

ACTS

Bible Study

Final Words (continued)

Acts 1:4—6

The last words and actions of Jesus, before he ascended into heaven, are recorded in the Gospels. Obviously, not everything He spoke was recorded, but we do find out He opened the Disciples' eyes so they could understand Scripture (the Old Testament) in light of everything that had happened in the past three years. This newfound knowledge, with the work of the Holy Spirit (John 20:22), was manifested as a godly power when Peter and the 11 go throughout Jerusalem preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom and confounding the religious leaders with their wisdom (Acts 4:13). It was during the 40 days after Christ's resurrection that He showed Himself to hundreds of believers throughout Jerusalem (1 Corinthians 15:5—6) proving He did come back from the dead and giving these believers much needed encouragement.

Wait in Jerusalem

Jesus gathers His Disciples together for some last minute instructions. After His resurrection, He told them to go to Galilee and He would meet them there (Matthew 28:7, 10, 16). Now He gathered them in Jerusalem to give them His final words of instruction so they would know how to proceed. The first thing they were to do was to wait for the coming of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8). Before that could happen, it was necessary for Jesus to be caught up into heaven (John 16:7).

Many people are confused because the Disciples had already been given the Holy Spirit in John 20:22, but yet they are told to wait on Jerusalem for the giving of the Holy Spirit in Acts 1:4. The special giving of the Holy Spirit to the Disciples had nothing to do with the promise of the Holy Spirit to Israel (Ezekiel 11:19; 36:26—27; 37:14; Isaiah 44:3). The Holy Spirit was going to be poured out on Israel only after Jesus Christ ascended into heaven, but yet the Disciples received the Holy Spirit directly from Jesus Christ before He ascended. We are looking at two different manifestations of the Holy Spirit given for two different purposes. The Holy Spirit was given to the Disciples so that they could take over the ministry of Jesus Christ after He left, while the giving of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost was a prophetic event that was promised to all of believing Israel. The Disciples were specifically tasked with remitting and retaining the sins of others, something they could only do through the power of the Holy Spirit (John 20:23). This is how Peter knew that Ananias and Sapphira had lied to the Holy Spirit (Acts 5). As far as we know, there were no outward signs of the presence of the Holy Spirit when the Disciples were given the Holy Spirit in John 20.

Jesus told them to wait in Jerusalem for the coming of the Holy Spirit. Verse eight spells out exactly how the Disciples were to advance their ministry of spreading the Gospel of the Kingdom. They were to begin in Jerusalem, proceed through Judea, continue on north into Samaria and finally go to the whole world. Most people think this was accomplished when the Jews were scattering from persecution at the hands of Saul (Acts 8:1—4), and then by Paul himself following his conversion. However, most people miss the fact that the Disciples never left Jerusalem (Acts 8:1).

Those who discover that the Disciples are never shown to expand their ministry beyond Jerusalem are often bewildered. Why didn't they follow the Lord's command to preach the Gospel to the world (Matthew 28:28)? Were they timid, or even prejudice against Gentiles? Obviously not. The Disciples were actually following Jesus Christ's orders. Their purpose, by beginning in Jerusalem, was to win over the Hebrew temple leaders to accept Jesus as Israel's Messiah. There would be no reason for the Disciples to move into other parts of Israel if the leaders were not won over first. Since they rejected the Messiah, there was no reason for the Disciples to move outside of Jerusalem.

We can see from Scripture that the two main leaders of the Hebrew church did not bring the Gospel beyond Jerusalem. The last mention of Peter in the book of Acts shows him in Jerusalem (Acts 15:7). This was approximately 20 years after Christ ascended into heaven. James is last mentioned in Acts 21:17—18

and he is still in Jerusalem approximately 25 years after Christ ascended. Either the Disciples were disobedient, or they were perfectly following the Lord's instructions, trying to convince the Jewish leaders to believe in Jesus Christ.

Dry baptisms (verse 5)

When the word baptism is mentioned, almost everybody thinks about water, whether dunking, sprinkling or pouring. Most fail to recognize that the Bible actually mentions over 10 dry baptisms, such as Israel being baptized into Moses (1 Corinthians 10:2) and we in the Body of Christ being baptized into Christ (Romans 6:3; Galatians 3:27). Jesus mentions three baptisms in one verse when he says that John baptizes with water but you will be baptized with the Spirit and with fire (Matthew 3:11). The promise of being baptized with the Holy Spirit was fulfilled at Pentecost as they were sitting in the upper room and the Holy Spirit came upon them as promised in the Old Testament. This event is a fulfillment of Joel 2:28, according to Peter (Acts 2:16). From this, they could pinpoint where they were in God's prophetic timeline. This promise was given specifically to Israel and is related to the believing remnant being purified so they could go into the Millennial Kingdom and become the bride of Christ.

According to Matthew 3:11, after John baptized Israel with water, Jesus Christ would baptize them into the Holy Spirit, and then He will baptize them with fire. This follows the order of end time events. John will baptize Israel with water, then the Holy Spirit will be given, and finally the fire of the seven-year Tribulation (Psalm 18:7—8, 12—13; 21:9; 97:3; Isaiah 10:16—17; 30:27—30; 66:15—16; Zephaniah 1:18; Zechariah 13:9; Malachi 3:2; Revelation 8:5—7; 9:17—18). This is called a baptism by fire because all of Israel is destined to go through the fire of the Tribulation. Baptism means nothing more than identification.

Restored kingdom (verse 6)

Foremost on the Disciple's minds was the Millennial Kingdom. This is the Kingdom promised to them in the Old Testament and taught by Jesus for the past three years. Notice that they are asking if the Kingdom was going to be restored, making it an obvious reference to the physical, literal kingdom of Kings David and Solomon. All through Scripture, the Kingdom is presented as a tangible, earthly realm. Strangely, most of Christendom insists the kingdom in view is an allegorical, spiritualized, intangible group of believers with Christ on the throne of our hearts.

Let's look at Biblical evidence that the Kingdom will be literal. First, Christ will come back to earth and physically touch down to the Mount of Olives (Zechariah 14:4—5). He will then overthrow all other kingdoms on the earth (Haggai 2:20—23), and then rule from His throne in Jerusalem (Zechariah 14:9; Isaiah 2:2—4; Revelation 2:27), over all the nations (Mica 4:1—4). The nations will be required to go up to Jerusalem to worship the King (Zechariah 14:16—19; Isaiah 66:23). King David will be given a special position of power by Christ, ruling over Israel (Jeremiah 30:8; Ezekiel 34:23—24). The Millennial Kingdom is called that because it will last 1,000 years while Satan is bound (Revelation 20:1—7). This will be followed by the Eternal State with a new heavens and earth (Isaiah 66:17; 2 Peter 3:10; Revelation 21:1). Israel will rule over the earth while we rule over the heavens (Deuteronomy 15:6; Isaiah 14:2; 1 Corinthians 6:3; Philippians 3:20).

There is absolutely no reason that these events cannot be taken literally, although many don't because they view Scripture through the writings of people like Augustine, who built his system of allegorizing Scripture on heretics such as Origen. When Scripture is allegorized (spiritualized), man can interpret it to say anything he wants. The basis for much bad theology comes out of man-made interpretations of Scripture through allegorization. Covenant theologians are especially adept at taking clear passages of Scripture and twisting them to fit in with their unscriptural belief system.

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