

Podcast 150: The Testimony of Jesus

Today Denver discusses the content of and purpose behind his new book, *The Testimony of Jesus: Past, Present, and Promise*, which is the culmination of five years of outreach to Christians everywhere and now available in hardback as a standalone addition to the *Teachings of Denver Snuffer* series.

DENVER: I have a number of books that are in print that are appropriate for people that understand and accept the idea of the Restoration. I have two books in print that are designed for a Christian audience. One of them is defending Joseph Smith in *A Man Without Doubt*. And the other one is suitable for any Christian, titled *Come, Let Us Adore Him*, but it also would appeal to the Latter-Day Saint audience.

I finally have a new book out that is altogether suitable and addressed to (exclusively) a Christian audience. There's a statement in the King James Version of the Bible that *the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy* (Revelation 7:10 RE), and that phrase, borrowed from the book of Revelation, is part of the title for the new book. It's titled *The Testimony of Jesus: Past, Present, and Promise*. The book is about the history of Christianity, and the Reformation, and the Counter-Reformation, and the Restoration, and what God is up to presently, working with mankind.

Christianity makes a number of sweeping claims that the history doesn't really support. Catholicism—the word “catholic” means universal—Catholicism is not the same thing as what we read in the New Testament. The New Testament church ended sometime before the beginning of the Roman Catholic Church. And there were so many divergent kinds of Christianity in existence at the time of Constantine adopting Christianity as the state religion for the Roman Empire, that once he adopted it, he was surprised to learn that Christians were actually killing Christians over doctrinal disputes. Constantine assumed that Christianity would unite the kingdom, but Christianity itself at that time wasn't united. And so, he sequestered (in Nicaea) the leading bishop-voices of Christianity to have them agree on a creed that they could accept—to have peace. And after some amount of wrangling between the various parties who were disputing, they essentially reached agreement with all but a handful—and those that did not agree were exiled—so that they got their Christianity.

At the time that the apostles left Christianity by their natural lives coming to an end (with the exception of John who, at the end of that time, converted from being a mortal ministrant to being a flaming sword/angel who would minister as an angel but remain here on the earth), they left behind different **forms** of Christianity. There was a Pauline church. There was a Petrine church. There was a Matthean church. There was a Johannine church. There were different forms of Christianity. The apostles were commissioned by Christ to take a message out, but the message they took out and the way that it was implemented reflected the individual personalities, strengths, and preferences of the individual apostle who came with the message. The result was a divergent kind of Christianity that did not reflect one single “universal” view of what Christianity meant. That was probably deliberate, and it was

probably healthy to allow people to understand and come to different vantage points to view Jesus Christ, His mission, and what He accomplished.

Well, by the time you get to about 324 A.D. and the adoption of Christianity as the state religion of the Roman Empire, having that kind of divergence was unacceptable to an emperor who was trying to unite—under one umbrella—the Roman people to have them come to peace so that they could resist the outside threats and not have internal conflicts tearing them apart. And make no mistake about it: Christianity was tearing itself apart internally, violently, by their different views of what the doctrines/teachings/principles of Christianity involved.

In the second and third century, there were debates about what kind of person or being Jesus Christ was. There was (what ultimately became schismatic) a view that Christ was not born the Son of God; He was just a normal man like any other man, but He got adopted by God at the time of His baptism. And that “adoptionist” theory was in conflict with those that believed He was the actual Son of God and that His Father was, in fact, God the Father, and His mother was Mary, and therefore, He was divine—He was a demigod, and He came into this world as deity itself.

Well, those debates became so hostile and violent that they wound up editing the text of the Gospels to change the wording. There’s evidence (and Bart Ehrman did research on this) that shows how, in ancillary texts, the statement that was made at the time of the baptism of Christ was, *Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee* (Psalms 2:7-8 KJV), which is a quote from the Old Testament. That statement was changed to a declaration: *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased* (Matthew 3:17 KJV), and they edited the text in order to support an outcome of the Christological debates in the second and third century. And so, the text of the Bible itself became subject to alteration by the people who are fighting over the meaning of Christianity. You can still find—even in Christian texts of the Bible—the statement, *Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee*, in the writings of the apostle Paul in the book of Hebrews. And so, they got rid of it in the Gospels, but they didn’t get rid of it in the book of Hebrews of the New Testament.

Well, Christianity fundamentally changed over the course of those first three centuries. And at the 324 [A.D.] mark, when Constantine decided to make it the state religion, it changed even further still. But once Christianity became triumphant in the Roman Empire, the Christian religion became institutionalized. And even when the governance of Rome collapsed over the ensuing millennium, the Catholic church that had been made the state religion triumphed, persisted, and dominated. But when you have a monopoly on religion and you have an idea of authority being given by God to the Pope and the archbishops and the bishops, abuses will inevitably ensue.

