



Truth For These Times



27. THE GREATEST STORY EVER TOLD

Before the first Christians were scattered throughout the world in the first century, as a result of persecution, it is estimated there were between 25,000 – 60,000 Christians living in Jerusalem. This dispersion resulted in the spread of the gospel message, which would not have been the case had they all stayed in Jerusalem.

Acts 8:1-4 Now Saul was consenting to his death. **AT THAT TIME A GREAT PERSECUTION AROSE AGAINST THE CHURCH** which was at Jerusalem; and **THEY WERE ALL SCATTERED** throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. And devout men carried Stephen *to his burial*, and made great lamentation over him. As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering every house, and dragging off men and women, committing *them* to prison. Therefore **THOSE WHO WERE SCATTERED WENT EVERYWHERE PREACHING THE WORD.**

Acts 20:20 How I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, **AND TAUGHT YOU PUBLICLY AND FROM HOUSE TO HOUSE,**

The scattered ones went everywhere preaching the word. They spoke of Jesus to people in the market place, in the street and in their homes.

Acts 17:6 But when they did not find them, they dragged Jason and some brethren to the rulers of the city, crying out, **“THESE WHO HAVE TURNED THE WORLD UPSIDE DOWN** have come here too.”

Did Christianity make an impact on the world? So effective was the witness of Christians that their opposers said they had “turned the world upside down”. Their work did not succeed because of the Apostles, but by the faithful witness of the church members – the laymen. Acts 8:1 says the Apostles remained in Jerusalem.

Matthew 28:19,20 **GO THEREFORE AND MAKE DISCIPLES OF ALL THE NATIONS, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I AM WITH YOU ALWAYS, EVEN TO THE END OF THE AGE.**

Here is a direct command from Jesus to His followers. He bade them “go” and take the good news of salvation. He was not only speaking to His people back there, but to all His followers to the end of time. He said His presence would be with them “even unto the end of the age”. This includes us today. However with this wonderful privilege comes the responsibility to share Jesus with others.



Mark 16:20

AND THEY WENT OUT AND PREACHED EVERYWHERE, the Lord working with *them* and confirming the word through the accompanying signs. Amen.

This was the response to the command of Jesus to go into all the world. Today this command is still in effect. The church is not a retirement centre. Its commission is to take the gospel to every nation.

Acts 1:8

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.

To attempt witnessing for Jesus without the power of the Holy Spirit would lead to failure. But a born again Christian can call upon this power and God is only too willing to supply it.



Acts 5:32

And we are His witnesses to these things, and *so also is* the HOLY SPIRIT WHOM GOD HAS GIVEN TO THOSE WHO OBEY HIM.

The obedient Christian is given the gift and power of the Holy Spirit.

Matthew 24:14

AND THIS GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM WILL BE PREACHED IN ALL THE WORLD as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.

The gospel message will be preached to the whole world. When all humanity has been reached and given the opportunity to accept Jesus as Saviour, God will bring the curtain down upon this world of sin. All may have a part, large or small, in telling others about our loving Saviour.

John 12:32

AND I, IF I AM LIFTED UP FROM THE EARTH, WILL DRAW ALL PEOPLES TO MYSELF.



Because Jesus was lifted up on the cross, humankind was drawn toward Him. His love found a way through to the hardened sinner's heart. When His followers uplift Him today, unashamedly, people are still drawn toward Him.

Mark 8:38 FOR WHOEVER IS ASHAMED OF ME and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, OF HIM THE SON OF MAN ALSO WILL BE ASHAMED when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels.

When Jesus returns the second time, there will be no reward for those who have been ashamed to uphold their Redeemer.

Romans 1:16

FOR I AM NOT ASHAMED OF THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.

Paul was not ashamed of Jesus or the message of salvation. He was proud of the fact that Jesus was his Saviour, and without shame he told the world.

John 4:28,29,39

The woman then left her waterpot, went her way into the city, and said to the men, “COME, SEE A MAN WHO TOLD ME ALL THINGS THAT I EVER DID. COULD THIS BE THE CHRIST?” And many of the Samaritans of that city believed in Him BECAUSE OF THE WORD OF THE WOMAN WHO TESTIFIED, “He told me all that I ever did.”



As soon as the woman understood Christ was the Messiah, she began to tell others about Him. Her knowledge of Him was very little, yet she shared it, and her testimony resulted in many others believing in Jesus. One does not have to be a trained theologian to tell others of Jesus, but only needs to tell what he or she knows. Nobody will argue with a person’s experience, even if there is a disagreement of viewpoints.

