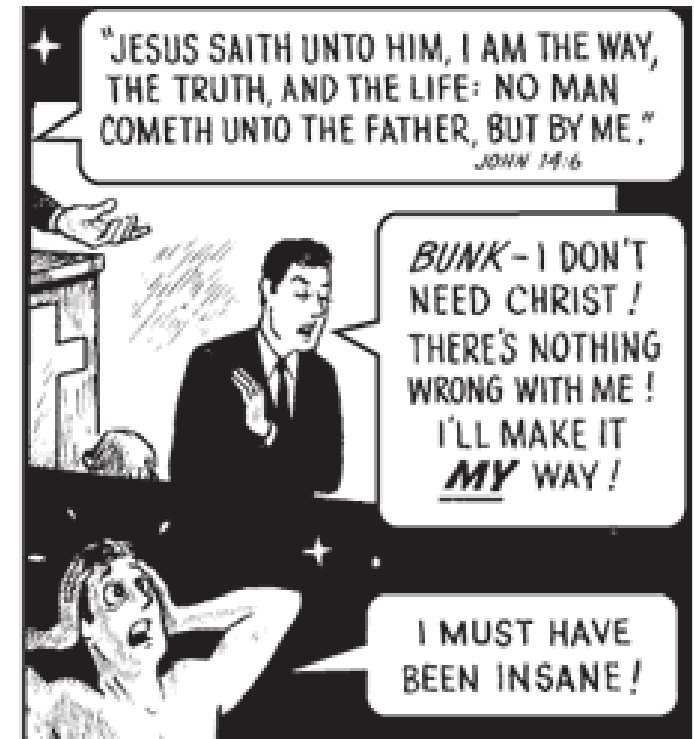


See
NOTE 2

Many ignore God's witnesses.

Romans 10:16-21-1

But not everyone who hears the Good News has welcomed it, for Isaiah the prophet said, "Lord, who has believed me when I told them?" Yet faith comes from listening to this Good News the Good News about Christ. But what about the Jews? Have they heard God's Word? Yes, for it has gone wherever they are; the Good News has been told to the ends of the earth. And did they understand that God would give his salvation to others if they refused to take it? Yes, for even back in the time of Moses, God had said that he would make his people jealous and try to wake them up by giving his salvation to the foolish heathen nations. And later on Isaiah said boldly that God would be found by people who weren't even looking for him. In the meantime, he keeps on reaching out his hands to the Jews, but they keep arguing, refusing to come.



See
NOTE 2

Many ignore God's witnesses.

Acts 28:23-29.

They arranged to meet Paul on a certain day, and came in even larger numbers to the place where he was staying. He witnessed to them from morning till evening, explaining about the kingdom of God, and from the Law of Moses and from the Prophets he tried to persuade them about Jesus. Some were convinced by what he said, but others would not believe. They disagreed among themselves and began to leave after Paul had made this final statement:

“The Holy Spirit spoke the truth to your ancestors when he said through Isaiah the prophet: Go to this people and say, You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving. For this people's heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them”.

Therefore I want you to know that God's salvation has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will listen!

5. Every Christian is required to be God's witness.

1 Peter 3:1-2.

Wives, in the same way submit yourselves to your own husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behaviour of their wives, when they see the purity and reverence of your lives.

1 Peter 3:15.

Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.

But do this with gentleness and respect.

Matthew 5:16

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.



5. Every Christian is required to be God's witness.

Practice What You Preach

Q: What is the first thought or image that comes to mind when I say: Taxes, senators, Occupy Wall Street, Mercedes, fast food, Las Vegas, computers, old age, church and religion. (Take a lot of responses from the last two.)

Q: Would you say that most peoples' initial thoughts about religion are good?

Q: Based on your experience with religion, how would you characterize it in general terms?

American "Christianity" is in a sad state affairs. Many leaders are corrupt, greedy, weak, etc. The Bible is used to promote pet doctrines, or only used occasionally. Churches are "lukewarm" and not much different from the rest of the world. Churches are dying, ritualistic, tradition bound and swayed by the norms of society. God is left out and make to look weak or indifferent, a cream puff or tyrant.

"Christians" are disillusioned, cynical, apathetic, uncommitted, materialistic or lukewarm.

Martyrs are God's witnesses.

