

## How Do You Know the Truth?

By Nathan Warner

How do we KNOW what we know? Have you ever stopped to consider this? We say we “know” something when we see, hear, or experience it for ourselves, OR someone tells us that they have seen, heard, or experienced something, and we believe them. For example, you “know” that when the sun goes down, it gets dark, because you’ve experienced it. But how do you actually know the sun going down is what makes it dark? You have faith in your interpretation of your senses. You interpret what your eyes see and believe that your conclusion is correct.

Similarly, you probably “know” the earth goes around the sun, right? But how do you know that? Have you seen it do so? Most likely not. How do you know this then? Well, people calling themselves scientists told you that with special knowledge and tools, they had observed the earth going around the sun, and you believed that what they were telling you was the truth.

How well you think you know something comes down to how much faith you put in your own senses or in other people. When you consider this, you realize everything you think you know actually comes down to belief in your interpretation of your senses OR faith in the senses of others. We actually rely on others for the bulk of what we know. Another way of saying this is that our interpretation of reality is derived largely from the TESTIMONY of others. A testimony: “In law and in religion, testimony is a solemn attestation as to the truth of a matter.”

### THE TESTIMONY FROM THE BEGINNING

Before the Fall, God gave man one important testimony to believe and act on: “*The Lord God commanded the man, saying, ‘From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die’*” (Genesis 2:16-17 NASB).

Man implicitly trusted God’s testimony, because there was no other testimony. The Serpent changed all that, saying to Eve, “*Indeed, has God said, ‘You shall not eat from any tree of the garden’?...You surely will not die! For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil*” (Genesis 3:1b; 4-5).

Suddenly a voice had risen up challenging God’s testimony and offering a different testimony in place of it. Where there is more than one testimony, there is conflict. Only one can be right, unless they are both wrong.

In Eden, it should have been clear—the Serpent was not God. God alone has the monopoly on knowledge and truth, because He alone knows everything from the sub-atomic level to the cosmic.

Yet, mankind liked what they heard the Serpent say, casting doubt on God’s intentions. They chose to put their faith in his “solemn attestation as to the truth” over God’s testimony because the promised outcome appealed to their pride. So, just like through all human history, man “*rebelled against the Most High God and did not keep His testimonies*” (Psalm 78:56).

We chose poorly, because the Serpent gave us false testimony. Our faith in his testimony was not well-founded. This was our first experience with the idea that perceptions of the truth can be manipulated – that people can tell us that they saw or heard something that they actually didn’t.

## A LABYRINTH OF LIES

God has created us so that faith is the fabric of our being. Before the Fall, there was only one testimony given to us—it was true and man wisely put his faith in it. After the Fall, man entered a reality where he put his faith in his senses or in the senses of other people to “know” things, because those senses can be fooled accidentally or purposefully. We can easily be misled. Every step of our lives becomes an act of faith in someone or something. Because of the Fall, our world has become a maze – a labyrinth of confusing, contradicting, testimonies, many of which are false.

False testimony is always immoral because it is self-serving at the expense of others. Satan is a case in point as he is willing to deceive and lie to people to get his way, even though it means he is destroying lives in the process. Jesus told the Pharisees: *“You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies”* (John 8:44). Through his lies, satan condemns men to death—he is a murderer. The Pharisees emulated satan: *“Now the chief priests and the whole Council kept trying to obtain false testimony against Jesus, so that they might put Him to death”* (Matthew 26:59).

This is why God told man, *“You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor”* (Exodus 20:16). *“You shall not bear a false report; do not join your hand with a wicked man to be a malicious witness. You shall not follow the masses in doing evil, nor shall you testify in a dispute so as to turn aside after a multitude in order to pervert justice”* (Exodus 23:1-2).

## GOD’S TESTIMONY TO ISRAEL

This command to not bear false witness is part of God’s Law. God referred to His Law as His “testimony” to man, maintained by His chosen witness to the world: Israel. *“For He established a testimony in Jacob and appointed a law in Israel, which He commanded our fathers that they should teach them to their children”* (Psalm 78:5). This testimony was written by the hand of God on stone tablets, which Moses placed in the Ark of the Testimony – the Ark of the Covenant.

The Law of God is “a solemn attestation as to the truth” of what God expects from man in order for him to be saved from His wrath and made acceptable to God in this life and in the next. Of all the things in this life that there are to know, this is most important for mankind. The only problem was that simply knowing the requirements of God is different from actually fulfilling the requirements of God—Adam and Eve also knew the testimony of God, but they acted against its requirements. While the Testimony of the Law was true, man could not keep it. Only Jesus could reconcile this problem.

