You can believe the Kingdom-dominion people if you choose, who preach that Christians will subdue and purify this ungodly world system and bring back King Jesus to a conquered earth. As for me, I believe the apostle Peter who stood in the Upper Room on the Day of Pentecost and boldly proclaimed that Joel's prophetic last days had come.

I stand with John, who wrote in his epistle, "Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time..." (1 John 2:18, Caps ours).

Why is it that the apostles recognized the day of grace as being the last days — and we who live at the very climax of history give ear to those who go about saying, "The Lord has delayed His coming.... All things continue as they were.... Where is the sign of His coming?" Jesus Himself called them "evil servants" who would make you believe the Lord has delayed His coming. [See Matthew 24:48.] Don't listen to those who would spiritualize Christ's imminent return; that leads to apostasy!

Paul said, "God...hath in these last days spoken to us by His Son..." (Hebrews 1:2). James rebuked the rich who were accumulating gold and silver, saying, "Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days..." (James 5:3). He added, "...for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh..." (James 5:8). Peter boldly preached the power of Christ's blood and the precious Lamb ordained from the foundation of the world: "But who was manifest in these last days for you..." (1 Peter 1:20). If all these godly men believed that Pentecost ushered in the final hours of the church — if they believed they had lived to see the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy — how much closer must we be to the end of God's dealing with mankind and the church? It was at Pentecost that all baptized believers were endued with power to go into all the world as witnesses unto Christ. And you can be sure that from Pentecost — the beginning of the last days — until Jesus Christ returns, He has always had and will always have His own true witnesses.

I believe that God, by His Holy Spirit, is even now refining and preparing a host of TRUE WITNESSES who will stand for the Lord's holiness in the dark, closing days just ahead.

There is a glib kind of mockery being heard in the church today — aimed at those who sigh and cry over the sins of our nation and in the church. It is directed against the holy remnant who yearn for the Lord's return and who long to see Him face to face and who proclaim that He is coming soon to take His bride. This is the way the accusation goes: "You people have given up on the world. You are willing to give it over to the devil and sit around waiting for Jesus to sneak you out. You won't stand up against the evil in the nation and its government. You would leave it in ruins. You are escapists! You are called to rule and reign — but you refuse to get involved!"

My answer to that is "Pardon me for confessing with Abraham that I am a stranger and pilgrim on this earth...and I desire a better country, that is, an heavenly...for I sojourn here as in a strange country...and my eyes are on a city whose builder and maker is God...." (See Hebrews 11:9-16,) If this is a reproach, then I share it with both Abraham, Paul and all the saints of past ages. Paul said, "Let us go forth therefore unto Him outside the camp, bearing His reproach. For here we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come" (Hebrews 13:13,14). Here on earth — "no continuing city! We seek one to come!" Beloved, that is the New Jerusalem from above which is "the mother of us all" who believe and receive it. My future is not here — it is in Zion, the place where Christ is — in glory!
Everything here is headed for fire, for ruin, with the very elements melting away.

Those who live in joyful expectancy of Christ's return have more power and spiritual authority over the principalities and powers of darkness than all those who live carelessly. It is because they are motivated to meet human need simply by the power of Christ's love in them. And they know that if people don't get changed, with new and purified hearts, all political and social changes are useless. We have proud, boastful preachers who absolutely refuse to believe Peter when he said, "The heavens and the earth which are now...are reserved unto fire against the day of judgment...the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up...all these things shall be dissolved...we, according to his promise look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness..." (2 Peter 3:9-14). Peter added "...they willingly are ignorant... [of these truths]" (2 Peter 3:5). The kingdom-dominion people try to spiritualize the fire and burnings and the melting of the earth's elements. But ask the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah if God's fire of judgment is merely spiritual. Ask Achab and his devoured clan. Ask Korah, Dothan and Abiram and the 250 rebellious leaders upon whom "the fire came forth from the Lord and consumed them..." (Numbers 16:35).

America is even now under judgment.

America is right now experiencing the awesome judgments of the Lord. The fiery plagues are even now raging. Drug abuse is out of control. Doctrines of demons are being introduced into an apathetic church that permits wicked Jezebels to teach and seduce. Sin, crime, plagues, diseases, corruption, drugs, abortion, homosexuality, terrorism: everything is accelerating so fast, it is impossible now to compute it in our minds. We can't believe or accept what is happening.