The Greek word for witness is martur or martus, whence our English word martyr: meaning one who bears witness by his death.

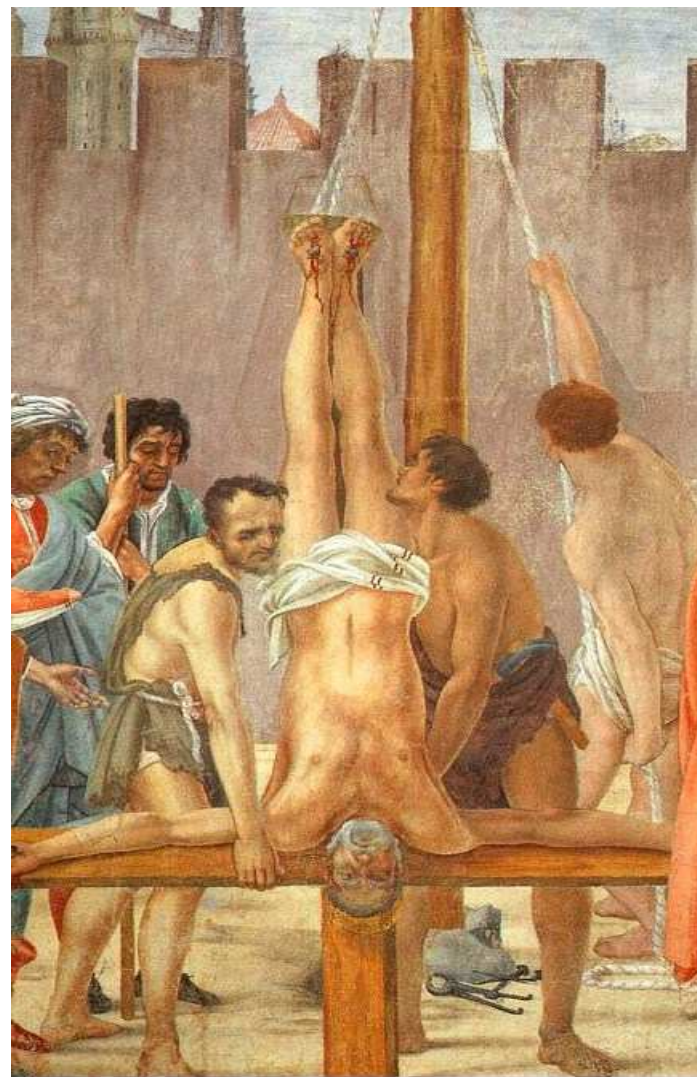
It is only as men and women are empowered by the Holy Spirit that they can be this type of witness for the Lord.

All the Apostles barring John died a martyr's death and he was exiled after according to tradition, being burned in boiling oil.

- 1. James:** Beheaded by Herod.
- 2. Philip:** Was ministering in Hieropolis (Phrygia). He was imprisoned, scourged and then crucified. He was buried by Bartholomew who nearly suffered the same fate.
- 3. Bartholomew:** Killed with a sword or beaten with clubs (conflicting accounts)

Martyrs are God's witnesses.

4. **Peter:** Was imprisoned by Nero for 9 months and then crucified upside down.
5. **Matthew:** Was put to death with the sword.
6. **Mathias:** Was stoned and beheaded.
7. **Thomas:** Was thrust through with a spear.
8. **Simon the Zealot:** Was crucified
9. **Thaddius:** Was crucified.

