

JACKIE CAPORASO
10552 SE 151ST STREET
SUMMERFIELD FL 34491
PH.352-288-5257
EMAIL- jackiecaporaso@gmail.com

THE TWO WITNESSES

WHO ARE THEY? (Part 2)

NO.247

INTRODUCTION

In part one of this study we saw that God's Word is established at the mouth of two or three witnesses. *"At the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established."* (Matt.18:16b)

It is good to keep in mind that when the Spirit speaks of "Christ," He does not refer to Jesus Christ only but to an entire creation of God in Christ. When Jesus was in the earth, He was the only Christ in the flesh, but Jesus is the Head of an entire body of saints. He is the first among many brethren.

After His death and resurrection, Jesus sent His Holy Spirit as a seed into many earthen vessels. This seed is nurtured as it is watered by His Word and fertilized through the many trials He takes us through. As the Christ seed is formed, it swallows up the old flesh man so that *"...when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP IN VICTORY."* (I Cor.15: 54)

Through the Spirit being formed, and the death of the old creation in us, the Christ is becoming a many membered body. So the Christ is no longer Jesus the Son, but now the Christ is becoming the sons of God with Jesus being the Head. A body is identified by its head. Our Head or our identity is Jesus.

When the Bible speaks of the "Two Witnesses" it is not speaking of only two individuals. It refers to individuals or groups of people who are anointed of the Lord to witness His Word and show forth His being. God is Spirit in a physical world and He reveals Himself through His witnesses.

The world is at enmity with the Christ and for a period of time appointed by God, the witnesses suffer rejection and many times persecution and even death. This does not mean that they actually lose their physical life, but it means that their testimony of Christ has no power among the ways of men.

During the times of the Dark Ages, Christians who did not belong to the Roman Catholic Church suffered great persecution in Europe. In France, the Huguenots were Christians who were part of French nobility yet their properties were ransacked and burnt down. The children were taken away from their parents to be raised in Roman Catholic schools. These Christians fled to Switzerland and Holland where they could escape and save their lives. Many lost their physical lives because they would not recant the testimony of Christ.

Of the hundred and two pilgrims who boarded the Mayflower in 1620, many were fleeing religious persecution. They took their chances and embarked on this crude and perilous voyage looking for freedom to worship the true God at any cost.

Many lost their lives to the harsh winter that met

them in New England or to the virulent diseases that spread throughout the ship. The Mayflower Compact was the first governing document of the Plymouth Colony. It was written and signed by these sometimes called "saints" who had fled religious persecution and found refuge on these shores. Today, four hundred years later, the staunch enemies who are out to stop the witness of the true God are still hunting us down.

THE TRUE LIGHT AND FAITHFUL WITNESS

"There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light." (Jn.1: 6-8)

John the Baptist was the greatest and the last of the Old Testament prophet because he bore witness to the true Light. We can safely state that "Moses and the Law" and "Elijah and the prophets" represent the "Two witnesses Company" of the Old Testament. But when Christ Jesus appeared in the world, He was that Light which is the Life of men.

The Book of Hebrews introduces the true Light, *"God who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; who BEING THE EXPRESS IMAGE OF HIS PERSON, and upholding all things by the word of his power..."* (Heb.1: 1-3a)

Speaking of the "Dear Son" of God Paul writes, *"Who is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature: For by him were all things created..."* (Col.1: 15-16a)

The revelation of Jesus Christ is introduced by John, *"And from Jesus Christ, who is the FAITHFUL WITNESS, and the first begotten of the dead..."* (Rev.1: 5a)

Jesus Himself declared to Philip, *"Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me,*

Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father?" (Jn.14: 9)

The Bible leaves no doubt that Jesus is the express image of the Father. He is the greatest witness of the Invisible God. He was sent to atone the sins of the world and to lead those whom God had given Him to the Father. Everything that Jesus did while in the flesh, He did according to what He saw the Father do. *"Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise."* (Jn.5: 19b)

THE VANISHING VISITORS

All the witnesses of the Old Testament pale in the light of the glory of the Christ when He appears in the earth. Speaking of the last of the Old Testament prophet (John the Baptist) Jesus said, *"Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist; notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he."* (Matt.11: 11)

The Christ appearing in the flesh is a greater witness by far than all the words spoken by the prophets as they heard the voice of God. To enter the kingdom of heaven, one must be in the Christ. *"I live; yet not I but Christ liveth in me..."* (Gal.2: 20b) To enter into the Christ and live as He lives in us, is much greater than all the words that were spoken in the Old Testament.

