

Law & Order, X

You Are Witnesses

June 26, 2016



Welcome to where we're coming to know and grow in God's Word.

The Gospel accounts are overlapping news reports covering Jesus' rebirth from the dead. (Col 1:18) **They not only seamlessly interweave, but in so doing, the purpose of each person emerges as a witness.**



Mary, nicknamed *Magdalene* (Lk 8:2) i.e. *the Tower of the Flock*, is the only follower to wait, watch, and weep at the tomb, (Jn 20:1) **fulfilling the tower birth prophecy of Micah 4:8-9 a second time.**



The two disciples who examine the tilted stone, empty tomb, and discarded clothes, (Jn 20:4-10) **fear that the powers who sealed the tomb stole the body to frame them**, so they go into hiding. (Jn 20:19)



The two angels, who appear to Mary Magdalene (named after the tower where the sacrificial lambs were tended), **recreate the sacrificial seat of atonement in the Holy of Holies.** (Jn 20:12; Ex 37:7-8)



Jesus, as the Last Adam, (1 Cor 15:45) having restored what was lost under the First Adam's watch, walks with God, naked and unashamed, in the garden. **He fulfills His Caretaker role so perfectly, that Mary mistakes Him for the Gardener.** (Jn 20:15)



The angel on the stone keeps the guards from leaving; (Mat 28:4) informs Mary Magdalene that Jesus has ascended as He had told her; (Mat 28:6) and, **introduces Jesus' earthly mother, Mary, to His Spiritual Father, David, inside the tomb.** (Mat 1:1)



Inside the *restored Tabernacle of David* (Acts 15:16) they find David (one of those who left their tomb to witness), (Mat 27:52) sitting with Jesus' bed at his right, (Mrk 16:5) as *he* had prophesied. (Acts 2:25-35)

The Marys race back and run into Jesus on the trail, and they clutch His scarred feet. (Mat 28:8-9) Jesus, David, and the angel each tell the Marys to tell the disciples to go to Galilee. (Mat 28:7-10; Mk 16:7)

The Galilean gals are confused when they come to care for the body.

But, **two witnesses: Moses, representing the Law, and Samuel, the prophets,** (Acts 3:21-24; Ps 99:6) **confirm Jesus' rebirth.** (Lk 24:4-7)



The ladies report to the disciples, but address Peter separately as instructed, (Mk 16:7) unaware he had denied Jesus. (Jn 18:17; Mat 26:72) Peter sprints back to the tomb, and sees Jesus. (Lk 24:12; 1 Cor 15:3-5)



On the road to Galilee, Jesus meets two downcast disciples returning home to Emmaus; so, **beginning with Moses and Samuel, He opens their eyes.** They see His scarred hands and race back. (Lk 24:13-33)

They tell the eleven *that* He's risen, that Peter has seen Him, and that He's disfigured. (Lk 24:33-35)



They're all eating and arguing when Jesus breaks in, rebukes 'em, displays His scars, and **opens their minds to the Law of Moses, the Prophets of Samuel, and the Psalms of David.** (Lk 24:36-47)

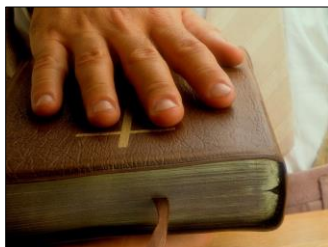
At Jesus' trial, the high priest said, **"Why do we need any more witnesses?"** (Mt 26:65) Paul, quoting *Moses*, says that **a matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.** (2 Cor 13:1; Deut 19:15) And, Jesus said, **"If your brother won't listen, take one or two others along."** (Mt 18:15-16)



[At dinner He said] ... repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in [My] name to all nations, **beginning at Jerusalem.** You are **witnesses** of these things. – Luke 24:47-48 NIV

Critics see a contradiction when scripture records 11 Apostles present (Mk 16:14; Lk 24:9-33) (12 minus Judas); **yet, later claims that "doubting" Thomas wasn't there.** (Jn 20:24) Peter addresses this:

We are witnesses ... God raised him from the dead on the third day and caused him to be seen. [However] **He was not seen by all the people,** [Thomas wasn't there] but **by witnesses whom God had already chosen** [including, Mathias, Judas' replacement, who was pre-chosen, prophesied in Psalm 109:8, and present at that dinner (Acts 1:20-26)] — **by us who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead.** He **commanded us to preach** [*kēryssō: preach; publish; proclaim*] to the people and to **testify** [*diamartyromai: demonstrate; share; explain*] that he is the one whom God appointed as judge ... **All the prophets** [beginning with David (Acts 2:29-32) and Moses and Samuel (Acts 3:21-24)] **testify** [*martyreō: bear witness*] about him that everyone who **believes in him** [*by faith*] **receives forgiveness of sins** [*by grace; the freedom from guilt and shame*] **through his name** [*Jesus Christ; the Word of God (Rev 19:13)*]. – Acts 10:39-43 NIV



He commanded us to preach, publish, proclaim, demonstrate, share, explain, and bear witness, in one way or another. It's not a suggestion. We *are* witnesses. **You need to see that Sharing is critical to your created purpose; you've been strategically placed in time and space to reach those around you.** Don't panic. God appointed *Jesus* as *Judge*. **We are witnesses, not lawyers or judges.** We wait, we watch, and when we're called, we offer what we've seen for ourselves in our own words.

