

TRUE **THE WITNESS PEOPLE OF GOD**



True ... real, genuine, authentic, not false; not make-believe; in accordance with fact or reality; being what exists, rather than what was thought, intended, or stated.



1. Jesus keeps his distance from lookers and pretenders, 11:54-57.

- (John 11:54–57 ESV) Jesus therefore no longer walked openly among the Jews, but went from there to the region near the wilderness, to a town called Ephraim, and there he stayed with the disciples. 55 Now the Passover of the Jews was at hand, and many went up from the country to Jerusalem before the Passover to purify themselves. 56 **They were looking for Jesus and saying** to one another as they stood in the temple, **“What do you think?** That he will not come to the feast at all?” 57 Now the chief priests and the Pharisees had given orders that **if anyone knew where he was**, he should let them know, **so that they might arrest him.**

Pretense – make-believe; an attempt to make something that is not the case appear true.

2. Jesus stands up for his worshipers, 12:1-8.

- (John 12:1–8 ESV) Six days before the Passover, Jesus therefore came to Bethany, where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. 2 So they gave a dinner for him there. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those reclining with him at table. 3 **Mary therefore took a pound of expensive ointment made from pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped his feet with her hair.** The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. 4 But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (he who was about to betray him), said, 5 “Why was this ointment not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?” 6 He said this, not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief, and having charge of the moneybag he used to help himself to what was put into it. 7 **Jesus said, “Leave her alone,** so that she may keep it for the day of my burial. 8 For the poor you always have with you, but you do not always have me.”

3. Lazarus alive was a threat to the make-believe religion of the chief priests, 12:9-11.

- (John 12:9–11 ESV) When **the large crowd of the Jews** learned that Jesus was there, they came, not only on account of him but also to see Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. 10 **So the chief priests made plans to**

put Lazarus to death as well, 11 because on account of him many of the Jews were going away and believing in Jesus.

4. Jesus, seen as the Christ, the Son of God, presents the greatest threat to those clinging to the make-believe world of religion, 12:12-19.

- (John 12:12–19 ESV) The next day the large crowd that had come to the feast heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. 13 So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, crying out, **“Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!”** 14 And Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, just as it is written, 15 “Fear not, daughter of Zion; behold, your king is coming, sitting on a donkey’s colt!” 16 His disciples did not understand these things at first, **but when Jesus was glorified**, then they remembered that these things had been written about him and had been done to him. 17 The crowd that had been with him when he called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to bear witness. 18 **The reason why the crowd went to meet him** was that they heard he had done this sign. 19 So the Pharisees said to one another, “You see that you are gaining nothing. **Look, the world has gone after him.**”

5. The request of these Greek worshipers prompted Jesus to signal the epochal change that was about to take place in his salvation plan, 12:20-22.

A group of worshipers (Greeks–Gentiles, non-Jews) approached Philip signifying a monumental shift from the Jews being the witness people of God to the Church (Gentiles/Jews) being the witness people of God.

- (John 12:20–22 ESV) **Now among those who went up to worship at the feast were some Greeks.** 21 So these came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and asked him, **“Sir, we wish to see Jesus.”** 22 Philip went and told Andrew; Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus.

A. The group of worshipers (proselytes) came to Philip and requested an interview with Jesus.

These people were Gentile converts to the one true religion; non-Jews who had converted to Judaism, adopting Jewish customs and religious practices.

B. The LORD has always provided a way for non-Jews to join themselves to him.

- (Isaiah 56:6–7 ESV) **And the foreigners who join themselves to the LORD, to minister to him, to love the name of the LORD, and to be his servants**, everyone who keeps the Sabbath and does not profane it, and holds fast my covenant— 7 **these I will bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer**; their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; **for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples.**
- (Isaiah 49:6 ESV) He says: “It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel; **I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.**”
- (Isaiah 45:22 ESV) Turn to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other.

