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# **The Testimony of Jesus**

## **THE WORDS OF GOD'S HOLY PROPHET**

By John F. Finkbeiner

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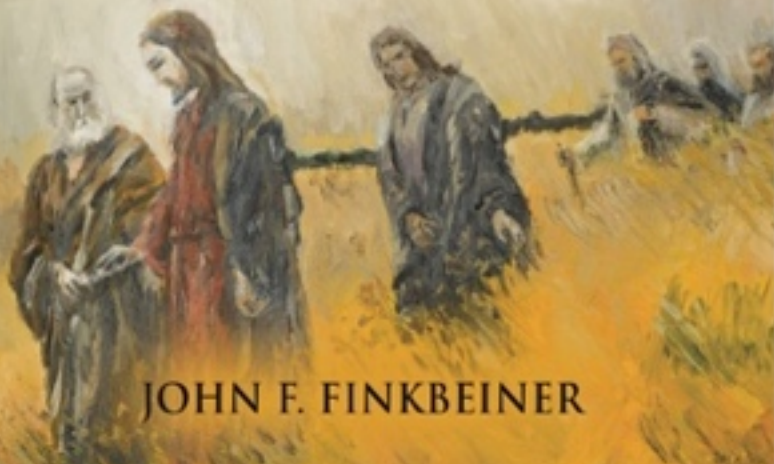
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# The Testimony of Jesus

THE WORDS OF GOD'S HOLY PROPHET

*Revealing the Spirit of Prophecy*



JOHN F. FINKBEINER

*THE TESTIMONY OF JESUS:*  
THE WORDS OF GOD'S HOLY PROPHET

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# Authority

## Chapter 1

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Scattered throughout the first few books of the New Testament are words like “amazed,” “astounded” and “astonished.” Appearing over forty times from *Matthew* through *The Book of Acts*, these descriptions refer to the people’s response to Jesus or his disciples.

In *Mark 1* we have this.

*They went to Capernaum, and when the Sabbath came, Jesus went into the synagogue and began to teach. **The people were amazed at his teaching, because he taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law.***

*Mark 1:21-22 (Matthew 7:28)*

Words spoken with authority was something unique that Jews recognized as characteristic of a prophet. Jesus often spoke in the imperative, the voice of command. Authority is what Jewish teachers lacked, but it was not just words that made our Lord different.

*Just then a man in their synagogue who was possessed by an evil spirit cried out, “What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God!”*

*“Be quiet!” said Jesus sternly. “Come out of him!” The evil spirit shook the man violently and came out of him with a shriek.*

***The people were all so amazed that they asked each other, “What is this? A new teaching—and with authority! He even gives orders to evil spirits and they obey him.”***

*Mark 1:23-27*

With His command, the evil spirit left. Jewish teachers had long provided the demon with cover rather than drive it out. How long had the devil possessed the man? The evil spirit knew Jesus (“*the Holy One of God*”). It had been watching Christ from the beginning—perhaps from before time—and understood why He appeared. “*Have you come to destroy us?*” the demon asked. (cf. *1 John 3:8b*)

After another revelation of His authority, this time in his hometown synagogue in Nazareth, more than a demon was aroused. What played out has always been true: Not everyone wants Jesus around.

*All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his lips. "Isn't this Joseph's son?" they asked.*

*Jesus said to them, "Surely you will quote the proverb to me: 'Physician, heal yourself! Do here in your home town what we have heard that you did in Capernaum.' "*

*"I tell you the truth," he continued, "no prophet is accepted in his home town..."*

*All the people in the synagogue were furious when they heard this. They got up, drove him out of town, and took him to the brow of the hill on which the town was built, in order to throw him down the cliff. But he walked right through the crowd and went on his way.*

*Luke 4:22-24, 28-30*

Minutes before, Jesus had opened the scroll to what we know as *Isaiah 61:1* ("*The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me because the LORD has anointed me...*"). He chose Nazareth to reveal that he was the Messiah, the Anointed One. ("*This scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.*") How many understood what happened? Calling His words "*gracious*" missed the mark. In so many words, the Lord said that he, Joseph's son, was the Son of God and Israel's promised king (cf. *Matthew 13:53-58*). We could do better than call that gracious.

Perhaps the Jews were accustomed to lessons on tithing spices or preparing for the next religious observance, but Jesus did not speak on that. He taught from the prophets instead. Most could not handle it. After more of the spirit of prophecy (*Luke 4:23-27*), Jesus began to sound less gracious.

Many had watched with curiosity, looking for miracles like the ones performed in Capernaum, but there were none. What they heard was the prophecy of *Isaiah*. His words provoked old friends and neighbors to try and force him off a cliff. They wanted a show; they got a prophet!

