

## **Attested Truth.** **pp. 93 - 99**

*(Being the substance of an address given by the Principal,  
on Foundation Day, May 28th, 1949, at the Chapel of the Opened Book).*

To the believer, brought up in orthodoxy, accustomed to the phrase “the Church began at Pentecost”, taking to himself as a matter of course the words “we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand” (Psa. xcv. 7), the results of the application of “right division” and the somewhat startling claims of “dispensational truth”, may seem after all to rest upon the somewhat uncertain basis of human deduction and inference. It may be that if we can discover that dispensational changes that subdivide the purpose of the ages, have always been announced, and that spiritual deduction only finds its place after, and not before, the announcement has been made public, the recognition of the differences that claim attention and which are vital to the full acknowledgment of our calling may be simplified.

First, in order to be sure that the term “dispensational truth” shall be understood, let us consider its place in the revelation and interpretation of the Word.

### **THE THREEFOLD DIVISION OF ALL TRUTH.**

The revelation given in the Scriptures comes to us in three forms (1) Doctrinal Truth; (2) Dispensational Truth; (3) Practical Truth.

*What do we mean by Doctrinal Truth?*—Doctrinal truth embraces all that has been revealed concerning the Being and Attributes of God, and all that God has done, commanded, promised or foretold in Creation, Law and Grace. “All have sinned” is true under whatever dispensation we may be called. “God is Just” is as true under grace as it was under law. “To the Jew first” was true during the period covered by the Acts, but cannot be put into practice since the dismissal of the Jew in Acts xxviii. This latter statement therefore comes rather under the next heading.

*What do we mean by Dispensational Truth?*—Dispensational truth takes note of the purpose of the ages, the changes that have been introduced since Creation, such as may be denominated the dispensations of Innocence, Law, Kingdom, Grace, Church, Mystery, &c., and the office of dispensational truth is to decide whether any particular doctrine—be it command, promise, calling or prophecy—does or does not pertain to any particular individual. Dispensational truth would lead the believer to distinguish between the blessing which says, “the meek shall inherit the earth”, and those blessings which are described as “all spiritual” and to be enjoyed in “heavenly places”.

*What do we mean by Practical Truth?*—Not until doctrine has passed the mesh of dispensational truth, can practical truth put in its claim. It is obvious that the people of Israel, called to be a royal priesthood and a holy nation, with its sphere of influence in the

earth, could not be called upon to put into practice the injunctions of Eph. iv.-vi. In like manner, the Church of the One Body has no guarantee that obedience to the special truth attaching to that calling will result in blessing in “basket and in store”. Those who are under the law must have a very different form of practice from those who are under grace.

Only by loyally preaching and teaching the truth of God as related to these three aspects can we hope to become workmen who need not to be ashamed, for only by so doing shall we “rightly divide” the Word of truth. We believe this threefold division will command the assent of all who honour the Scriptures as the revelation of the mind and will of God.

In the endeavour to discern the changing dispensations, we may collect together “things that differ”, we may observe that one calling is associated with the period “before the foundation of the world”, and another with a period “from (or since) the foundation of the world”. We may observe that in one calling Christ is “King”; in another He is represented as “Priest after the order of Melchisedec”, in another He is denominated “Head over all things to the church which is His body”. We observe that some are “to inherit the earth”, but that others find their place in the “New Jerusalem”, and yet others are blessed with all spiritual blessings “in heavenly places”; and that this sphere of blessing is “where Christ sits at the right hand of God”. We might moreover bring forward the prevalence of miraculous gifts and the persistence of the hope of Israel, right through the Acts of the Apostles to the last chapter, and compare and contrast this state of affairs with the teaching of the “Prison Epistles”. These, and many other studies are a legitimate approach to the Scriptures, and fulfil the injunction “comparing spiritual things with spiritual”. In this present study the key word is the word “Witness”, and our contention is that every dispensational change is accompanied by an accredited witness. We are not left to our own searchings or deductions, we find witnesses at intervals along the way, who declare in the name of Him that sent them that this or that change has taken place. If this be so, then we should spare no pains to become acquainted with so important a feature in the unfolding of the divine purpose. We have called this address “Attested Truth”, for dispensational truth is inseparable from “witnesses” specially raised up at the crises of spiritual history.

The word “witness” (Anglo-Saxon) and the words “testimony” “testify” (Latin) together with “record” and “report” (Latin) and the English word “martyr” which is from the Greek, are employed in the New Testament to translate the various verbal forms of the word *martus*, and together present a fairly comprehensive idea of the meaning of the original.

Testimony or witness is that which is affirmed as something seen, heard or experienced, or that has been made known by divine revelation, and for which the testifier would be prepared, if need be, to confirm by a martyr’s death. The words, *ho martus ho pistos* are translated “faithful witness” in Rev. i. 5, and “faithful martyr” in Rev. ii. 13.