## THE TESTIMONY OF CHRIST

As the Son of God, Jesus had a unique position: *“the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth...For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ”* (John 1:14b; 17). He was not limited by man’s need for faith to know the truth. As God, He was the manifestation of Truth. He did not need faith – He was the pure testimony of God, having come directly from Heaven. Jesus said, *“For this I have been born, and for this I*

*have come into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice”* (John 18:37b). Speaking of Himself, He adds, *“He who comes from heaven is above all. What He has seen and heard, of that He testifies; and no one receives His testimony. He who has received His testimony has set his seal to this, that God is true”* (John 3:32-33).

Jesus laid out the Testimony of God’s Salvation – that through Him, God was offering a pardon from our sins to reconcile us back to God: *“I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me”* (John 14:6). And people either put their faith in His testimony or didn’t. *“He who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life”* (John 5:24b) – *“It is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes”* (Romans 1:16b). Having listened *“to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God’s own possession, to the praise of His glory”* (Ephesians 1:13-14). Yet, while *“he who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God”* (John 3:18). As Jesus warned: *“He who rejects Me and does not receive My sayings, has one who judges him; the word I spoke is what will judge him at the last day”* (John 12:48). Christ’s testimony itself will judge those who did not believe it.

#### CHRIST’S TESTIMONY CHALLENGED BY MAN

When challenged by the Pharisees that under Jewish Law, He could not present His testimony as legal evidence, because Jewish Law required more than one witness to verify testimony, Jesus agreed: *“If I alone testify about Myself, My testimony is not true [lit. admissible as legal evidence]”* (John 5:31).

Then He provided them with all the witnesses backing up His testimony, beginning with the testimony of John: *“There is another who testifies of Me, and I know that the testimony which He gives about Me is true. You have sent to John, and he has testified to the truth. But the testimony which I receive is not from man, but I say these things so that you may be saved. He was the lamp that was burning and was shining and you were willing to rejoice for a while in his light”* (vs. 32-35). This was John’s testimony: *“There came a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness, to testify about the Light, so that all might believe through him. He was not the Light, but he came to testify about the Light”* (John 1:6-8). *“John testified saying, ‘I have seen the Spirit descending as a dove out of heaven, and He remained upon Him’”* (John 1:31). *“I myself have seen, and have testified that this is the Son of God”* (John 1:36).

Jesus added the Testimony of works: *“But the testimony which I have is greater than the testimony of John; for the works which the Father has given Me to accomplish—the very works that I do—testify about Me, that the Father has sent Me”* (John 5:36).

Then, He added the Testimony of the Father: *“And the Father who sent Me, He has testified of Me. You have neither heard His voice at any time nor seen His form. You do not have His word abiding in you, for you do not believe Him whom He sent”* (vs. 37-38).

Jesus added the Testimony of the Scriptures: *“You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; it is these that testify about Me. and you are unwilling to come to Me so that you may have life. I do not receive glory from men; but I know you, that you do not have the love of God in yourselves. I have come in My Father’s name, and you do not*

*receive Me; if another comes in his own name, you will receive him” (vs. 39-43).*

Finally and most importantly, *“Jesus answered and said to them, ‘Even if I testify about Myself, My testimony is true, for I know where I came from and where I am going; but you do not know where I come from or where I am going’” (John 8:14).*

Here, Jesus was pointing out that even if a witness doesn’t have someone else to verify his testimony, that doesn’t make what he is saying untrue. If you saw a snake slither into someone’s house, but no one else saw it, that doesn’t make it any less real or dangerous to the occupants of the house. Jesus was warning them that even if no one else backed Him up, His Word was still true, because He alone knew the Truth from beginning to end without needing to put faith in someone else. A true testimony is still true even if no one believes it or backs it up. *“But even if I do judge, My judgment is true; for I am not alone in it, but I and the Father who sent Me. Even in your law it has been written that the testimony of two men is true. I am He who testifies about Myself, and the Father who sent Me testifies about Me” (John 8:16-18).*

To the Jews, He said, *“Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know and testify of what we have seen, and you do not accept our testimony” (John 3:11).*

If there is a testimony we can trust, it is the Testimony of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. As God, He can’t get it wrong. What He says is truth. And because He shared it with you, *“you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free” (John 8:32).* Jesus delivered His testimony to His disciples and they passed His testimony on to us in written word. We hold the testimony of Christ, which is the Gospel. *“This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come” (Matthew 24:14).*

## THE WORLD REJECTS GOD’S TESTIMONY

As stated earlier, where there is more than one testimony, there is conflict. Jesus warned us that His testimony would not be well-received by the world, because they would rather believe the lies of false prophets who whisper false testimonies, saying we can save ourselves. Man prefers these lies over the Testimony of God, which firmly underscores the truth that every man and woman is in deep trouble without making peace with God—His way. So, rather than face the “ugliness” of the truth, they suppress it: *“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness...For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator” (Romans 1:18; 25a).*