In the current state of the church, how long would a leader last if they taught nothing but the pure testimony of Jesus? No music. No theatrics. How long before they would be driven from the building? It would depend, I guess, on who was listening.

What is meant by Jesus' testimony? Glad you asked.

*For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.*

*Revelation 19:10b*

Think of the witness of Elijah, John the Baptist, Jeremiah or one of the other prophets. Their words upset the status quo and enraged the king. Prophets angered the establishment to the degree that priests and the palace planned their death.

Disdain for prophets, then and now, is common. The flock likes sweet, but a prophet's words are fire.

How many among the religious of our day would choose to read this book? What would our elders say about it? As you progress, count the passages never heard mentioned in church. Why is that?

The devout in the synagogue were dependent on the rabbi. They could not access *Isaiah*, *Amos* or *Daniel* on their own. Most were fed a steady diet of Mosaic Law. Few were literate. Still they had no excuse. Simeon and Anna, the prophetess, were prepared to meet the baby Jesus (*Luke 2:25-38*). They must have had an ear tuned to prophecy.

The four walls of the church are a controlled environment. Unless the congregation reads their Bible, they are captive within an information bubble. The job of many pastors is to keep people content. It is like the powerful media outlets that manage the news. What we hear is controlled by the few. Editors are driven to persuade their audience. Omitting stories while promoting others—and, yes, changing a fact here and there—may all be in a day's work.

Consider the following examples of authority: A Roman centurion, a captain of a hundred, came to Jesus seeking healing for his servant. The centurion humbly declined the Lord's offer to go to his home.

*The centurion replied, "Lord, I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. But just say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I myself am a man under authority..."*

*Matthew 8:8-9a (Luke 7:6b-10)*

This time it was the Lord who was astonished. This Roman soldier was a rare exception. Would others take note?

*"But so you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins,"* was the reason for the miracle that followed. Then, to the paralytic, Jesus said, *"Get up, take your mat and go home."* *And the man got up and went home. When the crowd saw this, they were filled with awe; and they praised God, who had given such authority to men. (Matthew 9:6-8).*

Were all happy about this sign of Jesus' authority? No, not the keepers of the status quo (cf. *Matthew 9:3*).

Jesus rebuked the storm, "*Quiet! Be still!*" *Then the wind died down and it was completely calm. (Mark 4:39)*

A Gadarene demoniac was freed at last, but did everyone praise the God of heaven?

*"Then the whole town went out to meet Jesus. And when they saw him, they pleaded with him to leave their region."*

*Matthew 8:34*

With a loud voice, Jesus spoke into his friend's tomb, "*Lazarus, come out!*" *The dead man came out... (John 11:43b-44a)*. This was all the Jews were willing to take. From that time on they plotted Jesus' and his friend Lazarus' death (cf. *John 11:53, 12:9-11*).

The signs of Jesus' authority, and their connection to prophecy concerning the Messiah, did not sit well with the powerful. Later, this was true of their reaction to the disciples, those to whom Jesus had given his authority (*Matthew 28:18, John 20:21-23*).

*Then Peter said, "Silver and gold I do not have, but what I have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk." Taking him by the right hand, he helped him up, and instantly the man's feet and ankles became strong. He jumped to his feet and began to walk... **When all the people saw him walking and praising God, they recognized him... and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.***

*Acts 3:6-8a, 9-10a, 10c*

A beggar cried out to Peter and John at the temple gate. The lame man sought eye contact, so that he might receive their alms. Peter's response sounded much like the words of Jesus.

The Lord had been crucified, but His Life-Giving Spirit lived on. The spirit of prophecy and the testimony of Jesus had multiplied, and so did the Jewish leaders' troubles.

*The priests and the captain of the temple guard and the Sadducees came up to Peter and John while they were speaking to the people. They were greatly disturbed... They seized Peter and John, and because it was evening, they put them in jail until the next day.*

*Acts 4:1-2a, 3*



Do we ever see the religious elite joining in on the praise? When the woman crippled for eighteen years was healed, did they rejoice?

*Indignant because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, the synagogue ruler said to the people, "There are six days for work. So come and be healed on those days, not on the Sabbath."*

*The Lord answered, "You hypocrites! Doesn't each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or his donkey from the stall and lead it out to give it water? Then should not this woman, a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has kept bound for eighteen long years, be set free on the Sabbath day from what bound her?"*

***When he had said this, all his opponents were humiliated, but the people were delighted with all the wonderful things he was doing.***

*Luke 13:14-17*

Though many may have been opposed, it was the synagogue ruler who spoke up. Had he studied prophecy he would have known who this miracle-worker was. He was born in Bethlehem. He was taken down into Egypt out of Herod's reach (*Hosea 11:1*). His light shined in Galilee of the Gentiles by way of the sea (*Isaiah 9:1-2*) and his birth was in God's appointed time (*Daniel 9:24-27, Galatians 4:4*).