The words that will be employed, or have a bearing on the subject, are:

*Martureo* “to bear witness, to testify”. *Marturia/on* “That which is testified.”  
*Promarturomai* “To bear witness beforehand.”  
*Epimartureo* “To bear witness, to make a deposition.”  
*Diamarturomai* “To affirm with solemn protestation.”  
*Sunepimartureo* “To bear witness together, to concur in testimony.”

The first thing that we must do is to discover who, and what are called “witnesses” in the New Testament and, in order to avoid cumbering ourselves with unwanted material, we shall ignore references to “false witnesses” or those witnesses referred to who have no bearing upon the subject in hand.

- (1) JOHN THE BAPTIST. “The same came for a witness” (John i. 7).
- (2) THE LORD JESUS CHRIST. “I am one that bear witness of Myself” (John viii. 18).
  - (a) The Father bears witness of Christ.  
“The Father that sent Me beareth witness” (John viii. 18).
  - (b) The Holy Spirit’s witness of Christ.  
“He shall testify of Me” (John xv. 26).
  - (c) The Scriptures bear witness of Christ.  
“They are they which testify of Me” (John v. 39).
- (3) SUPERNATURAL GIFTS AND SIGNS.
  - (a) To Christ.  
“The works that I do, bear witness of Me” (John v. 36).
  - (b) To apostles.  
“God also bearing them witness . . . . with signs” (Heb. ii. 4)
- (4) PETER and THE TWELVE. “Ye shall be witnesses unto Me” (Acts i. 8)
- (5) THE APOSTLE PAUL,
  - (a) *Paul, before Acts xxviii.* “His witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard’ (Acts xxii. 15).
  - (b) *Paul both before and after Acts xxviii.* “A witness both of these things which thou hast seen and of those things in the which I will appear” (Acts xxvi. 16).
  - (c) *Paul after Acts xxviii.* “The testimony of our Lord nor of me His prisoner” (II Tim. i. 8).

It is written of John the Baptist “John did no miracle” (John x. 41), and there is neither sign, wonder nor miracle recorded of the apostle Paul after the change of dispensation which took place at Acts xxviii. We therefore distribute the witnesses in the New Testament as follows:

- A | John the Baptist. No miracle.
- B | Christ, and His apostles until Acts xxviii.  
Sign, wonder and miracle.
- A | Paul the Prisoner. No miracle.

It should be noticed with heart searching seriousness, that each one of the “witnesses” enumerated in the list above, were actually “martyrs”. John the Baptist was *beheaded*, The Lord Jesus Christ was *crucified*, Peter was forewarned by the Lord as to the *death* he should die and spoke of the near approach of his “decease” in his second epistle, and Paul wrote his second epistle to Timothy in view of his approaching death which tradition says, as well as the evidence of the epistle, was by *execution*. They were witnesses in the double sense of the word. It cannot be too strongly emphasized therefore that only in a secondary sense can any one of us to-day be called “witnesses”.

A “witness” must have had first hand evidence. He must be able to say “I was there”, “I saw with my own eyes”, “I heard with my own ears”, and we only spoil the incisive character of New Testament testimony by appropriating so intensely personal a term to ourselves. Let us put this to the test.

JOHN THE BAPTIST.—“How far was he an eye-witness”?

“The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto Him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. THIS IS HE OF WHOM I SAID . . . . and John bare record (*martureo* same word ‘bear witness’ John i. 7), saying I SAW the spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon Him. And I knew Him not; but He that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon Whom thou shalt SEE the spirit descending and remaining on Him, the same is He which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost” (John i. 29-33).

THE TWELVE.—How far were these “eye-witnesses”?

“Wherefore of these men which had COMPANIED with us ALL the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, BEGINNING at the baptism of John, UNTO that same day when He was taken up from us, MUST one be ordained to be a WITNESS of His resurrection” (Acts i. 21, 22).

PETER.—“He was seen of Cephas” (I Cor. xv. 5).

PAUL.—“Chosen . . . . see that Just One and . . . . hear His voice’ (Acts xxii. 14).

As we trace the unfolding purpose in the New Testament we observe that at each central epoch, a witness is raised up. This witness will either have extraordinary confirmation of his calling by the “signs and wonders” and the “divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost” (Heb. ii. 4) or if he be like John the Baptist who did no miracle, the prophecies that went before and at his birth (Luke i. 5-20, 57-80), were a sufficient attestation. With most of these assertions we shall find general agreement among believers, and as our chief interest is related to the special witness of Paul, and as it is in connection with this witness that the greatest difference of opinion is found, we will devote the remainder of our time to his particular ministry.

Witnesses for Pentecost and its message are abundant in the early Acts. Even the number “twelve” had to be made up—for had not the Lord spoken of “twelve thrones” that must be occupied by the “twelve apostles”?