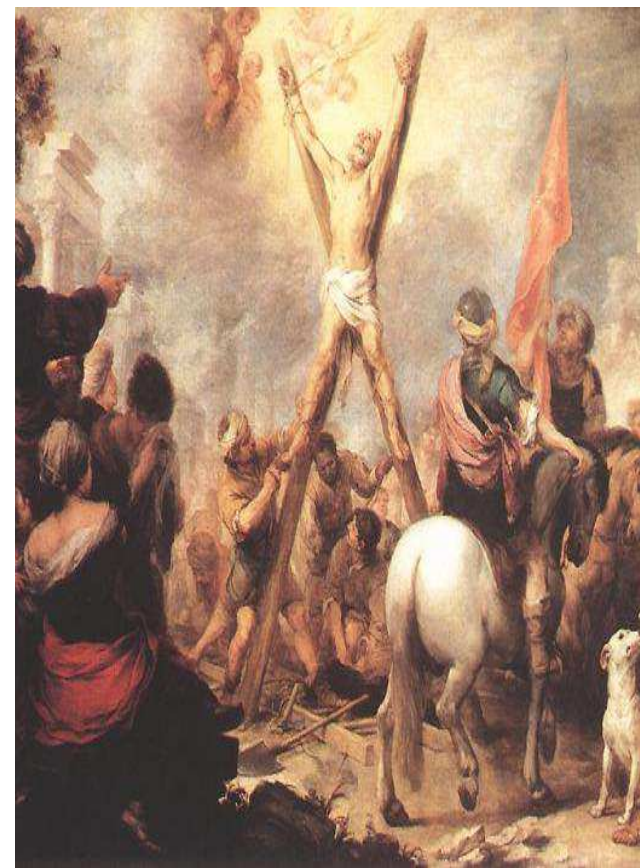


Martyrs are God's witnesses.

10. Andrew: Preached against idolatry in Patrae (Greece) annoying the Governor, who had him crucified on an X shaped cross. His words when crucified were recorded by a bystander.

“Oh cross, most welcome and oft longed for, with a willing mind, joyfully and desirously I come to thee, being a scholar of Him who did hang on thee, because I have always been thy lover and have longed to embrace thee”.

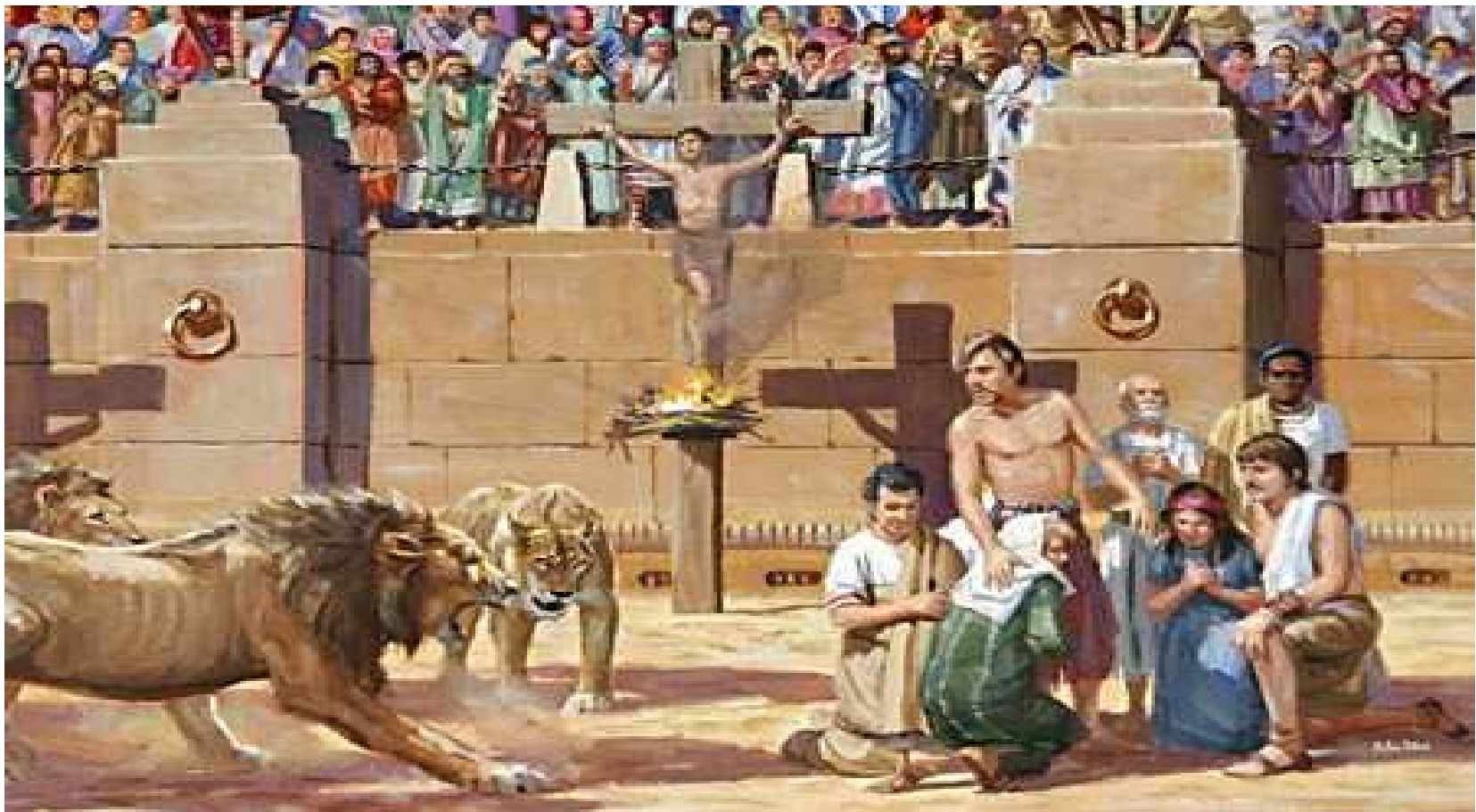
It took Andrew 3 days to die, during which he preached and souls were converted.