The Jewish leaders followed Jesus around, not to listen and learn but to catch him in an infraction. There will be some who read Jesus' testimony to hear from God. Others will scan it for religious correctness and, with veins bulging in their neck, declare it heresy. Yet, they are not the authority, Jesus is. It is because of His powerful testimony that this book was written.

As people were in ignorance of Jesus' authority then, so they are now. Heed the Prophets. If not, we will miss Our Savior at his coming.

*"For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what he has done."*

*Matthew 16:27 (cf. 25:31-34, Revelation 22:12)*

\*

*Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?"*

*And I said, "Here am I. Send me!"*

*He said, "Go and tell this people:*

*"Be ever hearing, but never understanding;  
be ever seeing, but never perceiving.'  
Make the heart of this people calloused;  
make their ears dull and close their eyes.  
Otherwise they might see with their eyes,  
hear with their ears,  
understand with their hearts,  
and turn and be healed."*

*Then I said, "For how long, O Lord?"*

*And he answered:*

*"Until the cities lie ruined  
and without inhabitant,  
until the houses are left deserted  
and the fields ruined and ravaged,  
until the LORD has sent everyone far away  
and the land is utterly forsaken."*

*Isaiah 6:8-12*

*For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.*

*Ephesians 6:12*

## **Dark Forces**

### **Chapter 2**

\*

In the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Wikileaks began to publish America's classified secrets. Many of the released documents were government-related but not all. The information's authenticity was unchallenged. Officially, the rage focused on a native Australian journalist, Julian Assange. He gathered the material from his sources, then posted it on the world-wide web. When he finished, what had been done in secret was shouted from the housetops (*Luke 12:3*).

Strong forces have always opposed Christ. Since they cannot keep it the Bible a secret, they distort prophecy then spread it through their sources. Misinformation and disinformation are released to the media to protect their interests and to keep the public in the dark.

The prophecy Satan wants promoted is the false narrative. While shuddering at the doom Bible prophecy foretells, the devil's minions work to deny God's people the opportunity to realize their destiny (cf. *Romans 16:20*).

Facts are facts, whether they expose evil doers or edify the saints. Prophecy reveals the religious establishment is a dark force. If those in power cannot ignore God's servants, they attack them with slanderous accusations. If an argument cannot be won, destroy the opposition.

Prophecy affirms God's condemnation of the rulers of this age (cf. *Matthew 2:1-8, 16*). History shows a pattern: Rather than investigate Jesus' Messianic claims (*Matthew 26:60b-62*), our Lord's accusers always attempt to discredit him (*John 2:18-20*).

*What has been will be again,  
what has been done will be done again,  
there is nothing new under the sun.  
Is there anything of which one can say,  
"Look! This is something new"?  
It was here already, long ago;  
it was here before our time.*

*Ecclesiastes 1:9-10*

Among contemporary Pharisees, look for actions like those of the high priest Caiaphas. He stopped at nothing to maintain his hold on

power. We have modern examples of others like Caiaphas so we *might walk in Jesus' steps* (*Mark 3:20-30, John 8:45-59, 1 Peter 2:21*).

Despite the personal cost, God's servants light up the world (*Matthew 5:14*). When the Lord's testimony is spoken, the spirits of darkness run for the shadows.

Jesus described the ways of his religious enemies:

*"Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you hypocrites, as it is written:*

*"These people honor me with their lips  
but their hearts are far from me.*

*They worship me in vain;  
their teachings are but rules taught by men.'*

*You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to  
the traditions of men.*

*Mark 7:6-8 (cf. 7:13, Matthew 15:1-7)*

Beginning with Abel, many have sacrificed everything for truth. In the last days, more will follow. Their accusers, on the dark side, are bound by man-made traditions. They mistreat those who refuse to be the *"child of hell that they are"* (*Matthew 23:15, 34-36*). From them, we will never hear the *"testimony of Jesus, the spirit of prophecy."*

Personal conflict is a catalyst for growth, so God often allows an internal crisis to produce needed change. When preachers omit discomfoting Scripture, they weaken God's people. By refusing to look at Israel's history of corruption, they are doomed to repeat it.

"Patient Endurance" is the gate through which the righteous enter (*Romans 8:17, 2 Timothy 2:12, Hebrews 12:1-3*). The enemy wants us convinced there is another way. They say that God's rewards go even to the disobedient. As with the exodus from Egypt, the Promised Land did not go to all Israelites. God's inheritance was only for overcomers (*Revelation 2:7, 11, 17, 26, 3:5, 12, 21 and 21:7*).

*...but he who stands firm to the end will be saved.*

*Matthew 24:13*

*If you do not stand firm in your faith, you will not stand at all.*

*Isaiah 7:9b*

The verse on which this book is based is *Revelation 19:10b*, *"For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."* In this defining text, an

angel coupled Bible prophecy with what came on oath from God's mouth. So, the testimony of God's prophets and that of Jesus, are inseparable (*Revelation 22:8-9*).

