

The Object Of The Witness

“...and you shall be My witnesses. . . .” (Acts 1:8)

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What was the Object of the Witness?

“And when they had come together, they were asking Him, saying, “Lord, is it at this time Your are restoring the Kingdom to Israel?” He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has fixed by His own authority; but you shall receive power when The Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth” (Acts 1:6-8) [NASB].

“Having, therefore, obtained help from God, I continue unto this day witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the Prophets and Moses did say should come” (Acts 26:22). [KJV].

Luke wrote both the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts in The New Testament. In The Gospel of Luke he has provided a carefully phrased introduction at the beginning of his narrative (Luke 1:1-4).

“Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us, even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eyewitnesses, and ministers of the word. It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus. That thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein Thou has been instructed” (Luke 1:1-4) [KJV].

Its language, style and content clearly distinguishes it from the main body of the story which begins in Luke 1:5. However, the effects of the introduction of the Book of Acts emphasize the unity between the story of the ministry of the Messiah, and the story of the beginning of the Church.

The Gospel tells what Christ, the Messiah, began both to do and to teach. The value of this is, in Acts, the writer relates what the Messiah continued to do and to teach through the agency of His witnesses—the Apostles. The risen Messiah gave by commandments to His disciples, the reality of His resurrection appearances (after his suffering, and the on the cross), and the promise of the coming of the Holy Spirit. These two points form the foundation for the continuing work of the followers of the risen and living Christ!

The writer is associating what Jesus *began* to do during His ministry, and what He *continued* to do after His ascension. The witnesses witnessed about the moral life of Christ, His fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies –with Scriptures pointing to Him (John 5:39), His suffering, the scandal of the Cross, and His resurrection from the dead. These were the beginning of Christianity (see Acts 1:12ff; and 2).

Christ, the Messiah, chose and designated His disciples to act as missionaries and apostles (Luke 6:13; 9:10; 11:49; 17:5; 22:14; 24:10). This story covers the time of His ministry until He ascended to be seated at the right hand of the living God (Luke 24:44-49; Acts 1:11-12). Then, it became very clear to His chosen witnesses that they were to “bear witness of His resurrection” (Acts 1:21ff).

The scope of their task was worldwide. It started in Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria, and stretched to the ends of the earth. For this task the apostles had the *power* of the Holy Spirit –[the third Person of the Godhead] (Luke 44:49), a promise fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost (Acts), and the *abiding presence* of the risen and living Christ, “Lo, I am with you always” (Matthew 28:20).

Summary:

After the death and resurrection of Christ, the early Christian community adopted a new way of thinking and living –which was unthinkable to the secular world –they lived with, and functioned from, the resurrection of Christ. They had a resurrection-centered view of reality. The subsequent history of the Church is very difficult to account for without the resurrection of Christ. Christianity and the Church emerged in the apex of the resurrection of Christ!

The Apostles were instructed to witness with a specific witness, and with a specific body of knowledge. Their witness has content and substance to it—with reality. Their witnessing had the central Truth of the Christian Faith –in it –the resurrection of Christ. This is the **content** and the **substance** which the modern Church has to return to in its witness!

The apostles and the early Church never presented Christ as an abstract or as a mystical Person, He was presented as real, as Someone who lived and existed in history, and as Someone who is Personal.