There came a day when Jesus took three of His closest disciples with Him to let them witness an astonishing appearance. *"And after six days Jesus taketh with him Peter, and James and John, and leadeth them up into an high mountain apart by themselves: and he was transfigured before them. And his raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow, so as no fuller on earth can white them.*

And there appeared unto them Elias with Moses: and they were talking with Jesus...And there came a cloud that overshadowed them: and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son:

hear him. And suddenly, **when they had looked round about, they saw no man any more, save Jesus only with themselves.**” (Mk.9: 2-4, 7-8)

Moses and Elijah were two who had not seen the grave because their calling had not been fulfilled. Moses and the Law are fulfilled in Christ. The body of Moses was now laid to rest. Remember the clue given in the Book of Jude, *“Yet Michael, the archangel when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee.”* (Jude 9)

There was a time when the devil wanted to bury the body of Moses in the grave, but God had other plans. Michael speaking in the name of the Lord would not let the devil touch Moses. The Lord Himself would bury Moses when he had fulfilled his calling.

John the Baptist was sent to fulfill the prophet's ministry. Speaking of John, Jesus said, *“If you can receive it, this is Elias which was to come.”* (Matt.11: 14) John was given the spirit of Elijah to fulfill that ministry. So when John was slain for his witness, it was the end of the Elijah ministry.

The two visitors of Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration represented the Two Witnesses of the Old Testament that were now being replaced by Jesus alone. They had come to talk to Jesus about His soon going to the cross, but they also appeared to pass the baton of the “Two Witnesses” over to the Lord.

By His death on the cross, Jesus paid the penalty of the Law for the sins of the world. It IS PAID IN FULL. Jesus also said that *“Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.”* (Matt.5: 18) The Law is fulfilled in Christ yet until the new heaven and new earth come into being the Law will still be enforced in the world. New heaven and new earth speak of the new creation of God in Christ and not of a new planet.

Throughout His earthly ministry, Jesus did all that

His Father told Him to do. This was to fulfill all Scriptures; He said this many times.

As these three disciples watched the scene on the Mount of Transfiguration, they suddenly heard the voice of the Father thundering out of a cloud, **“THIS IS MY BELOVED SON: HEAR HIM.”** Then lo and behold as they looked around, they saw no man save only Jesus and themselves standing there!

From that day forward, Jesus was the only Faithful and true witness in the earth. All previous witnesses were fulfilled in Him.

The Bible says that it was AFTER SIX DAYS that this took place. Six is the number of “Man” which denotes that the times of man's witness was over from that time on. With Jesus we enter the seventh day. The Law and the Prophets had indeed been the witnesses of the true God. They represented God in the world. But now the Son was established and taking His place as the ONLY true witness of the Father. THE FATHER AND THE SON OR THE SPIRIT AND THE WORD replaced the Law and the prophets or Moses and Elijah.

For three and a half years, Jesus went about showing the Father. *“Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? The words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works.”* (Jn.14: 10) On this Rock, He has been building His church and she will continue to be His witness in the world.

This was the new ministry of the **“Two Witnesses.”** They were no longer “The Law and The Prophets,” Now they were, **“The Father and the Son” or “The Spirit and the Word.”** These are the two olive trees and two candlesticks. *“These are the two anointed ones, that stand by the Lord of the whole earth.”* (Zech.4: 14)

JESUS EQUIPS THE SAINTS

For three and a half years, the world witnessed the presence of the Father in the Son. Jesus said, *“Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in*

me: or else believe me for the very works'sake." (Jn.14: 11) The works that Jesus did were not to show His power, they were for a witness of the Father in Him!

Jesus knew that after three and half years He would leave this earthly realm. When He agonized in Gethsemane, it was not only about the suffering of the cross, it was also about leaving His disciples behind. Would they have the faith to believe that He was IN THEM, just as the Father had been IN HIM?

These disciples would be under great pressure and their very lives were going to be threatened. Would they carry on the witness of Father and Son or be swept away by the strong forces of the religious serpent? Would they be turned again to follow Moses and the Law or would they dare continue in the Spirit that Jesus sent them? He prayed until *"His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground."*(Lk.22: 44) In Gethsemane Jesus warred against the forces of darkness that would come against His little flock, and He won!