Before we look closer into Jesus' testimony, we must address negatives associated with "prophet" or "prophecy." The terms originated with God. Prophet and prophecy are all His idea. Since the Lord made no distinction, a prophet must be understood as His voice to his people, the prophet's message must be considered as if it were God speaking! Sadly, many Christians have mental switches that turn off when they hear "prophet" or "prophecy." Attention to prophecy is listening to God's voice while lack of interest signals we are not His.

By training his dogs, the Russian physiologist, Ivan Pavlov, conditioned the animals to salivate by pairing a potent stimuli (food) with neutral stimuli (a bell). In time, ringing the bell produced the same response (saliva) in his dogs as did the sight and smell of their food.

A word or phrase may produce another type of response called "fight or flight." For many Christians, prophecy is one of those words. Some prepare for a verbal battle while others try to flee. Instead of fight or flight, we ought to salivate when hear prophetic Scripture. We have all been conditioned, but by whom? Was it the world, the flesh or the devil, or is it by the Spirit of Christ?

In *John's Gospel 3:16* or in *Revelation 12:10-11*, we hear the testimony of Jesus is synonymous with salvation. The King of Heaven has spoken. He will save to the uttermost, whether from the power of the beast or from the wages of sin.

We are warned; God will send a powerful wind that separates Christians into camps, like wheat from the chaff.

*For that reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness.*

*2 Thessalonians 2:9-12*

On which side will we be? On one will be those who love the truth and so be saved (the saints, the elect, the wheat); on the other will be those who *have not believed the truth* (the chaff). It is decreed, God will release a deception so strong that it will sweep the superficial into the enemy's camp. From there they will betray and hate the elect of

God (*Matthew 24:4, 9-10, Mark 13:12, Luke 21:16-19, 1 Peter 4:17-19, Revelation 6:1-2, and 1 Kings 22:16-23*).

Is this news? In Paul's "*Second Letter to the Thessalonians*," it makes it clear that, among God's people, love or apathy for Jesus' words divide us all. The great delusion first surfaced in heaven (*Revelation 12:3-4, 9*). It was seen again during the reign of the wicked Ahab of Israel (*1 Kings 22, 2 Chronicles 18*). Who, but the seducer of heaven's angels, could ignite a rebellion among millions of God's people? (*2 Thessalonians 2:3, 9-10, John 10:10, Numbers 14:1-4*)

To be on the Lord's side after the great delusion, we must hang on tight to Jesus' testimony (i.e. love the truth). This means keep believing what He said and, with determination, never let go.

Am I being over-dramatic? One might think so, unless they, too, know Jesus' testimony. Salvation and truth are a whole (*1 Timothy 2:4*). We will not possess one without holding to the other.

From what the Word describes, why so little mention from pastors about the next major "any moment" event? If they loved Jesus' testimony, would we not know more of the coming *great delusion* (cf. *Matthew 24:9-13, 24-25*)? How many understand its necessity? Is this a conspiracy of our enemy? Are we being deprived of the knowledge of this prophecy because something evil is afoot? With the focus on Jesus' return, why are we not told of the test of truth that precedes it?

Regarding the second coming, Paul wrote:

*Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction. He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple proclaiming himself to be God.*

*Don't you remember when I was with you I used to tell you these things?*

*2 Thessalonians 2:3-4*

Though the spirit of the prophet (above) specifies that *the rebellion* and *the man of lawlessness* appear **before** the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, many are convinced Jesus comes first (*2 Thessalonians 2:1-3*). Countless Christians will believe a fiction; therefore, they will be in mortal danger of participating in the rebellion against God.

Since it already happened and is supported by history, prophecy related to Jesus' first coming does not require much faith. Because it is yet unfulfilled, God's witness about the Second Coming does indeed require faith, *for without faith it is impossible to please God (Hebrews 11:6)*. Prophecy is God's plan, so it is an insult if He bids us to learn His plan for salvation, yet ignore His plea? *How shall we escape if we ignore so great a salvation? (Hebrews 2:3)*

Many are instructed to believe Christ comes first or that his return is spiritual, not physical. Was Jesus' first coming physical? Some might say "No." I say "Yes!" Could it be many are unprepared for the global signs that must happen first, before Jesus' literal and physical return: Two are *"the rebellion and the coming of the lawless one"*? How blessed are they who teach saints God's signs (*Romans 10:11-15*)!

Are those who reject Jesus' testimony courting disaster?

