

## FRIDAY 27 May 2022 "Ascension Day" (Acts 1:6-11)

Hello my "Walking with Jesus" friends, on this significant day. Today is the 40th day after Easter which we celebrated on Sunday 17 April, this year. *Do you know what that means in the history of our world?*

*Come with me back, about 2000 years, to the city of Jerusalem, and let's experience together this historic, world changing day, with those who witnessed it firsthand.* The Gospel writer Mark was a young teenager and may well have seen it happen. He writes this one sentence: **"After the Lord Jesus had spoken to them He was taken up into heaven..."** (Mark 16:19) Dr. Luke, the Gentile physician who became a follower of Jesus through the influence of the Apostle Paul with whom he traveled, was not there that day, but he opens his account by explaining that he made a thorough investigation of all that had been reported to him (Luke 1:1-4). Yesterday I left you at the table with Jesus and His friends, as Luke records the disciples had just asked a powerful question of Jesus: **"Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?"** (Acts 1:6)

Look at them, these men who had walked with Jesus for many months, and now had several times seen Him as the RESURRECTED Jesus. I've often tried to imagine what it would have been like for me to sit with a man who I knew well, and I was certain He had been brutalized, crucified and buried, but He was fully alive, having a meal with me and continuing to teach me God's truths!?? *As Jesus spoke His open hands evidenced His resurrection as the healed scars were clearly visible!* They almost held their breath awaiting His response to their question: **"It is not for you to know the times or dates My Father has set by His own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you; and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."** (Acts 1:7,8)

Stunned and somewhat rebuked, they sat amazed. *They had just received, in a few very specific words, their life mission, for the rest of their lives!* They should cease trying to figure out if or when God was going to do what they hoped He would do... overthrow the Roman Empire and re-establish the kingdom of Israel. *Instead, they should prepare themselves to be anointed and empowered by the Holy Spirit of God, unlike any people had ever experienced before.* These men knew their Old Testament and the history of Israel. They knew other famous heroes had experienced an empowering of the Holy Spirit for a short period of time and a specific purpose. People like Gideon according to Judges 6:34; or Saul as Samuel anointed him to be Israel's first king (1 Samuel 10:6); or young shepherd boy David as Samuel anointed him to be Israel's second king. (1 Samuel 16:13) *This anointing which Jesus had explained would be very, very different. Do you see how it's different my friends?*

**First**, their experience would not be a temporary anointing, *it would be a permanent INDWELLING*. Jesus had explained: **"The Father will send you another Counselor to help you and be with you forever -the Spirit of Truth. You know Him for He lives with you and will be IN you."** (John 14:16)

**Second**, *the Holy Spirit would TEACH them all things* God wanted them to understand as HIS representatives in our world. Jesus had said: **"The Counselor, the Holy Spirit, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you."** (John 14:26)

**Third**, the Holy Spirit would come *ONLY after Jesus left!* **"It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go, the Counselor will not come to you, but if I go, I will send Him to you."** (John 16:7)

**Fourth**, the Holy Spirit would come to *guide them in understanding ALL God's TRUTH!* Jesus had said: **"When He, the Spirit of Truth, comes, He will guide you into all truth...and He will tell you what is yet to come."** (John 16:13)

Look at these simple men who had experienced unbelievable miracles with Jesus, now struggling to understand what Jesus was predicting they would experience... **without Him!** *The Holy Spirit would come upon them, live within them, teach them, guide them, empower them... all without Jesus with them!* And they would be led and empowered by the Holy Spirit to spend every day the rest of their lives, telling as many people as would listen, the story of their experiences with Jesus. But more, oh so much more. They would be responsible to TELL the people the teachings of Jesus *and explain them*, so they could then tell their families and friends. *And a few of them would write the story of Jesus for the world to read for centuries to come.*

Now I wonder when you've found yourself in a conversation, my "Walking with Jesus" friends, that was at all similar to this? A conversation that stretched your intellectual capacity to try and understand concepts and truths that really were beyond normal human understanding? Or perhaps a conversation that cast a vision and gave you direction and sent you out to attempt things in life you could never imagine you'd be part of? *This conversation totally redirected these men's lives. For the rest of their lives, they pointed back to this moment as THE defining moment which gave them identity and purpose for the remainder of their lives.*