The witness of Father and Son, Spirit and Word has continued but the witnesses have all suffered for their testimony. Before leaving them, Jesus explained to His disciples that the Father was going to send Him back in the form of the Holy Spirit. Then Jesus went to the cross as the Lamb of God and atoned for the sins of the world once and for all. From that day forward, those who believed in Him were cleansed and ready to receive Him in the form of the Holy Ghost.

Before leaving, Jesus gave His disciples these final instructions. *"...wait for the promise of the Father, which saith he, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence."* (Acts.1: 4b-5) And again, *"But ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and **YE SHALL BE WITNESSES UNTO ME...**"* (Vs .8a)

Just as Jesus was the witness of the Father, the disciples are witnesses unto Him and the Father. We know that the Holy Ghost in us has many functions,

and being witnesses unto Him is a foremost part of our calling. When the Holy Ghost descended into the hundred and twenty gathered in the upper room, the "Two Witnesses" who had been the Father in Jesus for three and a half years, were now transferred to a Company who are the Christ in the world, or the Body of Christ.

The Holy Spirit is the sum total of the Father and the Son, the Spirit and the Word. *"If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him."* (Jn.14: 23) The Two Witnesses were no longer a one person entity, they were now an entire "body" of those who hold within them the Spirit of Father and Son.

The serpent was gloating in his wicked achievement. He had riled and incited the Pharisees against Jesus and they had crucified Him. Satan was finally rid of this powerful witness of the true God and now there were no more. But soon he was faced with a company on fire for "Jesus!" They were bold with their testimony and they were multiplying fast! They were witnesses of Father and Son.

Satan had to double his sly tactics. He made plans to exterminate this little band of people. If he could not kill them, he would deceive them by raising a counterfeit Christ (antichrist) among them. But this also is part of God's plan to destroy the works of the devil.

BORN TO DIE

When John wrote the things that the resurrected Lord showed him, he saw Christ's witnesses being faced unto death by the beast of the pit. *"And when they (the witnesses) shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them and kill them. And their dead bodies shall like in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified."* (Rev. 11: 7-8)

The witnesses of the Old Testament have laid down their lives for the Word of God, and the witnesses of Jesus Christ are also called to do so.

Indeed, the beautiful church that Jesus built has been in the earth as the witness of the true God. Just as the Father in His infinite wisdom had decreed that His beloved Son die on the cross, so all the witnesses of the true God in the world are called to die. Some die physically at the hand of their enemies while others find that they are rejects among the religious, social and political systems of the world and even among most of their own loved ones and peers. Their true identity in Christ is dead in the world.

Truly God's ways are not our ways. With our natural reasoning we would raise up witnesses trained to be successful in convincing the world of the goodness of God. But God's witnesses are called to do much more than that. Through them, our God is revealing what is in man's hearts.

He is opening the bottomless pit. Jesus said, *"For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies.."* (Matt.15: 19) And out of that pit comes the beast that makes war against the witnesses of Christ. It is when it is all exposed that God will utterly destroy it by fire.

For this reason, God's witnesses are rejected and persecuted. Indeed the religious and all systems of men will kill the witness of anyone who speaks the truth and reveals their evil ways. It is the witness to the Truth that lays dead in the streets of men.

John wrote, *"He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil."* (I Jn.3: 8)

The works of the devil are the systems that rule over the people of the earth instead of God. When the witnesses of God have fulfilled their calling in the world, God will destroy all of man's systems by fire. This has already begun.

Gods' Holy Spirit has been revealing many great truths to His followers. The Book of Acts gives us an account of the fire that was burning within the first witnesses of the new Church. The power of

God moved them mightily and they went about doing many great works. They quickly multiplied and the witness of the true God was established among them.

Soon, their lives in the world were threatened by the "prince of the power of the air." The systems of brutish and egotistic men who rule over the people of the world were now their most deadly enemies. Under the guise of doing good for the populace, wolves in sheep's clothing, governmental, social and religious powers had now set up their "big guns" to exterminate any and all who would be a witness of the true invisible God and His Christ.

The Witness Company was slated to be tested. Would they succumb to the pull of organized religions and become witnesses unto them instead of unto the Living Christ? Many were pulled into the system until the Day that the Light of Christ shone brightly upon them and one by one they were called out.

This has indeed been very costly. They paid with their lives. Many paid with their physical lives while others were rejected by their peers and loved ones. They were looked upon as deceived and deceivers by those they were trying to help.