*...for they have rejected the law of the LORD Almighty  
and spurned the word of the Holy One of Israel...*

*He lifts up a banner for the distant nations,  
he whistles for those at the ends of the earth.*

*Here they come, swiftly and speedily!*

*Isaiah 5:24b, 26*

Those who feel secure in Zion but reject God's salvation, I ask: "When has the Lord rewarded ignorance? In the world, does stupidity ever earn a prize? No, in the natural order, ignorance is punished."

Christ's *second coming* is not good news for all who call on Jesus as Lord (*Matthew 7:21-23*)? This might explain the controversy. If we fail to understand what will soon take place, we have no one to blame. To fully comprehend Jesus' *trustworthy and true* witness, we must overcome the dark forces of ignorance, deceit and apathy, then rightly handle the word of God.

\*

*“Do not call conspiracy  
everything that these people call conspiracy;  
do not fear what they fear,  
and do not dread it.  
The LORD Almighty is the one you are to  
regard as holy,  
he is the one you are to fear,  
he is the one you are to dread,  
and he will be a sanctuary,  
but for both houses of Israel he will be  
a stone that causes men to stumble  
and a rock that makes them fall.  
And for the people of Jerusalem  
he will be a trap and a snare.  
Many of them will stumble;  
they will fall and be broken,  
they will be snared and captured.”*

*Isaiah 8:12-15*

*Jesus replied, “No one who puts his hand to the plow  
and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God.”*

*Luke 9:62*



## **Presumption**

### **Chapter 3**

\*

Everything begins and ends with God. He spoke and it all came into being. He gave His Word that this age and the next must end for something better to take its place. When understood, the testimony of Jesus impacts in an extreme, radicalizing way, right down to “the root” (Latin, the *radix*).

Do not let your heart be troubled. Jesus, the angels, Moses and the prophets are only messengers (*John 8:25-30*). In *Exodus 20:18-21*, Israel begged Moses to be a go-between or spokesman. After hearing God thunder and seeing the smoke from Sinai, they were filled with dread. They balked at the fact their God was a *consuming fire* (*Hebrews 12:29*). Knowing Moses would speak on their behalf and repeat God’s words, Israel promised to obey him, if only they did not have to enter the Lord’s fearful presence. The request was granted.

What is heaven like? Who can comprehend it (*1 Corinthians 2:9*)? Of this we can be sure, it is a place of intimacy with God, perfectly pure and radically different. God’s presence permeates heaven. There are those like Moses who long for perpetual intimacy with God (*Exodus 33:17-18*). Like the Israelites, others want the Holy kept at a distance.

Not long after vowing to obey, rebels in the camp violated a command etched in stone (*20:1-4*). They also rejected what Moses said, preferring instead an idol (*20:22-23*). They perished for their disobedience (*32:26-29, 35*).

Why did so many turn away from God? Why were they so easily entangled in this grievous sin of idolatry? Could it be they thought they were favored and had immunity from punishment? Could it be they found a substitute intimacy from the graven image?

By God’s power, they were led across the desert and the sea (*Exodus 13:21-22*). They witnessed miracles. They gathered around Sinai and confessed all the right things, so were they saved?

Witnessing God’s wonders will not change the soul, only intimacy does that. Lip service is insufficient. Many in Israel presumed their salvation was secured based on a promise to be good, but was their inheritance guaranteed? Since they were His chosen people, did God owe them anything? Were they free to live life on their terms? The

Lord loved them, so they had no fears—not even His wrath. They and God were friends. The prize was theirs, regardless of how they ran their race. Had they been intimate, they would have known better.

Since they would not draw close, they could not know God's ways. Through Moses, Israel was warned about presumptuous sins. God has conditions and holiness is one, which was the very thing Israel tried to avoid. For without holiness *no one will see God (Hebrews 12:14)*.

*“Go down and warn the people so they do not force their way through to see the LORD and many of them perish. Even the priests, who approach the LORD, must consecrate themselves, or the LORD will break out against them.”*

*Moses said to the LORD, “The people cannot come up Mount Sinai, because you yourself warned us, ‘Put limits around the mountain and set it apart as holy,’”*

*Exodus 19:21b-23*

It would be presumptuous for priests who offer sacrifices to ascend or touch Sinai's base. Without the purification God prescribed, the penalty was death (*Exodus 19:10-13*). The mountain was holy ground (*Exodus 3:4-6*). Breaking His command would incite the Lord against them. If the mountain was holy, then His people must be holy. All who approach God need reminded of this (*Exodus 28:36*). The family of Jacob was set apart as a holy priesthood (*Exodus 19:5-6*), yet they refused to perform the primary qualification of a priest.

When has holiness not been a condition for entering the Lord's presence? When warnings come from God's mouth, we better listen.