A knowledgeable doctor put into words the horror being felt by physicians everywhere concerning the plague of AIDS. He said, "Unless we find a magic bullet soon, it's all over — we are doomed as a society. We have no moral or political courage to legislate against those who spread it, nor to isolate them. We have become blind, impotent and have given gays 'the right' to spread this dreaded thing throughout the fabric of society. By 1993 it will cost trillions of dollars in medical bills — which we don't have — and that in itself could destroy us." These are not the warnings of emotional evangelists — these are the sober words of medical specialists. They know that the whole world — that all of society — is now at risk. And the homosexuals are now so entrenched in our political power structure, the nation is being whipped into a submission unto death.

What is this plague? It is Deutoronomy 28 being fulfilled to the letter. Moses prophesied such plagues would befall those who forsake the awesome name of the Lord: "If thou wilt not observe to do all the words of this law that are written in this book, that thou mayest fear this glorious and fearful name, the Lord thy God; then the Lord will make thy plagues wonderful, and the plagues of thy seed, even great plagues, and of long continuance, and sore sickness, and of long continuance. Moreover he will bring upon thee all the diseases of Egypt, which thou was afraid of; and they shall cleave unto thee. Also every sickness, and every plague, which is not written in the book of this law, them will the Lord bring upon thee, until thou be destroyed" (Deuteronomy 28:58-61 KJV).

It is in apostate times like these — when the judgments of God are falling — that true witnesses are so needed! This is not a time for false witnesses! The trumpet must not blow an uncertain sound. There must go forth a pure word — a convicting word — a word so ablaze with Christ's holiness that the false prophets and deceivers will be put to shame.

The character and ministry of true witnesses

All true witnesses of Jesus Christ have a dual ministry. They are called to preach glad tidings to the lost — and to declare the righteous judgments against sin in the church! Some believe their only ministry as a true witness is to bring the good news to a lost world. It's true, God fervently loves the feet of those who go about preaching glad tidings of grace and reconciliation to all repentant, sin-forsaking sinners. But it goes much further than that! The true witness is called by the Spirit of God to discern wickedness in God's house and stand up and declare the Lord's righteous judgments upon it.

God will not permit passiveness nor neutrality when it comes to dealing with sin in the house of God. A pastor of one well-known Charismatic church refuses to hear any reports of sin in his congregation. He said, "I don't want to hear it. Just give them enough rope and they'll hang themselves." A member of that same congregation wrote to me about all the compromises now going on there as a result of his apathy.
When the sons of Benjamin refused to deal with the rapists among them who viciously attacked and murdered a Levite’s concubine, all of Israel gathered to fight against them because, "...nothing like this has ever happened or been seen from the day when the sons of Israel came up from the land of Egypt to this day..." (Judges 19:30). United as one man, Israel went up against their own brethren — the Benjamites. All except one tribe from Jabesh-gilead. 25,000 Benjamites fell in battle — but 600 were permitted to stay alive to keep the tribe from extinction. But because of the neutrality and apathy of Jabesh-gilead, every man was "utterly destroyed." (See Judges 21:10,11.)

Isaiah declared that he and his family were set forth as a sign or type of the Lord's true witnesses. The Spirit of Jesus was upon him and his family. "Behold, I and the children whom the Lord hath given me are for signs and for wonders in Israel from the Lord of hosts, which dwelleth in Mount Zion..." (Isaiah 8:18). A more accurate Hebrew translation is: "I and the children which Jehovah hath given me for signs and types in Israel..." (Keil-Delitsch). In other words, Isaiah and his children are signs, symbols of the Lord's true witnesses in Zion. The importance of this prophecy is discovered when these very same words are ascribed to Christ in Hebrews 2:13, "Behold, I and the children which god hath given me...."

The type is found in their names! Isaiah had a wife who was a prophetess and two sons. Jesus understood the types Isaiah spoke of — and that is why He declared His own witness to be of the same character.

Consider the name Isaiah: "Our salvation is Jehovah!" The full meaning of his name is found in Isaiah 12:2—"Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation..." This precious servant had seen a vision of the terrible and awesome holiness of God. He had seen the seraphims of glory hide their eyes at the sight he beheld. He had heard the thundering voices of angels crying, "Holy, holy, holy!" He had been humbled and shamed by the uncleanness of his lips — and of the sin among God's people. He had experience the burning, purging coals from God's altar. He was never to be the same. God's holiness was now his vision, his witness, his ministry. He was not out to get anybody — he was not vindictive. Isaiah understood that God's redemptive love was behind all His righteous judgments. His wrath was meant to produce future grace upon a purged and purified people! But never again would this witness permit sin against God's holiness to go unchallenged.