The Word of life that was burning within them was trampled upon and they were as good as dead in the streets (ways) organized and set up by men. Sooner or later, the true witnesses of Christ will have all been killed in the spheres of men's activities. The world will never give homage to the true testimony of Christ. The consuming fire of our God will destroy all their ways and replace them with His kingdom.

Each and everyone who is part of this "Two Witness Company" knows this well for they have gone through the meticulous cleansing of the Holy Spirit within them. They have been totally separated in their hearts from the world's attraction. They have no part in man's religions or politics. They did not need to leave their jobs and their domiciles, but the Spirit changed their hearts and their affections are no longer for worldly things. With Jesus they can

also declare, “*..the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me.*” (Jn.14: 30b) Daily they are washed and cleansed from the works of the flesh. They have learned to relentlessly stomp and bruise the head of the serpent which slyly tries to creep into their minds and hearts and tries to pull them back into the religious pit. They will remain dead in the streets until God Himself raises them up.

Now when the prince of this world comes to tempt them, he cannot offer them anything that would sway them. In the wilderness temptation, the devil offered Jesus the kingdoms of this world. He offered Him riches, fame and the adoration of the populace, but Jesus was not interested. Jesus knew that what He possessed was much greater than anything the world could ever give Him.

This is the acid test for those who have been entrusted with powerful ministries to the people. The spirit of this world pressures them into believing that the more successful they are, the more they please God; this is a great deception and many have fallen into that trap.

For example, the Lord had raised Oral Roberts with a powerful anointing to lead the people into the baptism in the Holy Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit. Oral Roberts did just that and even suffered for it, but later he was lured into building a kingdom for himself. The Word that he had first preached stood the tests of time but his kingdom fell by the way-side.

I can think of others who followed the same path. They were called of the Lord with a powerful word of deliverance and that word stood in those who faithfully followed the Word. But those who followed the man suffered greatly when they were led to build a kingdom for the ambitious minister they had once trusted.

This is the way of the serpent who comes around with carnal reasoning and makes one strive to do much more for God even using the tactics of the world. This is the way of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. He presents the good of that tree as something desirable, but the good of that tree is on

the level of the world and it is death. There is none good but God and the good of the tree of knowledge leads to evil.

Man's great knowledge and accomplishments in the fields of science and technology have only brought us to the brink of destruction. Yes, on one hand, the progress in medicine and communications have done much to improve lives, but on the other hand because the root of that tree is also evil, the entire tree is evil. Now we are on our way to destroying our planet and killing anyone who does not agree with us.

Society is changing and it is not all for the good. Social media and electronic communications have raised children who can no longer work together as teams. I heard a knowledgeable industrialist say that business and industry cannot stand because the workers can no longer do team work.

But God is in charge. He has a plan and He will even restore the planet. The prophet Joel declares, “*A fire devoureth before them and behind them a flame burneth: **the land is as the garden of Eden before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness; yea and nothing shall escape them.***” (Joel 2: 3) Indeed, God's fire is burning up the ways of men but the Garden of Eden, that beautiful planet earth with all its bounty, will be restored.

SAVED AND CALLED

“For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. Be not therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God; who hath SAVED US AND CALLED US WITH A HIGH CALLING, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus BEFORE THE WORLD BEGAN, but is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel..” (II Tim.1: 7-10)

In just these three verses, the apostle Paul lays out

the truth about our high calling in Christ. He makes it clear that the spirit of fear is not of God; we have been given the Spirit of the Overcomer. We must keep our minds focused on the truth at all times.

The serpent is very clever. He tries hard to scramble the truth with his lies. For this reason we may have believed doctrines that later we had to reconsider and possibly discard. It is certain that there are controversies among well-meaning brethren. For instance, some teach that once we are saved, we are always saved. We cannot lose our salvation. But others argue that this is not true and that we can lose our salvation through disobedience.

Paul, the great apostle to the Gentiles relates this experience. He was in Macedonia with Silas when they met up with vicious opposition and were beaten and thrown into prison. It was midnight and they were praying and praising God when suddenly the prison shook as if it was a great earthquake. The iron doors flew open and the bands of all prisoners were loosed. The keeper of the prison, supposing that the prisoners had fled pulled out his sword and would have killed himself when Paul cried with a loud voice, "Do thyself no harm!"