*And God spoke all these words:*

*“I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.*

*“You shall have no other gods before me.*

*“You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God...*

*Exodus 20:1-5b*

Israel's worship of the golden calf in *Exodus 32* provoked God's jealousy. Slain were three thousand Israelites who crossed the Red Sea and made vows to God. Idolatry stirs God's wrath because it

attacks His majesty, devalues His matchless worth and rejects his law. Idolaters *exalt created things above the Creator who is to be forever praised (Romans 1:21-25)*. Idol worship is Satan's work since it debases God and steals worship that belongs to Him. Idolaters will be, therefore, *thrown in the burning lake of fire (Revelation 21:8, 22:15)*.

Because of a spiritual experience or miracle of God, some believe their heavenly destination is secure. Due to the mindset that there is nothing to fear from God, the presumptuous think they are safe. They dismiss a hot, radical faith and settle for something lukewarm. Jesus warned He will spew them out (*Revelation 3:14-16*). They consume blessings without blessing others. They say they have no cross to bear or Calvary Road to walk. They regard heaven as an entitlement.

Assuming minimal effort will suffice, the presumptuous live by their own standards of conduct. The exodus from Egypt is behind them. Next, is receiving their inheritance—or so they presume.

Foolishly believing all is “in the bag,” the presumptuous have no more to accomplish. They imagine that eternity is more of what they already have, only better. They do not sense that something is amiss. Ignored is the consecration God commanded at Sinai.

Jesus addressed the presumptuous in the church at Ephesus.

*“Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love. Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not, I will come and remove your lampstand from its place.”*

*Revelation 2:4-5*

The presumptuous reject rugged self-examination.

*Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror and after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it—he will be blessed in what he does.*

*James 1:22-25*

Presumptuous Christians engage in a losing game. Holiness is not in the picture. A wholly surrendered life is, in their view, unnecessary. They totally ignore Paul's charge to believers in Philippi,

*Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.*

*Philippians 2:12-13*

"Work out one's salvation? How can that be?" the complacent ask. "We are saved by grace and not by works." "With fear and trembling? What have I to fear? What is Paul talking about? God accepted me for who I am," they say with a tone of defiance.

Presuming their name is on God's roll, they gather around teachers who nod and "tickle their ears" (2 *Timothy* 4:3). These teachers tip the balance between grace and law in favor of grace. Sins past and future are forgiven, so they live out their days with a casual view of their actions and thoughts. They hold to man's teaching, not Jesus' words.

Prophecy and Bible history tend to keep the saints balanced. The exodus warns that presumption will end in destruction (*Matthew* 7:21-23). Prophecy declares we have a race to run and do not yet know how it ends. Salvation is not fully manifest at the beginning, middle or near our race's completion. Glory is not ours until we crossed the finish line a winner (*Romans* 8:17-18).

Satan, the seducer, whispers in our ear, "You have nothing to fear. You are a good person. If anyone deserves heaven it is you. You don't need to be an evangelist or one of those Bible-thumping Christians. You are not perfect, but neither is anyone else. You don't do everything God says, but that's alright. Look around. No one else obeys it all either. See how he has rewarded you with money and comforts—and there are more to come. Just don't get carried away with this religious stuff! No need to become radical."

The trap is set. With the focus on "you" rather than on what God says, passivity seizes control. Blinded by false security, the foot nears the snare. *"I warned you, when you felt secure, but you said, 'I will not listen!' This has been your way from your youth; you have not obeyed me."* (*Jeremiah* 22:21)

Warnings are ignored, then, too late, we learn the Lord is against us. The devil has left us to our own demise.

The Spirit of Truth counsels those who call Jesus “King,” to *find out what pleases him (Ephesians 5:10)*. It is no secret what the Lord despises. He hates presumption as much as boasting. Near the top of things “desired” is faith, for *without faith it is impossible to please God (Hebrews 11:6)*. The Lord rewards those who diligently seek him.

Some U.S. military who failed to survive their captivity in North Vietnam asserted they would “be home before Christmas” or “back with their family in six months.” When Admiral James Stockdale, the highest-ranking former Vietnam POW was asked to reflect on which prisoners never made it home, he said, “That’s easy. The optimists.”

Consider what is called “The Stockdale Paradox.” (Source: *Good to Great*, Jim Collins, Harper Business, pp. 83-87) It reveals the fate of optimists who ignore reality. Optimists easily fall prey to despair. The cycle of high hopes then the low of utter disappointment proves too much to bear, so they die of a broken heart. This is what awaits those who own the promises but reject God’s warnings. The question often asked by Richard Wurmbrand bears repeating. “Will you still love Jesus if all he gives you is suffering?” God says many will turn away.

When wishful thinking becomes wishful believing (presumption) the devil sees opportunity. Precious energy is spent on holding on a little longer. When false hopes crumble, the enemy whispers of an imagined comfort in dying.