Martyrs are God's witnesses.

Early Church Christians were killed in the arena in Rome to entertain the crowds.

But more Christians have been martyred in recent history than in the infancy of the Church. To be a Christian in many countries today comes at a high cost.



Martyrs are God's witnesses.

John Hus was burnt at the stake.

On July 6, 1414, Hus's hands were tied behind his back with ropes and a chain was placed around his neck. Wood and straw were placed all around him.

Wycliffe's writings were used as kindling for the fire. Before the fire was lit, Count Palatine gave him one last chance to recant. He responded,

"God is my witness that the evidence against me is false. I have never thought nor preached except with the one intention of winning men, if possible, from their sins. Today I will gladly die."

As the flames began, he sang in Latin,

"Christ, thou Son of the living God, have mercy upon me."





















































KEY

EXTREME PERSECUTION

SEVERE PERSECUTION

MODERATE PERSECUTION

SLIGHT PERSECUTION

1. North Korea		14. Pakistan		27. Brunei		40. Kenya	
2. Saudi Arabia		15. Ethiopia		28. Azerbaijan		41. Comoros	
3. Afghanistan		16. Uzbekistan		29. Bhutan		42. Malaysia	
4. Iraq		17. Libya		30. Algeria		43. Djibouti	
5. Somalia		18. Laos		31. Tunisia		44. Tajikistan	
6. Maldives		19. Turkmenistan		32. India		45. Indonesia	
7. Mali		20. Qatar		33. Myanmar (Burma)		46. Colombia	
8. Iran		21. Vietnam		34. Kuwait		47. Uganda	
9. Yemen		22. Oman		35. Jordan		48. Kazakhstan	
10. Eritrea		23. Mauritania		36. Bahrain		49. Kyrgyzstan	
11. Syria		24. Tanzania		37. Palestinian Territories		50. Niger	
12. Sudan		25. Egypt		38. China			
13. Nigeria		26. United Arab Emirates		39. Morocco			

Martyrs are God's witnesses.

North Korea.

North Koreans Christians aren't simply killed for their faith in Christ. They are pulverized with steamrollers, used to test biological weapons, shipped off to death camps or shot in front of children, while newborn babies have their brains pithed with forceps in front of their mothers.



Crimes against humanity reminiscent of Auschwitz and Treblinka to which the world declared "Never Again!" more than 60 years ago are being perpetrated today against the North Korean Christians.

North Korea is one of the most brutally repressive governments in the history of mankind.

Tonight more than 200,000 Christians will try to stay warm in horrific North Korean labour camps. Christians there are considered little more than dogs as the following story from The Voice Of The Martyrs illustrates.....

The young brown-eyed girl looked up at her mother. What would she decide? Earlier that morning, the young girl's mother, their pastor, and twenty-six others in her North Korean village of GokSan were bound and taken before a screaming crowd of Communists. One of the guards ordered Pastor Kim and the other Christians, "Deny Christ, or you will die." The words chilled her. How could they ask her to deny Jesus? She knew in her heart he was real. They all quietly refused. Then the Communist guard shouted directly at the adult Christians, "Deny Christ, or we will hang your children." The young girl looked up at her mother. She gripped her and knowing how much her mom loved her, her mother then leaned down. With confidence and peace she whispered, "Today, my love, I will see you in heaven."