Mark 5:18-20

And when He got into the boat, he who had been demon–possessed begged Him that he might be with Him. However, Jesus did not permit him, but said to him, “GO HOME TO YOUR FRIENDS, AND TELL THEM WHAT GREAT THINGS THE LORD HAS DONE FOR you, and how He has had compassion on you.” And he departed and began to proclaim in Decapolis all that Jesus had done for him; AND ALL MARVELED.

This demoniac was possessed with a legion of devils. His appearance was terrifying but when Christ cast out the devils, he changed from a madman to one in complete control of his faculties.



He was so grateful to Jesus, he wanted to be one of His disciples; but Jesus said, “Tell them what great things the Lord has done for you”. In other words, He asked him to be a witness for Jesus. He knew little of Jesus, but he shared what he had. He was able to tell of his miserable life before knowing Jesus and that he had needed help that he couldn’t provide for himself. He was able to tell how he became a Christian, and the joy of this experience. He rejoiced in an understanding of the word of God and the way of salvation. He could

also tell of his life since becoming a Christian. He found peace of mind and satisfaction almost undreamed of before.

All Christians today can testify through their own experience of the power of Christ that they have seen, felt or heard. They can testify how they needed help and found it in Jesus. They can testify how Jesus is to them a personal Saviour, and the Bible is indeed the word of God.

“As witnesses for Christ, we are to tell what we know, what we ourselves have seen and heard and felt. If we have been following Jesus, step by step, we shall have something right to the point to tell concerning the way in which He has led us”. *Desire of Ages*, page 318.

Because of the witness of the demoniac, the people were ready to listen to Christ when He visited this area at a later time. The seed was sown and Christ reaped the harvest. God wants us to “sow the

seed” by living a consistent Christian life, and telling what we can of Jesus. If we are faithful, there will be a harvest of souls for the kingdom of God.

Luke 10:2

Then He said to them, “**THE HARVEST TRULY IS GREAT, BUT THE LABORERS ARE FEW; THEREFORE PRAY the Lord of the harvest TO SEND OUT LABORERS into His harvest.**”

In this world of sin there are few workers engaged in gathering in the harvest. Some souls are looking wistfully to heaven, but do not know the way, unless some representative of Jesus can show them. Many more are needed to consecrate their services to the Lord. Not all can do the same work, but all can do something. The Lord will make it plain what He wants you to do when you ask Him in prayer. When you know God’s will concerning your work for Him, do it diligently, and weary not in well doing.



Are you willing to be a witness for Christ? Jesus wants you to be a well of living water. He wants you to share these waters of salvation with others. The greatest joy and fulfilment in life will come when you share with others what you have found in Jesus Christ. In fact, not only will others benefit from your witness, but also you yourself will find your Christian experience growing stronger. By helping others, you help yourself. Will you ask Jesus to help you be a willing witness?

Review Sheet – Sharing Your Faith

Assignment: Read the Bible study carefully before answering the following questions.

1. As a result of persecution in the early Christian church, what did the Christians do? Acts 8:1-4.
Those who were scattered _____.
 2. What types of evangelism were used then? Acts 20:20
And taught you _____,
 3. What influence did Christianity have on the world? Acts 17:6
Those who have _____.
 4. What was Jesus' command to the Christian church? Matthew 28:19,20
"Go therefore _____ ... I am with you always,
_____."
 5. Did the early church obey Christ's command? Mark 16:20
And they _____,
 6. Who strengthened the believers to witness for their Lord? Acts 1:8
But you shall receive power _____; _____
_____.
 7. What is a qualification in order that the believer might receive the Holy Spirit? Acts 5:32
The Holy Ghost whom _____."
 8. Will Christ's command finally be carried out? Matthew 24:14
And this gospel of the kingdom _____.
 9. If we are ashamed to witness for Jesus, how will He regard us when He comes again? Mark 8:38
For whoever is ashamed of me ... of him _____.
 10. How did the woman at the well witness for Jesus? What was the result? John 4:28,29
Said to the men, "_____, _____
_____. Could this be the Christ?". And many of the Samaritans of that city _____,
 11. What did Jesus tell the demoniac to do after the devils were cast out? Mark 5:18-20
Go home to _____,
_____, ... and all _____.
 12. What is the great need in spreading the gospel message? Luke 10:2
The harvest truly _____; _____ Pray the
_____.
- Are you willing to be a witness for Christ? _____.