Isaiah knew that if he stood only for God's holiness — it would bring down upon him the wrath of all the people of God who were cozy with the world! He and all who stood with him would be accused of being unpatriotic! They would be called conspirators — division mongers. But Isaiah was so clear in his vision of God's holiness — so sure that God would judge sin — he cared not what they said. He warned, "Say ye not, A confederacy [conspiracy], to all them to whom this people shall say, A confederacy [conspiracy]...neither fear ye their fear, nor be afraid..." (Isaiah 8:12). What the prophet was saying was, "Don't be put off by their accusations that you are a traitor, a conspirator, or unpatriotic because you tell the truth about God's holiness and righteousness judgments against sin in His house! Don't fear them — never be afraid to stand up for His righteousness...." "Hearken unto me, ye that know righteousness, the people in whose heart is my law; fear ye not the reproach of men, neither be ye afraid of their revilings" (Isaiah 51:7).

Isaiah was fearless against sin in Israel because he knew that God had promised to become a sanctuary to all who stand for Him. "Then...he shall be for me a sanctuary..." (Isaiah 8:14).

Who is it who will be hidden to God — protected from all the arrows and fiery darts of the enemies of the Lord? There is a condition! "Let him be your fear, and let him be your dread..." (Isaiah 8:13). Those who fear God and dread his righteous judgments need fear no living man, no demons, no principalities or powers of darkness. Those who stand in awe of His holiness will discover Christ as their hiding place!

Isaiah states he is a type — "I and my children...." Therefore, the true witness of this last day is one who, like Isaiah, has been shut in with God — having been broken and changed by a vision of His absolute holiness, and he goes forth to preach reconciliation to sinners, and to stand in the sanctuary as a witness to God's own people of His righteousness judgments.

**Judgment is speedily approaching**

Consider the meaning of Isaiah's sons: Shear-Jashub and Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz. The second son bears the longest name in the Bible. But it is also the name Christ bestowed on all His true witnesses — that is how important
this name is. The name in Hebrew means, "Plunder speeds, spoil hastens." In modern English it is: "A time speedily approaches of general disturbances, plunder, and ravage." This son's name was written on a sign and posted in a public place where all could see it. It was the witnesses of God against a backslidden, idol-worshipping nation. It stood there — before the onrushing multitudes as heaven's sure word of prophecy. Loud and clear was the message on this sign: "Judgment is at the door — time is running out!" And keep in mind this witness was posted against God's own stiff-necked children.

The Lord's true witnesses must take the gospel to a lost world — to every nation under heaven. But every true witness also must bear the prophet's mournful vocation of hardening the hearts of Christians who refuse to hear what the Spirit has to say. God commanded Isaiah: "Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not...make the heart of this people [God's people] fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes..." (Isaiah 6:9,10).

Paul understood what Christ meant when he correlated His last day witnesses to Isaiah and his sons. In fact, Paul, the powerful witness of Christ, himself quotes Isaiah: "And when they agreed not among themselves, they departed, after that Paul had spoken one word, Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet...saying, Go unto this people, and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand, and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive. For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have shut..." (Acts 28:25-27).

The Holy Ghost preached through Paul the message concerning sin, righteousness and judgment. Wherever the Holy Ghost is in charge, this is the message. But those who refuse to hear it and repent are hardened by it. What is not of the Spirit focuses on self: self-improvement without repentance and hatred for sin.

When Isaiah was receiving his vision of God's holiness and after he was purged by fire — he heard the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" Isaiah answered, "Here am I — send me!" (Isaiah 6:7,8). What was this great commission — what was this holy assignment? To go into the Lord's sanctuary among His people and render them insensitive! Preach them blind and dumb! Preach God's holiness until their hearts are like flint. "In it shall be a tenth [who will hear and return to the Lord]..." (Isaiah 6:13).

Jesus Himself declared that His teaching had the same effect on the hypocrites of Israel. He said, "I speak to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand..." (Matthew 13:13). Then, amazingly He quotes that same passage from Isaiah, "...in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah...for this people's heart is waxed gross [callous], their ears are dull...their eyes they have closed..." (Matthew 13:14,15).

From Isaiah, from Paul, and from Jesus we receive the same frightful warning: Their sins have blinded and hardened them — and the warnings of judgment will not move them. They will turn away and shut the message of righteous judgments out of their minds! That is exactly what is happening this very hour throughout the evangelical and especially the Charismatic circles. Only a brokenhearted remnant believes judgment is at the door. Only a small, maligned and despised group now preach it. The Lord's true witnesses are few in number — but praise God, He is awakening many more. Sadly, the majority prefer to wink at sin — they refuse to mourn over the sins in the sanctuary because they are too wrapped up in their Laodicean riches and blessings.