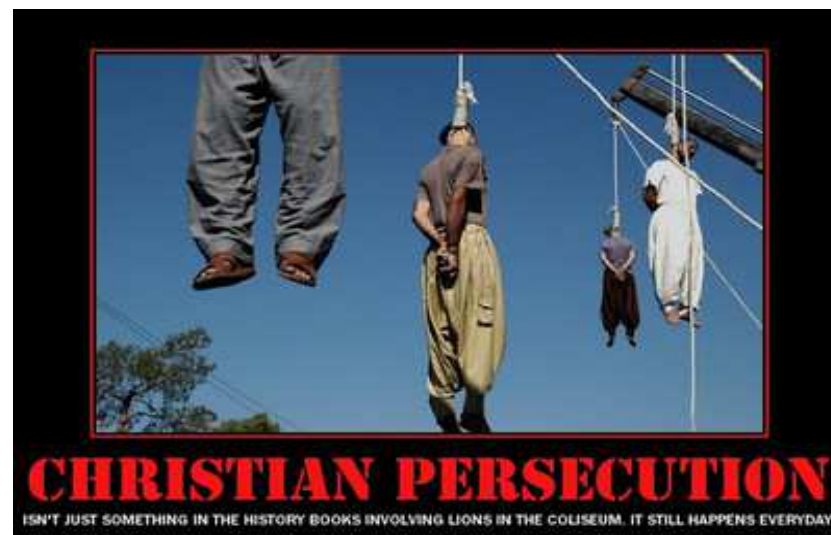
All of the children were hanged. The remaining believers were then brought out onto the pavement and forced to lie down in front of a huge steamroller. The Communists gave them one last chance. "Deny this Jesus or you will be crushed." The Christians had already given up their children; there was no turning back. As the driver started the heavy piece of equipment, the singing from the villagers started softly. "More love, O Christ, to thee, more love to thee."

Martyrs are God's witnesses.

Eritrea.

Today some 3,000 Eritrean Christians are imprisoned for their faith. Some are in underground and solitary cells whilst some are in 'secret' prisons for the 'disappeared'.

However, most are herded into unventilated shipping containers in the desert where dysentery and infectious diseases go untreated. Torture is routine.



Saudi Arabia.

Saudi Arabia, of course, strictly forbids the conversion of any Muslim to Christianity. The penalty for conversion is beheading. Back in 2008, The daughter of a man who works for Saudi Arabia's religious police became a Christian after she joined an Internet chat group. He responded by cutting out her tongue and burning her to death.

Persecution.

Calls for government repression of Christianity in the United States have grown louder than ever before. The Huffington Post even published a deeply disturbing article that calls evangelical Christianity the number one source of domestic terrorism in the United States and that calls on the Secret Service and the FBI to investigate and "infiltrate" pro-life and evangelical Christian groups.

Not only that, but many of the hottest best selling books in recent years have publicly mocked Christianity....

Just consider the titles of a few recent New York Times bestsellers.....

- * *"God is Not Great: Why Religion Poisons Everything"* by journalist Christopher Hitchens.

- * *"The End of Faith"* by atheist author Sam Harris.

- * *"The God Delusion"* by Richard Dawkins.

But this anti-Christian sentiment is just not held by a few elitists. The reality is that it has spread to much of the general population.

For example, the following are the titles of just a few anti-Christian threads on one of the most popular political discussion forums on the Internet....

- *"Dirty, Filthy, Christians": Treatise On The Most Dangerous Death Cult In Human History*

- *How can we destroy Christians?*

Persecution.

- Christians should not participate in politics*
- Why Christians are so ***** lame...*
- Attention Heterosexuals! Repent! Jesus Can Finally Make You Gay!*
- Christian are sub-humans*

The truth is that hatred for Christians and Christianity is rapidly increasing.

Jesus warned us that these days would come.

In **Matthew 24:9**, Jesus told us how the world will treat Christians in the end times....

*"Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me."
Members of the same family will even betray one another to the authorities.*

The truth is that things are not going to get any easier for Christians from here on out. Someday soon there will be no place to hide from Christian persecution. When that day arrives, what will you do?

