

WHY THIS LESSON?

Those people who are followers of the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society (they are followers of neither Jehovah nor Jesus) call themselves "Jehovah's Witnesses." Many others in the various denominations refer to themselves as "witnesses of Jesus Christ." (A book by Edmond C. Gruss is called, "Why a Witness of Jesus Christ -- Not a Jehovah's Witness.") I believe that both are wrong, that they are misusing the word "witness," and that they are using Bible passages out of context. The Bible uses such words as "testify," "testimony," "witness" (as a noun), and "witness" (as a verb) in many places. How are they used? We need to use Bible words in Bible ways.

They Are Not "Jehovah's Witnesses"

The people who call themselves "Jehovah's Witnesses" are wrong in so designating themselves. At their convention in Columbus, Ohio, July 24-30, 1931, they adopted this designation and claimed that it was in fulfillment of Isaiah 43:10. This ridiculous claim came from their president "Judge" J. F. Rutherford. Please read verses 1-10, 11-12, 14 of Isaiah 43. The passage is addressed to Jacob or Israel (the nation) and speaks of their being witnesses of or the evidence to sustain the fact that Jehovah is the one true God and that His word is true -- His word in prophesying their deliverance from Babylon and restoration to their land. It does not refer to a people in the twentieth century who will go forth testifying or witnessing for Jehovah. See also Isaiah 44: 1, 6-8 where the matter is mentioned again.

These Are Not "Witnessing For Christ"

Those who talk about "witnessing for Christ" are equally misguided and are misusing Bible passages (such as Acts 1:8, where Christ was both talking to and talking about the apostles). The English word "witness" is from a verb meaning "to know." The principal idea is "knowledge." A witness is a person who has first hand knowledge of an event or a subject. He can "testify" or "bear witness" as to what he saw or heard (and even smelled, tasted, or touched). One definition says, "To be present at; see personally." A witness does not have a successor, nor does he succeed anyone as a witness. He cannot have a "stand-in," and is not to give his opinions or feelings. "Witness" can also refer to evidence or testimony given or provided by a qualified "witness." Wm. E. Vine, in his Expository Dictionary of N. T. Words, gives this definition of a "witness": "Denotes one who can or does aver what he has seen or heard or knows." (Vol. IV, p. 225)

Some Bible Passages on "Witnessing"

The law of Moses in the ten commandments forbade bearing false witness (testifying falsely) (Ex. 20:16). The law also required the testimony of at least two witnesses for corroboration of any alleged testimony (Num. 35:30; Deut. 17:6; 19:15). What a witness is can be shown by Job 29:11 (one can bear witness about what he has seen and heard) and Jer. 29:23 (God was certainly qualified to bear witness against some of His people in that He had heard their words and seen their deeds).

The apostles were to be witnesses (witnessing or bearing testimony) because they had witnessed firsthand the things about which they would be testifying to the people. When Jesus said, "But ye shall receive power, when the Holy Spirit is come upon you; and ye shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea and Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth," He was

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