*“This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But he who practices the truth comes to the Light, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God” (John 3:19-21).* So, they attempt to silence Christ’s testimony, trying to put out the light that is exposing them. Jesus confronted the Pharisees about this: *“But as it is, you are seeking to kill Me, a man who has told you the truth, which I heard from God” (John 8:40a).*

Every Believer has been given this same testimony of the Gospel to bear before men. And Jesus told us, *“Remember the word that I said to you, ‘A slave is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also” (John 15:20);* therefore, *“beware of men, for they will hand you over to the courts and scourge you in their synagogues; and you will even be brought before governors and kings for*

*My sake, as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles” (Matthew 10:17-18). May we affirm, “I will also speak of Your testimonies before kings and shall not be ashamed” (Psalm 119:46), even though men “lay their hands on you and will persecute you, delivering you to the synagogues and prisons, bringing you before kings and governors for My name’s sake. It will lead to an opportunity for your testimony. So make up your minds not to prepare beforehand to defend yourselves; for I will give you utterance and wisdom which none of your opponents will be able to resist or refute” (Luke 21:12-15).*

## GOD GIVES US HIS HELP TO KNOW THE TRUTH

God did not leave us without support in this conflict. First of all, we have the Word of God. Jesus asked His Father to sanctify us *“in the truth; Your word is truth”* (John 17:17). *“The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple”* (Psalm 19:7b). *“Your testimonies also are my delight; They are my counselors”* (Psalm 119:24). *“I have more insight than all my teachers, for Your testimonies are my meditation”* (Psalm 119:99). We cannot undervalue God’s Word in our daily confrontation with the world.

Secondly, we have the very Spirit of God in our hearts who bears Christ’s testimony in us. *“When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify about Me”* (John 15:26). Yes, when *“the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come”* (John 16:13). He *“will teach you all things”* (Jn. 14:26b), *“for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God. For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God, which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words. But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised”* (1 Cor. 2:7-14).

We are truly blessed to have such wonderful support, facing the twisted labyrinth of human and satanic testimonies, which constantly tempt, beguile, and assail us from every angle in new and unexpected ways.

## DESIRE TRUTH WITH HUMILITY

Even with all this help, sometimes it is difficult for us to discern the truth of a situation, matter, or idea. How do we hold to the Truth, if we aren’t sure what the truth is?

When the Serpent told Eve things that contradicted God’s Word, she did not take the argument captive to God. After being presented with a testimony that contradicted God’s Word, she immediately acted in *“the boastful pride of life”* (1 John 2:16b), trusting another mind’s assessment of her situation and trusting her mind’s appraisal of the “evidence” that “proved” God’s Word wasn’t true. She relied on her own mind and not the mind of God.

If we present concerns, ideas, or arguments to God, He will answer us, but only if we approach Him like Daniel. The Angel of the Lord told Daniel, because *“you set your heart on understanding this and on humbling yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I*

*have come in response to your words”* (Daniel 10:12). We see here two things: an honest desire to understand the truth of a matter and humility to understand that we cannot figure it out without God. And although it took a while, God answered him, because *“God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble”* (James 4:6b), so *“Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you”* (James 4:10).

God requires you to sacrifice ideas, arguments, and thoughts to His Word and Holy Spirit—to take them captive for Jesus. By taking every thought captive to Christ, God destroys knowledge raised against Him in your mind. He may not resolve it for you immediately, but if you patiently and humbly wait on Him, He will. As Paul says, *“Consider what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything”* (2 Timothy 2:7).

### GOD’S TESTIMONY WAS THE FIRST WORD AND IT WILL BE THE LAST WORD

God *“desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth”* (1 Timothy 2:4), yet not everyone will come willingly to the Truth. Does that change God’s Word? No. God’s Testimony is the last and only word. Jesus said, *“Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away”* (Matthew 24:35). This is contrasted with all other testimonies: *“a false witness will not go unpunished, and he who tells lies will perish”* (Proverbs 19:9).

God’s testimony is the only Word that will not perish. No other testimony will endure and no other word will outlast His Word—from the first recorded words in the Bible: *“Then God said, ‘Let there be light’; and there was light”* (Genesis 1:3) to the last recorded words: *“He who sits on the throne said, ‘Behold, I am making all things new.’ And He said, ‘Write, for these words are faithful and true.’ Then He said to me, ‘It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost. He who overcomes will inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be My son. But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death’”* (Revelation 21:5-8).

In this world, man makes many boasts, claims, and declarations about what is true and what is not, and everyone trips over themselves to pledge their allegiance to any testimony other than God’s. The Church ought to know better. May we hold fast to the one true testimony from God Himself—the first and last word on all things—His Word.

*“He who testifies to these things says, ‘Yes, I am coming quickly.’ Amen. Come, Lord Jesus”*  
(Revelation 22:20).