With the call and commission of Paul, however, a new witness appears and his advent indicates another dispensational change. He is given a number of titles, “A chosen vessel” being the earliest recorded. Paul was to bear the name of the Lord before the Gentiles, and Kings and the children of Israel. “Gentiles” occupying the first place even

as they do in the prophetic utterance of old Simeon (Luke ii. 32). The emphasis upon the Gentiles in these passages, cannot be disassociated from the withdrawal of favour from Israel.

“It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you; but seeing *ye put it from you*, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles” (Acts xiii. 46).

From Acts xxii. 6-15 we learn more fully the commission given to Paul following his conversion on the road to Damascus:

“For thou shalt be His witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard” (15).

and referring to this first ministry which ends with the shadow of prison in Acts xx., he summed it up as “testifying (or witnessing) both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ” (21).

In his defence, the Apostle more than once linked the two sections of his ministry by the word that is translated either “witness” or “testify”.

“As thou hast *testified* of Me in Jerusalem, so must thou *bear witness* also at Rome” (Acts xxiii. 11).

In like manner, Paul’s prison ministry, the ministry that unfolded the new dispensation of the mystery, the ministry that finds its exposition in the “Prison Epistles”, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon and II Timothy, this too is a “witness” or a “testimony”. The first ministry comes to an end in Acts xx., and the new ministry is envisaged. Referring to the prophecies that spoke of “bonds and afflictions” Paul said:

“But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, TO TESTIFY the gospel of the grace of God” (Acts xx. 24).

This implies something more than preaching the gospel as an “Evangelist”, it includes this, but it gives meaning to the emphasis which is laid on “the grace of God”, for in the Prison Epistles we read that “the dispensation” which had been given to the apostle as “the Prisoner of Christ Jesus for you Gentiles” was “the dispensation of *the grace of God*” (Eph. iii. 1, 2).

Again, in his defence before Agrippa the apostle spoke of his twofold ministry, again using the word translated either “witness” or “testimony”.

“I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a WITNESS both of these things *which thou hast seen*, and of those things in the which *I will appear* unto thee, delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee” (Acts xxvi. 16, 17).

Some of these words were uttered by the Lord on the Damascus Road, but in Acts ix. Paul was not delivered from “the people”, neither was he “sent unto the Gentiles” at that time. “Now I send thee”, with these words the apostle intimates that the second

appearing to him of the Lord had taken place, according to the promise originally made, and “NOW”, that is at the time of his defence, he was being “sent unto the Gentiles”, the Roman powers undertaking his transport as a prisoner.

The apostle’s prison ministry is called “the testimony (or witness) of our Lord” and of Paul “His prisoner” (II Tim. i. 8). The special teaching which Timothy was enjoined to commit to faithful men, was a teaching which he had heard of Paul “among many WITNESSES” (II Tim. ii. 2). So, in his first epistle to Timothy, Paul speaks of the great message concerning “One God and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, Who gave Himself a ransom for all”, he adds (our translation):

“THE TESTIMONY IN ITS OWN PECULIAR SEASONS” (I Tim. ii. 5, 6).

Then immediately following this most discriminating claim, he adds:

“Whereunto I am ordained a preacher and an apostle (I speak the truth in Christ, and lie not), a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and verity” (I Tim. ii. 7).

The words translated “in due time” in I Tim. ii. 6, which we have rendered “in its own peculiar seasons”, are the Greek words *idios* and *kairos* in the plural dative. *Idios* means something peculiarly one’s “own”, and is so translated in I Tim. iii. 4, 5, 12. A similar phrase, similarly translated in the Authorized Version is found in Titus i. 2, 3:

“In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before age-times (*pro chronon aionion*); but hath in due times (*kairois idiois*) manifested His word through preaching, which is committed unto me according to the commandment of God our Saviour.”

Here we find it is a “God that cannot lie” which strikes the same note as the interjected words of I Tim. ii. 7 “I speak the truth in Christ I lie not”, and suggests that this peculiar dispensational claim here “attested” would be strongly “contested”, a fact that most of those associated with *The Berean Expositor* will endorse. Here also we have a message “committed” to Paul in harmony with a “commandment of God”, which is but another way of saying “whereunto I am ordained” (I Tim. ii. 7).

The revelation of the mystery and the dispensation of the grace of God, especially committed to Paul the Prisoner with its accompanying Gospel of the grace of God (?), and its teaching concerning the one Mediator Who gave Himself a ransom for all, as distinct from the more limited reference in Matt. xx. 28, which was “for many”, this new ministry was a testimony or a witness that had its own peculiar season for its manifestation and announcement. Therefore every fresh unfolding of the dispensations has been accompanied at its inception, with a specially equipped and commissioned witness. Dispensational truth, like all other aspects of truth, can be supported, illustrated and enforced, by comparison, by study and by every other legitimate means, but it is an occasion for thanksgiving to have seen, that its discovery does not depend upon the WIT of man, but stands solidly and unassailably upon the WITNESS of God. From the days of John the Baptist until the end of time, each and every dispensational change could be heralded with the words employed by Paul “A testimony in its own peculiar season”.

Dispensational Truth is “Attested Truth”.