Martyrs are God's witnesses.

Hebrews 11:35-39.

There were others who were tortured, refusing to be released so that they might gain an even better resurrection. Some faced jeers and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment.

They were put to death by stoning; they were sawed in two; they were killed by the sword.

They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated the world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and mountains, living in caves and in holes in the ground. These were all commended for their faith



Martyrs are God's witnesses.

Hebrews 12:1-4.

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood.

(Not everyone is called to be a martyr)

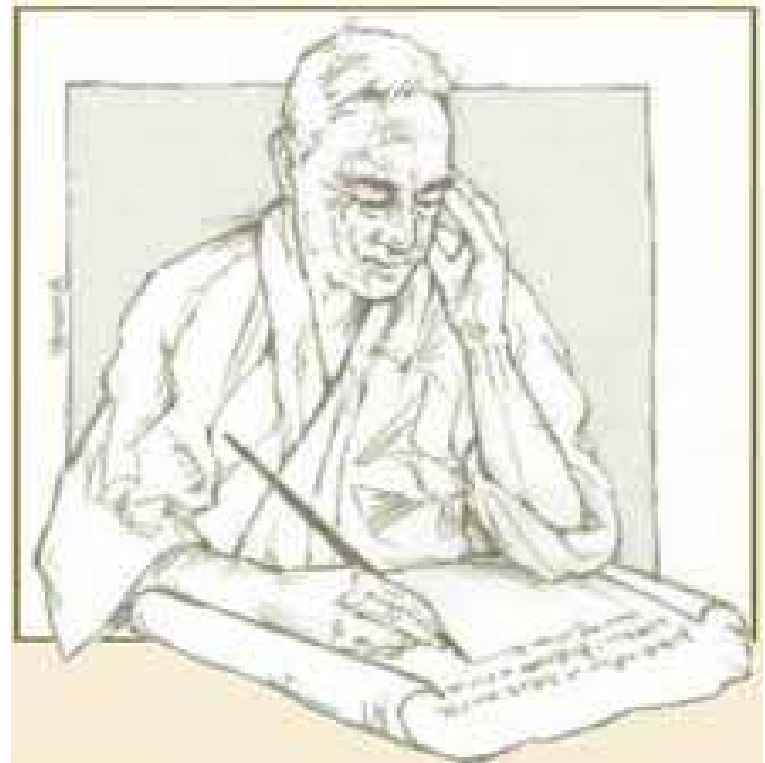
But we are all called to be witnesses!

God's witnesses.

Luke 1;1-4. (MSG)

So many others have tried their hand at putting together a story of the wonderful harvest of Scripture and history that took place among us, using reports handed down by the original eyewitnesses who served this Word with their very lives.

Since I have investigated all the reports in close detail, starting from the story's beginning, I decided to write it all out for you, most honourable Theophilus, so you can know beyond the shadow of a doubt the reliability of what you were taught.



The Holy Spirit given to empower God's witnesses.

Acts 1:1-5. (Author Luke)

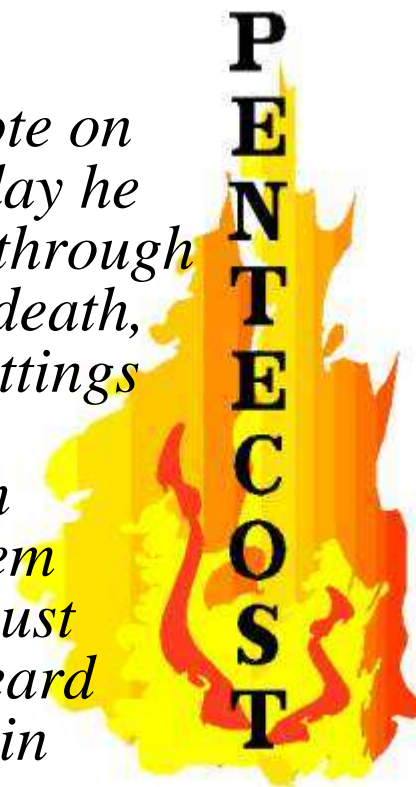
Dear Theophilus, in the first volume of this book I wrote on everything that Jesus began to do and teach until the day he said good-bye to the apostles, the ones he had chosen through the Holy Spirit, and was taken up to heaven. After his death, he presented himself alive to them in many different settings over a period of forty days. In face-to-face meetings, he talked to them about things concerning the kingdom of God. As they met and ate meals together, he told them that they were on no account to leave Jerusalem but must wait for what the Father promised: the promise you heard from me. John baptized in water; you will be baptized in the Holy Spirit. And soon.