While the Bible contains many accounts of rescue and promises more, endurance must manifest first. Jesus’ testimony focuses on the perseverance of the saints, then miracles follow. Radical faith is necessary if we are to overcome the odds. Faith to trust God in our time of trouble, for as long as it takes, is key to defeating the enemy. Believing must be based on an intimate relationship; knowing our Lord is our help and our strength. *He will never leave us nor forsake us (Psalm 46:1, Hebrews 13:5)*. A radical faith does not presume but trusts in Jesus who saves.

\*

*The people walking in darkness  
have seen a great light;  
on those living in the land of the shadow of death  
a light has dawned.*

*Isaiah 9:2 (cf. Matthew 4:16)*

*From that time on Jesus began to preach, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near."*

*Matthew 4:17*

*These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: "Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel. As you go, preach this message: 'The kingdom of heaven is near.'"*

*Matthew 10:5-7*

*After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two-by-two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go...*

*When you enter a town and are welcomed, eat what is set before you. Heal the sick who are there and tell them, 'The kingdom of God is near you.'"*

*Luke 10:1, 8-9*

# **Unresponsive**

## **Chapter 8**

\*

Usually it requires a physician to certify that a person is deceased. When emergency medical technicians (EMT's) arrive at an accident scene, they check victims for vital signs. If none are detected, they are transported to a medical facility. In reporting on their patient, it is not an EMT's place to go beyond saying, "They are unresponsive."

Before the Lord brings disasters such as war, famine or plague, he sends his prophets to warn of impending judgment. If signs of repentance appear, as there was with the Ninevites in *Jonah 3*, the Lord may relent (*Jeremiah 26:3*).

*When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, he had compassion and did not bring upon them the destruction he had threatened.*

*Jonah 3:10*

When the spirit of prophecy is unloosed on the land, it is urgent sinners turn from their sin and beg for mercy. If the prophet speaks of ruin and death and there are signs of remorse, his role becomes like an EMT's: Do all one can to save those at death's door. If there are no spiritual signs such as *godly sorrow (2 Corinthians 7:10)*, then there is no remedy. "Unresponsiveness" spells the end. Given no hope of recovery, cities like Sodom and Gomorrah were doomed to lie in ashes—and why not? Dust is knocked off the prophet's sandals, then they move on. Certification of death is up to God. Do we see why the spiritually dead detest even the sight of a prophet?

Noah preached to the people about a coming flood. When all who believed were safely in the ark, God shut the door.

In the time of the end, when the righteous heed the warnings and flee Babylon the Great, she will be destroyed by fire. When the last martyr is slain, God's vengeance begins. Through her commerce and luxuries, Babylon appeared to have life, but none was detected. When tested, she will be unresponsive.

*In one hour such great wealth has been brought to ruin.*

*Revelation 18:17*

Babylon the Great persecuted the prophets that God sent to save her, so with *violence she was thrown down (Revelation 18:21)*.

*In her was found the blood of prophets and of the saints and of all who have been killed on the earth.*

*Revelation 18:24*

God will place a sign in the sky as an everlasting witness.

*The smoke from her goes up forever and ever.*

*Revelation 19:3*

It will soon be as it was in Noah's day. Vast numbers of wicked will reject the message spoken by prophets. Those who display the life of God will be saved, those without it will be dead men walking.

Living in an age of false prophets and false alarms, we need to know how testimony sounds that comes straight from God. Be grateful that the Lord does *not change (Malachi 3:6)*. Those responsive to prophecy will have no trouble recognizing Jesus' servants. *They will shine like the brightness of the heavens (Daniel 12:3)*

What about our vital signs? Are we spiritually alive? Are we moved by the following Scriptures that urge repentance? We have Moses and the Prophets. If we do not believe them, how will we be convinced by one *risen from the dead? (Luke 16:31)*

From the mouth of the Lord come these solemn words.

*Psalm 34:13*

*Whoever of you loves life  
and desires to see many good days,  
keep your tongue from evil  
and your lips from speaking lies.*

*Psalm 101:7*

*My eyes will be on the faithful in the land,  
that they may dwell with me;  
he whose walk is blameless  
will minister to me.  
No one who practices deceit  
will dwell in my house,  
no one who speaks falsely  
will stand in my presence.*



Do we hear warnings as well as promises? We have just begun.