You're not expected to argue the case, push for a verdict, or bring a conviction. That's the role of God's Holy Spirit. (John 16:8)

Let's read **Mark 16:15-18 (BLUE)**, **Luke 24:49 (GREEN)**, and **Acts 1:4-8 (Dark Green)**. No verse is left out or out of its order.

On **[this]** one **[initial]** occasion, while he was eating with them, **[and in response to and remedy of the abundance of fear and lack of faith that caused them to disobey His commands to meet Him in Galilee]** he gave them **this command: "Do not leave Jerusalem,** but **wait** for the **gift** my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. **[Spoiler alert: it's the Holy Spirit]** He said to them, I am going to send you what my Father has promised; "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned. For John baptized with water, but in **a few days** you will be **baptized with the Holy Spirit.**"

Oops. The Critics see a contradiction! **The Holy Spirit is given at the Day of Pentecost ... five weeks later. That's many days; and this literally says: not many days hence. That's when everybody gets it.** Jesus says, "In a few days YOU will be baptized with the Holy Spirit." They were, a week later. (John 20:21-22, 26, 21:14)

And these signs will accompany those who believe: **[not that each of the following will accompany every believer]** **In my name they will drive out demons;** **[as Paul did when he drove the spirit out of the fortune teller (Acts 16:18)]** **they will speak in new tongues;** **[as they did on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:4)]** **they will pick up snakes with their hands;** **[like they ... wait ... what?!]** **and when they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all;** **[Beg pardon?!]** **they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well."** **[Yeah, yeah ... can we go back to the snakes and deadly poison?!]**

There is no command to pick up snakes or drink poison. Don't put God to a foolish test. (Mat 4:7) **It's a promise of protection if the enemy goes after someone in God's witness protection program.** Jesus referred to His enemies as snakes and sons of snakes. (Mat 12:34, 23:33) **Do you handle the snakes like He did – with tough love and mercy? Because, that's your witness of trust and belief in Him.** And, I don't think that poison is what we think it is.

[James writes that] ... [the **tongue** is] full of **deadly poison.** ... [can] a **grapevine** bear figs? **[Nope. Just grapes]** – James 3:8-12 NIV



[James is echoing Moses, who wrote about the enemies of "our Rock" (Deut 32:31)] Their grapes are filled with **poison** ... Their wine is the **venom of serpents,** the **deadly poison of cobras.** – Deuteronomy 32:31-33 NIV

[David cries out] Rescue me, O Lord, from evil men; protect me from men of violence ... They make **their tongues** as sharp as a **serpent's;** the **poison** of **vipers** is on **their lips.** ... **may they be thrown into the fire** ... – Psalm 140:1-3, 10 NIV

How well do you drink the poison of your detractor's tongues? Do you react with their type of tongue – or, a new tongue of love for your enemies? That's your witness of where your value and power comes from. May they be thrown into the fire of God's Throne!

Now, do you remember when the Apostle Paul was shipwrecked on the island of Malta?



Paul gathered a pile of brushwood and, as he put it on the fire, **a viper**, driven out by the heat, **fastened itself on his hand**. [There's the *snake handling*] When the islanders saw the snake hanging from his hand, **they said to each other, "This man must be a murderer; for though he escaped from the sea, Justice has not allowed him to live."** [There's the *deadly poison*] But **Paul shook the snake off into the fire** [There's what David prays for] ...

The people expected him to swell up or suddenly fall dead, but after waiting a long time and seeing nothing unusual happen to him, they changed their minds and said he was a god. [How that *pendulum can swing!*] ... [The chief official's] father was sick in bed, suffering from fever and dysentery. Paul went in to see him and, after prayer, **placed his hands on him and healed him**. [“They will place their hands on sick people.” Even the hand just bit by the snake!] When this had happened, the rest of the sick on the island came and were cured. – Acts 28:3-9 NIV

Our best witness usually comes in our worst circumstances.

[Jesus continued, that night] ... but stay in the city [of Jerusalem] until you have been clothed with power from on high.” So when they met together, [this first time] they asked him, “Lord, are you **at this time** [“When God's Holy Spirit comes”] going to restore the kingdom to Israel?” He said to them: “It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. But you **will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses** in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and **to the ends of the earth.**”

You'll cast out demons in His name, because you'll speak with His tongue. You'll handle the snakes with wisdom and love; their poison won't harm you. Your actions will bring healing; because, these signs accompany those who believe!



Know what's weird? When He was saying this, in that upper room, 2000 years ago, **we would be their inconceivable definition of the ends of the earth! They made it! We're here and we've heard!** How's it feel to live at the ends of the earth?

If someone has *no desire* to help others find their way to Jesus, do you think they've received the *power* of His Holy Spirit?

Because, He doesn't say, “You'll receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you *may* or *may not* be My witnesses or ... *whatever*; I mean if you're *like really private*.” Being private doesn't release us from the witness stand. There are different ways, different means, and different gifts. But, there's only **one goal**: “Everyone who believes in him [by faith] receives forgiveness of sins [by grace] through his name.”

And, they speak with new tongues. And, handle the snakes. And, drink the deadly poison. And, bring healing to those they touch.