

## The Witnesses – Who can you believe?

Act 4:32-37 (Psa 133) 1Jo 1:1-2:2 Joh 20:19-31

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+BI A freshman at Eagle Rock Junior High won first prize at the Greater Idaho Falls Science Fair, April 26. In his project he urged people to sign a petition demanding strict control or total elimination of the chemical "dihydrogen monoxide." And for plenty of good reasons:

1. It can cause excessive sweating and vomiting
2. It is a major component in acid rain
3. It can cause severe burns in its gaseous state
4. Accidental inhalation can kill you
5. It contributes to erosion
6. It decreases effectiveness of automobile brakes
7. It has been found in tumours of terminal cancer patients

He asked 50 people if they supported a ban of the chemical. Forty-three said yes and six were undecided.

Only one knew that the chemical, "dihydrogen monoxide," was water.

The title of his prize winning project was, "How Gullible Are We?"  
He feels the conclusion is obvious.

Today it seems you have to be so careful.

Candid camera type programs put us on alert to practical jokes  
There are hoax Internet stories and urban legends  
I get notifications of Lottery wins which I have never entered  
and people wanting me to handle their money for them.  
Hoax viruses

In our last parish we had a visit from a lady with blood on her.  
She told of how her husband had beaten her and she needed to get to  
a relative living some place north, and she had no petrol. A few days

later she was in the paper. The police had caught up with her for  
swindling a number of people.

Given our current climate I think we can readily identify with Thomas  
(I suppose we ought to in some way since our building is identified  
with St Thomas!)...

*"Unless I see the evidence..."*

Actually a certain amount of scepticism can be a healthy thing.  
People who have had some doubts have usually worked through them  
and know why they believe what they believe.  
The worst thing is to have doubts and to keep those doubts on the back-  
burner and never deal with them.  
Doubting can be just an excuse for an unwillingness to know the truth.  
And you can waste a lot of your life doubting what is true, simply  
because you never got around to asking someone about it.

Jesus was willing to show Thomas the evidence...

-and I feel that if *we* are genuinely seeking God and not just  
making excuses for avoiding him, then God will also reveal  
himself to us.

(This sort of revelation can come through the conviction of the Spirit as  
you read the scriptures, or perhaps some sign that God gives you)

The Scriptures we read today speak of **the witness of the apostles**

**This was a major feature amongst the early Christians...**

In Acts 4 we read that they were of *One heart & soul*  
ie They believed the same thing – the witness of the apostles)  
because... the testimony came across with great power.

We read...

*Great grace was upon them*

It would seem that The Holy Spirit united them in believing the  
testimony.

And the outcome was their unity

*They had all things in common*  
– no-one was in need

So what was the testimony of the apostles that brought such unity?

In 1 John 1, John ( a disciples of Jesus)

declares his credentials as a witness:-

*<sup>1</sup>We declare to you what was from the beginning,  
what we have heard,  
what we have seen with our eyes,  
what we have looked at and touched with our hands,*

What had been revealed to John was Eternal Life through Jesus Christ.

(Today there is the ongoing quest for eternal youth.

People want to be remembered... immortalized.

Some even have themselves frozen in the hope of being revived)

John says, What we are witness to is...

*concerning the word of life*

That is... eternal life, in the person of Jesus.

John writes...

*We.. declare to you the eternal life that was with the Father  
and was revealed to us—*

For those who receive John's testimony, there is unity and fellowship

with those of like mind

with God

with Jesus Christ

John says...

*<sup>3</sup>we declare to you what we have seen and heard so that you  
also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with  
the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.*

That fellowship continues and is enriched as we are cleansed from sin  
and as we continue to confess our sins

*if we walk in the light as he himself is in the light, we have  
fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son  
cleanses us from all sin.*

*If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us  
our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

This is good news, but it is not just for us in church... Chapter 1 John  
chapter 2 reads...

*Jesus Christ is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not for ours  
only **but also for the sins of the whole world.***

Here is a message that we are bound to share with others.

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, lived, died for our sins, was raised  
by God and now sits at his right hand.

We who have received the witness of the apostles through their  
writings, can now share their witness, and our own experience  
of God with the rest of the world around us.

**So what of your testimony?**

Are you able to share with others what God means to you?

Are you walking in fellowship with him?

Do you in fact have anything to share and witness to?

As we witness we know that..

We live in a world where some people will believe anything.

And some who are cynical and sceptical about everything.

Neither extreme is a healthy one.

For those who believe anything...

we must encourage them to find out what their faith is based upon.

For those who are sceptical about everything...

we must encourage them to not just take our word for it, but to examine the Scriptures for themselves.

The Scriptures – the testimony of the apostles esp – invite our scrutiny.

If you earnestly seek God and seek the truth – the scriptural evidence will stand up

Lies and deceit are eventually revealed for what they are but the word of God stands firm. It has proven itself through the ages.

John R. W. Stott wrote...

+BI We cannot be content with an evangelism which does not lead to the drawing of converts into the church, nor with a church order whose principle of cohesion is a superficial social camaraderie instead of a spiritual fellowship with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.

<sup>3</sup>*we declare to you what we have seen and heard so that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.*

*if we walk in the light as he himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.*

In finishing let me just say this...

If you have doubts about the resurrection, or about the scriptures generally, don't be embarrassed or think that it makes you

ignorant or a lesser person.

Be honest about your doubts. Come and speak to me and maybe with the help of God's Spirit I can help you to see another perspective, or an angle you hadn't thought of.

Sometimes understanding and belief come gradually through thought and prayer.

To those of you who feel secure in your faith, be patient and understanding with those who express doubt. And bear in mind that it may be that you feel secure only because your faith has not been severely tested.

For us all, may God increase our understanding and our faith, and may we share the gospel of Jesus Christ gently but confidently whenever we have opportunity.