The book (*The Testimony of Jesus: Past, Present, and Promise*) goes into discussing some of this material in order to reassure Christians today—who are so dogmatic and opposed to the idea of there being something afoot that God Himself has authorized to reestablish Christianity in a more pure, more vibrant, more clear method—it goes to reassure the Christians that they really need to take a careful look at that, because Christianity became a tattered ruin over the course of the centuries in which Roman Catholicism was the

dominant religion, so much so that the common man didn't even have access to the Bible. The common man heard sermons in a language they didn't speak. They learned about Christianity from the tapestries and the icons and the statuary that was around the cathedrals. But understanding and being able to read biblical Christianity just didn't exist.

It was Martin Luther who, as a Catholic priest, understood and had access to the Scriptures and concluded that there were abuses underway. He rebelled over the sale of indulgences, and that began the Protestant Reformation.

The Protestant Reformation, however, began (as its point of origin) with a Catholic priest that was rebelling against the hierarchy. The hierarchy had maintained their stranglehold on Christianity because of the claims to authority. Martin Luther, reading in the book of Romans, concluded that if salvation came by grace and grace alone, that it would be possible to be saved independent of the Catholic priestly hierarchy. That enabled salvation separate from the Catholic priesthood, and it made possible the idea of the priesthood of man.

Well, from the rebellion of Martin Luther sprang a number of other protesters that led to the Protestant Reformation, and those Protestant fathers are discussed in *The Testimony of Jesus: Past, Present, and Promise*. Their names and some of their biographies are provided for people to understand the background. But Evangelical Christianity (which is one of the more self-confident forms of Christianity) is something of very late creation. So late, in fact, and so different from where Christianity was for the first millennium and a half that Evangelical Christians of today would not even be recognized as Christians for the overwhelming majority of Christian history. So, their self-confidence about their salvation is really predicated upon a complete dismissal of Christian history and the fact that if they're right, then they have damned centuries, millennia (more than a millennia) of people that claimed themselves to be Christians.

Well, in the cacophony of Christian religions—estimated today at something more than 40,000 different sects—there is one theme that they all look for and that is the belief that Jesus was, in fact, a Savior, sent into the world to rescue them from sin and from death, and that He was, in fact, a descendant that God sent into the world for our salvation.

But if Jesus organized **something** and that something fell into corruption, the question has to be posed whether you can take corruption and spring out of it something that will, in fact, save you, that reconnects and restores or reforms Christianity back into an original form. Roger Williams said that it couldn't happen without God sending new apostles. And so the "Promise" part of the new book talks about how the purpose of the prophecies of the New Testament and the rescuing of mankind by the Lord is something that necessitated a return of the original authority directly from Heaven. And the book discusses how that's a **crying need** in order for Christianity to reassume an authentic form. And that, in fact, has begun.

Not only that, but in its recommencement, there are a number of prophecies that have to be fulfilled in order for the Lord to keep His promises before His return in glory to judge the

world. So, the book walks through what those prophecies and promises are and how they are currently underway.

This book is one of the few books that I think anyone that believes in the Restoration can comfortably hand to a friend or relative who is a Protestant or a Catholic and to invite them to consider whether or not there needs to be something more than a protest, something more than a reform, or something more than an abusive Catholic hierarchy. The question of whether God can and **would** do something before His return in glory is really answered by both the Old Testament and New Testament prophecies. Those are discussed in the book.

If you have someone who is a Christian that you would like to approach in a way that will open their mind to the idea of there being a work by God, promised from Old Testament times on that has begun today, and that the God of Heaven who cared for the ancients cares just as much for the current people living on the earth, and that the God who once spoke from Heaven can—and is—speaking again today, if you want to present those ideas to someone, that's the purpose of this book.

It came out and became available on Thanksgiving Day. It's something that I intend to purchase for and give to members of my own family who are not believers in the Restoration, and I'm hoping that a number of the Christian friends I have will likewise consider the book (when I give it to them) as something that at least explains why we have reason to believe that God can, has, and does speak today in an effort to prepare the world for His return in glory to judge the world.

You **cannot** believe the Bible to be true and rule out the possibility that God is going to do something preliminary to His Second Coming to prepare the world. That message is embedded right into both the Old and the New Testament, and this book is an attempt to show that those promises that God made He not only intends to keep, but He is **in the present act** of keeping those promises.

The book is available on Amazon. After this podcast goes up, I will put a link to it. It's being published only in hardback form because if we're going to give it to someone (even though it costs more for us to be able to publish it as a hardback book), people tend to respect hardback books, and they also tend to wear better than paperback. And so, it's coming out in a form that, I think, we would be pleased to share with someone as a quality product. It's available now, and if anyone has any interest in getting a copy for the purpose it was intended (that is, for a Christian audience), I would encourage you to take a look and consider whether or not you think the book would be suitable.

The foregoing was recorded on November 14, 2021 in Sandy, Utah.