

## What to Do While We Wait? Acts 1:6-14<sup>1</sup>

After His resurrection, Jesus remained on earth for forty days and ministered to His disciples. He had already opened their minds to understand the Old Testament message about Himself (Luke 24:44–48), but there were other lessons they needed to learn before they could launch out in their new ministry. Jesus appeared and disappeared during those forty days, and the believers never knew when He might show up. It was excellent preparation for the church because the days were soon coming when He would no longer be on earth to instruct them personally. We believers today never know when our Lord may return, so our situation is very similar to theirs in that respect.

Jesus taught them several important lessons during that time of special ministry.

First Jesus taught them the reality of His resurrection (v. 3a). Some of the believers may have had their doubts forty days before, you remember how the Gospel of Mark really ended with great doubt and sadness (Mark 16:9–14), but there could be no question now that Jesus had indeed been raised from the dead. To strengthen their faith, He gave them “many infallible proofs” which Luke didn’t explain in his writing. We know that when Jesus met His disciples, He invited them to touch His body, and He even ate before them (Luke 24:38–43). Whatever proofs He gave, they were convincing to the disciples and the many witnesses who saw the resurrected Christ.

Faith in His resurrection was important to the church because their spiritual power depended on it. Also, the message of the Gospel involves the truth of the Resurrection (Rom. 10:9–10; 1 Cor. 15:1–8); and, if Jesus were dead, the church

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<sup>1</sup> *The Holy Bible : New Revised Standard Version*. Nashville : Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1989, S. Ac 1:6-11

would be speechless. Finally, the official Jewish position was that the disciples had stolen Jesus' body from the tomb (Matt. 28:11–15), and the believers had to be able to refute this as they witnessed to the nations.

These believers were chosen to be special witnesses of Christ's resurrection, and that was the emphasis in their ministry throughout the early church (Acts 1:22; 2:32; 3:15; 5:30–32). Most of the people in Jerusalem knew that Jesus of Nazareth had been crucified, but they did not know that He had been raised from the dead. By their words, their walk, and their mighty works, the believers told the world that Jesus was alive.

Jesus also taught them of the coming of His kingdom (v. 3b). In the disciples' minds the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and the coming of the promised kingdom were closely associated. But Jesus was talking about the reign of God over the hearts and lives of those who have trusted Him (see Matt. 6:33; Rom. 14:17; 1 John 3:1–9). When we read the four Gospels, we discover that the Apostles had a strongly political view of the kingdom and were especially concerned about their own positions and privileges. Being loyal Jews, they longed for the defeat of their enemies and the final establishment of the glorious kingdom under the rule of King Messiah. What they didn't realize was that there must first be a spiritual change in the hearts of the people (see Luke 1:67–79).

Jesus did not rebuke them when they "kept asking" about the future Jewish kingdom (Acts 1:7). After all, He had opened their minds to understand the Scriptures (Luke 24:44), so they knew what they were asking. But God has not revealed His timetable to us and it is non-sense for us to speculate. The important thing is not to be curious about the future but to be busy in the present, sharing the message of God's *spiritual* kingdom.

Jesus taught them about the power of the coming Holy Spirit (vv. 4-8). John the Baptist had announced a future baptism of the Holy Spirit (Matt. 3:11; Mark

1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33; and see Acts 11:16), and now that prophecy would be fulfilled. Jesus had also promised the coming of the Spirit (John 14:16–18, 26; 15:26–27; 16:7–15). It was the power for the disciples so that they would be able to serve the Lord and accomplish His will (Luke 24:49).

Acts 1:8 is a key verse in this chapter. It explains that the power of the church comes from the Holy Spirit and not from humans (see Zech. 4:6). God's people experienced repeated fillings of the Spirit as they faced new opportunities and obstacles (Acts 2:4; 4:8, 31; 9:17; 13:9). Ordinary people are able to do extraordinary things because the Spirit of God is at work in our lives. The ministry of the Holy Spirit is not a luxury; it is an absolute necessity.

Acts teaches us that we are witnesses. A witness is somebody who tells what he or she has seen and heard (Acts 4:19–20). When you are on the witness stand in court, the judge is not interested in your ideas or opinions; the judge only wants to hear what you know.

We hear a great deal these days about “soul winning,” and the emphasis is a good one. We know that some of God's people have a calling to evangelism (Eph. 4:11), but all of God's people are expected to be witnesses and tell the lost about the Savior. Not every Christian can bring a sinner to the place of faith and decision, but every Christian can bear faithful witness to the Savior.

Acts 1:8 also gives us a general outline of the Book of Acts as it describes the geographical spread of the Gospel: from Jerusalem (Acts 1–7) to Judea and Samaria (Acts 8–9), and then to the Gentiles and to the ends of the earth (Acts 10–28). No matter where we live, as Christians we should begin our witness at home and then extend it “into all the world.” As Dr. Oswald J. Smith used to say, “The light that shines the farthest will shine the brightest at home.”

Jesus assured the disciples that He is coming again (vv. 9-11). Jesus' ascension into heaven was an important part of His ministry, because if Christ had

not returned to the Father, He could not have sent the promised gift of the Holy Spirit (John 16:5–15). Also, in heaven today, the Savior is our interceding High Priest, giving us the grace that we need for life and service (Heb. 4:14–16). He is also our Advocate before the Father, forgiving us when we confess our sins (1 John 1:9–2:2). The exalted and glorified Head of the church is now working with His people on earth and helping us accomplish His purposes (Mark 16:19–20).

As the disciples watched Jesus being taken up to glory, two angels appeared and gently rebuked them. The two messengers gave the believers assurance that Jesus Christ would come again, just as He had been taken from them. Christians agree that Jesus is coming again and that He can come at any time. This in itself is a great motivation for faithful Christian service (Luke 12:34–48).<sup>2</sup>

The Ascension of Christ marked the conclusion of His ministry on earth in His bodily presence. It also exalted Him to the right hand of the Father (Acts 2:33–36; 5:30–31; Heb. 1:3; 8:1; 12:2). At the same time the Ascension meant that the continuing work of Christ on earth was now placed in the hands of His disciples (Acts 1:1–2, 8).

It was imperative that the Ascension occur so that the promised Comforter could come (cf. John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7; Acts 2:33–36). The Holy Spirit would empower the disciples as they ministered the gospel and waited for the kingdom.<sup>3</sup>

Verses that we did not read tell us that the disciples waited in Jerusalem for the promised Holy Spirit. But while they waited, they prayed that God's will would be done. We know that God is too great to be housed in man-made temples (1 Kings 8:27; Isa. 66:1–2; Acts 7:48–50), but we also know that God is not too great to be

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<sup>2</sup>Wiersbe, Warren W.: *The Bible Exposition Commentary*. Wheaton, Ill. : Victor Books, 1996, c1989, S. Ac 1:1

<sup>3</sup>Walvoord, John F. ; Zuck, Roy B. ; Dallas Theological Seminary: *The Bible Knowledge Commentary : An Exposition of the Scriptures*. Wheaton, IL : Victor Books, 1983-c1985, S. 2:354

concerned about human needs (Acts 17:25). God was calling them to a great task, and He promised they would receive power. We live in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, but we still can't do God's will with prayer and the power of the Holy Spirit. Pray prepares us to be willing servants, obedient to God directions. Whatever the tasks that are set before us; God will empower us.

Our prayer must be come Holy Spirit come, and have your way!