When they were together for the last time they asked, Master, are you going to restore the kingdom to Israel now? Is this the time?

He told them, You don't get to know the time. Timing is the Father's business. What you'll get is the Holy Spirit.

And when the Holy Spirit comes on you, you will be able to be my witnesses in Jerusalem, all over Judea and Samaria, even to the ends of the world.

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The two witnesses & the 144 000.

Revelation 11:3-10.

And I will appoint my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth. They are the two olive trees and the two lampstands, and they stand before the Lord of the earth. If anyone tries to harm them, fire comes from their mouths and devours their enemies. This is how anyone who wants to harm them must die. They have power to shut up the heavens so that it will not rain during the time they are prophesying; and they have power to turn the waters into blood and to strike the earth with every kind of plague as often as they want. Now when they have finished their testimony, the beast that comes up from the Abyss will attack them, and overpower and kill them. Their bodies will lie in the public square of the great city which is figuratively called Sodom and Egypt where also their Lord was crucified. For three and a half days some from every people, tribe, language and nation will gaze on their bodies and refuse them burial. The inhabitants of the earth will gloat over them and will celebrate by sending each other gifts, because these two prophets had tormented those who live on the earth.



God's witnesses.



"AND I SAW THE DEAD, SMALL AND GREAT, STAND BEFORE GOD; AND THE BOOKS WERE OPENED: AND ANOTHER BOOK WAS OPENED, WHICH IS THE BOOK OF LIFE: AND THE DEAD WERE JUDGED OUT OF THOSE THINGS WHICH WERE WRITTEN IN THE BOOKS, ACCORDING TO THEIR WORKS."

Revelation 20:12

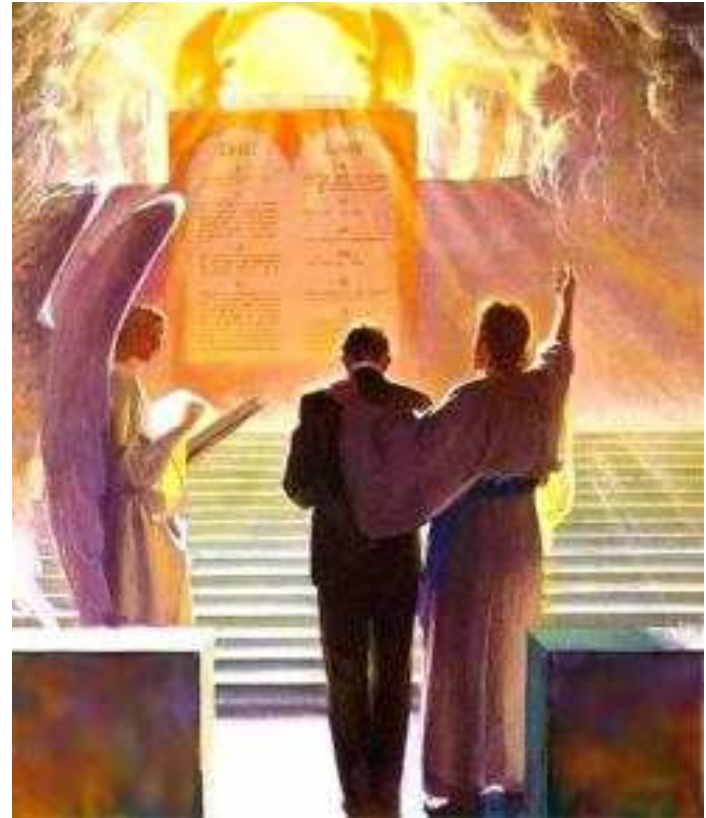
See
NOTE 2

God's witnesses.

Hebrews 10:28-31.

Anyone who rejected the law of Moses died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses.

How much more severely do you think someone deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified them, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace? For we know him who said, It is mine to avenge; I will repay, and again, The Lord will judge his people. It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.



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