Luke tells us evidently, they got up from that table, went out into the city of Jerusalem, walking with Jesus, across to the Garden of Gethsemane, and further up the Mount of Olives hillside to the brow of the hill. Oh, so many memories... that famous day Jesus came riding over the brow of this hill on a donkey and the crowd went wild, calling Him their king! (Luke 19:28-44) Or the many times they had sat with Jesus over there in the Garden, as He taught them, and then of course that night as He prayed and then suddenly the quiet of the night was shattered by a mob, led by Judas, who dragged Jesus away. (Matt. 26:36-56) And over there, across the Kidron Valley, the great city of Jerusalem and the Temple and all the memories with Jesus there.

As their gaze turned back to Jesus these men were again shocked to see something no human eyes had ever seen, ever in all human history! Luke records it this way: **"...Jesus was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid Him from their sight! They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. 'Men of Galilee, why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you INTO HEAVEN, will come back in the same way you have seen Him go into heaven!'"** (Acts 1:9-11) No human words, in any language known to mankind, can fully explain this experience! *It's called the "Ascension" of Jesus, and it happened on the 40th day after His resurrection from the dead.* (Acts 1:3)

But my friends, what does it mean? **WHY did Jesus elevate up into the sky, in full view of many people, and according to these two angels, return back to heaven?** Oh, my what an important question.

**First**, Jesus had said repeatedly, *He went to heaven so the Holy Spirit could come to earth.* (John 16:7) Jesus, while here on earth, was restricted by His physical body to being in one place at any time. The Holy Spirit would be like having Jesus living with EVERY person who trusts Jesus to be their Savior, anywhere in the world, all at the same time!! (John 14:15-17)

**Second**, upon His arrival in heaven *Jesus re-assumed His authoritative role of SUPREMACY over all things in heaven and on earth,* according to Colossians 1:15-20. Jesus reigns now, in heaven, as the KING over God's Kingdom!

**Third**, upon His arrival in heaven *Jesus sat down on His throne of ultimate authority, at the right hand of 'the Majesty', God the Father,* according to Hebrews 1:3.

**Fourth**, *Jesus is now our Advocate, our Intercessor speaking to God the Father on our behalf,* according to Romans 8:31-34... **"Christ Jesus who died, more than that, who was raised to life, is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us..."**

**Fifth**, *Jesus is, from His position of authority in heaven, SAVING from their sin condemnation, all who repent and trust in Jesus for Redemption,* according to Hebrews 7:25... **"...because Jesus lives forever, He has a permanent priesthood. Therefore, He is able to save completely those who come to God through Him, because he always lives to intercede for them."**

**Sixth**, *Jesus is bringing into heaven any and all who have trusted Him to be their Savior and die here on earth as He promised in John 6:39* **"And this is the will of the Father who sent Me, that I shall lose none of all those He has given me but raise them up at the last day. For everyone who looks to the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life."** And then my friends, according to Jude 24 *Jesus will present these who arrive in heaven* **"before God's glorious presence without fault and with great joy."**

And may I give you two more, my friends?

Jesus is doing what He promised when He said to His disciples **"I will build MY Church."** (Matt. 16:18) Every hour, every day, around the world, Jesus is delivering people from their sin bondage, and drawing them into His church of followers of Jesus, now numbering almost 1 billion people in our day! *Jesus is leading His church as a global movement of God's people, pushing back the darkness of evil in cities and towns all around the world...* even where you live!

And finally, *Jesus is awaiting word from His Father, (Matt. 24:14,36) that the time is NOW* to come and gather up His Church from this earth, to be with Him forever, as described in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18!!

Wow, does that make you want to stand up and shout, and maybe dance, my friends? Just think of it all my friends! *And here now is a great song to help us celebrate these amazing truths of what's happening in heaven right now where the Resurrected and Ascended King Jesus reigns:*

**Today's Scripture is Acts 1:6-11.**