C. The Jews had continued their pattern of abandoning God and chasing after man-made religion.

- (Acts 13:46–48 ESV) And Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly, saying, “**It was necessary that the word of God be spoken first to you. Since you thrust it aside and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles.**” 47 For so the Lord has commanded us, saying, “**I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.**” 48 And when the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord, **and as many as were appointed to eternal life believed.**
- (Jeremiah 2:5 ESV) Thus says the LORD: “**What wrong did your fathers find in me that they went far from me,** and went after worthlessness, and became worthless?”
- (Judges 2:11–13 ESV) **And the people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the LORD and served the Baals.** 12 And **they abandoned the LORD**, the God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt. **They went after other gods**, from among the gods of the peoples who were around them, and bowed down to them. And they provoked the LORD to anger. 13 **They abandoned the LORD and served the Baals and the Ashteroth.**

D. This time in salvation history marks the change from the Jews being the witness people of God to the Gentiles being the witness people of God.

- (Ephesians 2:14–16 ESV) For he himself is our peace, who has made us both [*Jews and Gentiles*] one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility 15 ... that he might **create in himself one new man in place of the two**, so making peace, 16 and might **reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross**, thereby killing the hostility.
- (Romans 9:23–26 ESV) In order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory— 24 **even us whom he has called, not from the Jews only but also from the Gentiles?** 25 As indeed he says in Hosea, “**Those who were not my people I will call ‘my people,’ and her who was not beloved I will call ‘beloved.’**” 26 “And in the very place where it was said to them, ‘You are not my people,’ there **they will be called ‘sons of the living God.’**”

6. The hour had come for Jesus to be glorified in his death, burial and resurrection, 12:23.

- (John 12:23 ESV) And Jesus answered them, “**The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.**”
- A. Up to this point Jesus had always spoken of “the hour” as yet to come.
- (John 2:4 ESV) And Jesus said to her, “Woman, what does this have to do with me? **My hour has not yet come.**”
 - (John 7:30b ESV) ... but no one laid a hand on him, **because his hour had not yet come.**
 - (John 8:20b ESV) ... but no one arrested him, **because his hour had not yet come.**
 - (Matthew 26:45b ESV) ... See, **the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.**”
- B. We need to understand that salvation is the glory work of God—that absolutely everything God has done, is doing and will do is for his glory.

Everything that Christ accomplished on earth—his life, death, burial and resurrection—was planned in the Divine Council of the Holy Trinity in eternity past before God created this world.

C. The Son of Man is glorified in bringing us to glory as his glorious work.

- (2 Corinthians 3:18 NASB95) But we all, with unveiled face, **beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory**, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.
- (Romans 8:29–30 ESV) For **those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son**, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. 30 And **those whom he predestined he also called**, and **those whom he called he also justified**, and **those whom he justified he also glorified**.

7. Following Jesus and so dying to ourselves is the mark of the true witness people of God, 12:24-26.

- (John 12:24–26 ESV) Truly, truly, I say to you, **unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies**, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. 25 **Whoever loves his life loses it**, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. 26 **If anyone serves me, he must follow me**; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him.

A. The true witness people of God follow God.

B. The person who does not lose his life and follow Jesus is not a witness for God.

This person is deceived in his beliefs and has fallen prey to his misconceptions and opinions regarding God and the salvation he offers. He has become ensnared in the same religious trap as the chief priests, scribes and Pharisees who were seemingly oblivious to the fact that even though they professed to know and represent God they had abandoned God.

C. The true witness people of God firmly believe that it was necessary for Jesus to die, not to save the nation, but to bear the fruit of salvation.

D. The true witness people of God firmly believe that we need to die to ourselves to be fruitful.

- (2 Peter 1:8 ESV) For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, **they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ**.

E. The true witness people of God know we must not

love our lives in this world or we will lose them.

F. The true witness people of God know that hating our lives in this world is keeping our lives for eternity.

G. The true witness people of God serve Jesus, follow Jesus and live in his presence.

H. The true witness people of God are honored by the Father.

CONCLUSION: Do I serve Jesus ... follow Jesus?

Simple, clear teaching ... "If anyone serves me, he must follow me." It is the servant who loses his life and follows Jesus who lives in the presence of Jesus.

So that is the question each of us must answer ... Do I follow Jesus? Or do I merely say I follow Jesus and live in a world of pretend ... make-believe?

- I. To have any idea as to the magnitude of the opportunity before us we must follow Jesus and live in his presence.
- II. True believers follow Jesus and abide in his word and know the truth and live in freedom and in the light of the glory to come.
- III. Does that describe your life?
- IV. When we follow Jesus, we bring glory to God and live in the light of his glory.
- V. Following Jesus means daily living in submission to and obedience to him through his word.