It was then that this responsible jailer who had been in full control of his charge, fell down before Paul and Silas and implored, "*Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.*" (Acts 16: 30b-31)

Beloved, this has never changed. The formula is still the same, "*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.*" Paul explained to the Ephesian Church, "*For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God. Not by works lest any man should boast.*" (Eph.2: 8-9) But Paul explains that there is more.

PAUL WAS PRESSING TOWARD MORE...

Paul prayed, "*That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; **if by***

any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.

*Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the **mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.**" (Phil. 3: 10-14)*

These four verses are most enlightening. Paul knew that as great as salvation by grace really is, he had been called to attain more. He knew that he was apprehended to attain to the resurrection of the dead. The word apprehended here means to overtake abruptly or to take into custody. We know that when the Lord called Paul on the road to Damascus, He threw him off his horse and by His brightness blinded him for several days.

Paul was not apprehended gently, indeed the Lord was very firm and even harsh with him. He blinded him and made it clear that He wanted him for something out of the ordinary. Then he sent him to Ananias to recover his sight.

Ananias would have turned Paul away, but the Lord had prepared him. He introduced the converted Saul, now Paul, to him ahead of time. "*Go thy way: for he (Paul) is a **chosen vessel** unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel; for I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.*" (Acts.9: 15)

From that day forward, Paul was pressing with fervor and diligence to fulfill his calling and to attain to THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD. This goal is more than just being saved from eternal death it is overcoming death while in these bodies. This is the high calling of God. It is what our Lord fulfilled in the flesh. And this is the calling of the elect in Christ.

"For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not

many noble, but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise..." (I Cor. 1: 26-27a) We were not chosen because of our worldly wisdom or our noble position in life, we were chosen because God knew us in Christ from the beginning. Jesus flatly declared, *"So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many are called, but few are chosen."* (Matt. 20: 16)

It was not when we first we heard His call that we realized the extent of our calling in Christ. As we moved from church to church and wore the harness of each group, we learned discipline but we also found that we really did not fit among any of them. As we continued our walk with Him, He CALLED US OUT of every church and every meeting that we were joined to. Then the time came when we had nowhere to lay our head or no place where we could share what the Lord had placed in our hearts and minds.

We are called to be "overcomers in Christ." We are called to follow the Lamb wherever He goes. And each time we follow the Lamb, He leads us to the same place!! The death of the cross!

Then we found that we had been apprehended to press toward the mark of this same high calling in Christ. Some will overcome death in these bodies. This is what Paul was pressing toward. The resurrection that He was looking for was not for a later date. He was pressing to attain resurrection while still in his body of flesh. Up to now, only Jesus has attained this.

The salvation of our souls is secure by grace through faith, but the mark of this high calling comes as we overcome every speck of man's religion in us. If we are called to rule and reign with Him in the age to come, we will take part in the fellowship of His sufferings and will embrace our daily cross.

As we walk the entire narrow way with Him, we are joined to *"...mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly of the **firstborn** which are written in heaven,*

*and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men **made perfect.**"* (Heb.12: 22-23)

PAUL'S JEOPARDY

It was Paul's testimony of the resurrection that put him in jeopardy. The Pharisees who ruled in that day felt that Jesus was a threat to their position of power over the people. When Christians declare that Christ is Lord of lords and King of kings and that His kingdom is being established in earth as it is in heaven, the world's power over the people is threatened.

When Christians declare that indeed Jesus is raised from the dead and that He will soon appear to establish His kingdom, the powers of this world are out to kill. It does not matter what denomination or sect one belongs to, if they name the name of Jesus Christ as Lord, their lives are in jeopardy.

Credible research has found that a staggering 100,000 Christians are violently killed every year for their faith. Violence against Christians continues to be on the rise in some countries of Africa and of the Middle East. In some places, Christians are displaced by force, their places of worship are destroyed and their women are raped. We know that this took place during the dark ages, but it is even on the rise today. In Syria today, Christians have been subjected to so called "religious cleansing."

We are still blessed in this country. I am free to write this little journal each month and Secretary of State John Kerry declared last week that "Religious Freedom is the birthright of every human being."

God still blesses America! But gross darkness is falling more and more over Europe and many countries all around us. Yet this also is part of God's plan of redemption and it is truly on track! As Jesus said, *"When you see these things, rejoice, for your redemption is nigh!"*

(To be continued)

Because of His love, *Jackie Caporaso*