Isaiah 26:21- 27:1

*See, the LORD is coming out of his dwelling  
to punish the people of the earth for their sins.  
The earth will disclose the blood shed on her;  
she will conceal the slain no longer.*

*In that day, the LORD will punish with his sword,  
his fierce great and powerful sword.*

Jeremiah 5:26-27a, 29

*“Among my people are wicked men  
who lie in wait like men who snare birds  
and like those who set traps to catch men.*

*Like cages full of birds,  
their houses are full of deceit...  
Should I not punish them for this?”  
declares the LORD.*

*“Should I not avenge myself  
on such a nation as this?”*

Jeremiah 14:14-16

*Then the LORD said to me, “The prophets are prophesying lies in my name. I have not sent them or appointed them or spoken to them. They are prophesying to you false visions, divinations, idolatries and the delusions of their own minds. Therefore, this is what the LORD says about the prophets who are prophesying in my name; I did not send them, yet they are saying, ‘No sword or famine will touch this land.’ Those same prophets will perish by sword or famine. And the people they are prophesying to will be thrown out into the streets of Jerusalem because of the famine and sword. There will be no one to bury them or their wives, their sons or their daughters. I will pour out on them the calamity they deserve.”*

Jeremiah 23:25-29

*“I have heard what the prophets say who prophesy lies in my name. They say, ‘I had a dream! I had a dream!’ How long will this continue in the hearts of these lying prophets, who prophesy the delusions of their own minds? They think the dreams they tell one*

*another will make my people forget my name, just as their fathers forgot my name through Baal worship. Let the prophet who has a dream tell his dream, but let the one who has my word speak it faithfully. For what has straw to do with grain?” declares the LORD. “Is not my word like fire?” declares the LORD, “and like a hammer that breaks a rock into pieces?”*

*Colossians 2:8*

*See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ.*

*1 Peter 2:1*

*Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind.*

*Revelation 21:7-8*

*“He who overcomes will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be my son. But the cowardly, the unbelievers, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars—their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death.”*

Consider yourself blessed to have read the prophet’s words. More blessed are those who take them to heart. God’s people are warned and will act accordingly. The above makes clear there is a high cost for being deceived yet a higher one for spreading lies. We have no excuse for believing Satan and not putting him to the test. Those that do will be unresponsive when they are checked for vital signs.

What is a typical response to *The Book of Revelation*? Many say, “It is scary.” They may cite plagues, judgments, creatures with four faces or seven heads, the lake of fire; all there to frighten. Remember Moses’ words to Israel in *Exodus 20:20*? God provided *Revelation* to test his people, so that the fear of Him *will keep us from sinning*. Unfortunately, the fear of the Lord will not always work.

Former prisoners visit juvenile offenders to describe in stark terms what life will be like should they continue their reckless path. Do the scary stories correct every youth? No, but the appeal to fear works on

some and that is why they do it. It is that way with the Lord. From *Revelation's* first word, we have Jesus' testimony about what will soon take place. Some who read it, heed its warnings will come alive. Others will pause before continuing in sin. Without fear, many are unresponsive as if there was no future day of reckoning.

The fear of God is a vital sign of life. Because of pride, many resist an appeal to fear, but God watches over those who fear him (*Psalms* 34:7). Always, when the spirit of prophecy speaks, *listen!* Do not let Jesus' testimony fall on deaf ears or you may be judged unresponsive.

*“Wake up, O sleeper,  
rise from the dead,  
and Christ will shine on you.”*

*Ephesians 5:14b*

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*I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.*

*Ezekiel 36:25-27*

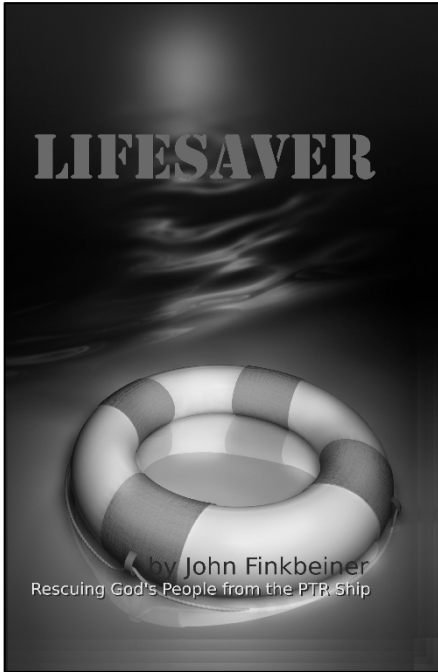
*As John's disciples were leaving, Jesus began to speak to the crowd about John: "What did you go out into the desert to see? A reed swayed by the wind? If not, what did you go out to see? A man dressed in fine clothes? No, those who wear fine clothes are in kings' palaces. Then what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. This is the one about whom it is written:*

*"I will send my messenger ahead of you,  
who will prepare your way before you.'*

*"I tell you the truth: Among those born of women there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist; yet he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing, and forceful men will lay hold of it."*

*Matthew 11:7-12*

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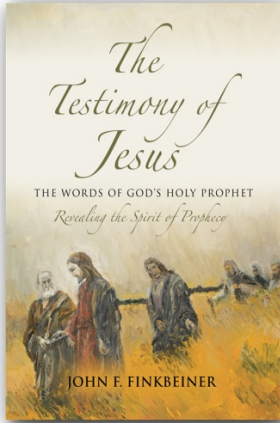
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