A remnant will be saved

Isaiah's firstborn was named Shear-Jashub [Isaiah 7:3], which in Hebrew means, "A remnant is converted."

Here is the second characteristic of the Lord's true last-day witness! They believe what Jesus said, "Many will be called, but few chosen.... Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.... Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able...." The Lord's true witness must obey the command to take the gospel to the world — to "whosoever will hear." He is to expect fruit for his labors — and to make disciples of those prepared to walk in holiness. The true witness must live in the hope of Holy Ghost outpourings, revivals, restorations, and the conversion of multitudes in heathen nations. Much of the civilized world has been shaken by mighty revivals in past centuries. Under the Roman Emperor Constantine, entire nations were "Christianized" — with a form of godliness without the power. And today, multiplied thousands are turning to Christ behind the Iron Curtain, China, Africa, South America and elsewhere. While, at the same time, gospel-saturated America becomes hardened and corrupt.
Yet it has always been a fact that though multitudes are willing to "confess Christ" and join denominational systems — only a remnant goes on to "wholly follow the Lord..." Only two out of the multiplied thousands that came out of Egypt followed the Lord with all their hearts — Joshua and Caleb. Only two!

Jesus warns that many, many will boast of prophesying in His name; of casting out devils; of doing many wonderful works — and they are not even known by the Lord: "Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them. Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (Matthew 7:20-23 KJV).

Isaiah said, "And it shall come to pass in that day, that the remnant of Israel, and such as are escaped of the house of Jacob, shall no more again stay [lean] upon him that smote them; but shall stay [lean] upon the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, in truth. The remnant shall return, even the remnant of Jacob, unto the mighty God. For though thy people Israel be as the sand of the sea, yet a remnant of them shall return: the consumption [full end] decreed shall overflow with righteousness" (Isaiah 10:20-22). Also read this: "Son of man, when the land sinneth against me by trespassing grievously, then will I stretch out mine hand upon it, and will break the staff of the bread thereof, and will send famine upon it, and will cut off man and beast from it: though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness, saith the Lord God. Or if I send a pestilence into that land, and pour out my fury upon it in blood, to cut off from it man and beast: though Noah, Daniel, and Job were in it, as I live, saith the Lord God, they shall deliver neither son nor daughter; they shall but deliver their own souls by their righteousness. Yet, behold, therein shall be left a remnant that shall be brought forth, both sons and daughters: behold, they shall come forth unto you, and ye shall see their way and their doings: and ye shall be comforted concerning the evil that I have brought upon Jerusalem, even concerning all that I have brought upon it" (Ezekiel 14:13-14, 19-20, 22 KJV).

We so often quote Joel 2 concerning the Holy Spirit outpouring upon all flesh. But it is also an outpouring of righteous judgments with the sun darkened; the moon turned to blood. The chapter closes with this word: "...for in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the Lord hath said, and IN THE REMNANT WHOM THE LORD SHALL CALL..." (Joel 2:32). The gospel will go into all the world — as many as call on the Lord will be saved. That call is more than a vote for Jesus — it is more than a surface repentance. Only a remnant will call from a heart grieved over sin — only a remnant will turn from their wickedness and be truly saved. The great multitudes which stand before God's throne represent the remnants saved since the Cross. The remnants of all the terrible days of persecution — remnants saved out of the Dark Ages. We will be the capstone remnant.

Consider again what Jesus said, "Behold, I and the children which God hath given me..." (Hebrews 2:13). He is saying, "Look at Me — behold My holiness and stand in awe of My righteousness. Then look at the characteristics of My true witnesses! Behold what my witnesses are like! It is exactly as the prophet prophesied."

The true witnesses are a body of believers who share the Lord's burden for a lost world! They stand against all the taunts and jeering of a sinful, backslidden, harlot church system — to proclaim that the righteous judgment of a holy God is now at the gates! They are set to follow the Lord wholly — with all their hearts, in the midst of a wicked and perverse society!

They know the cost of discipleship, the reproach of the cross, the sharing of Christ's suffering — and they know that only a remnant of awakened souls will follow such a straight and narrow path! God alone is their fear and dread! They are surrounded by a wall of fire — They are bold because they are purged!

They despise the hype and shallowness of the charismatic choreographers and tricksters — because they have beheld the glory of His holy presence! They hate flesh in God's house, themselves, in God's work, and wherever it rises up — because flesh is the enemy against the Spirit of God.

Best of all — these remnant last-day witnesses are the joy of the Lord's heart. He delights in saying to all mankind, "Behold, Me and My children — given to Me by my Father!"

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