

Last Teaching & Ascension of Christ Mark 16:19-20; Luke 24:50-53; Acts 1:1-12

Appearances of Jesus after the Resurrection:

1. Mary at the tomb – John 20:11-18
2. Woman leaving the tomb – Matt. 28:9-10
3. Two followers on the road to Emmaus – Luke 24:13-32
4. Peter – Luke 24:34
5. 10 of the 11 disciples – no Thomas – John 20:19-25
6. 11 disciples – Thomas (8 days later) John 20:26-31
7. 7 disciples on the shore of the Sea of Galilee – John 21:1-25
8. 500+ disciples and followers in Galilee – I Cor. 15:6
9. James the brother of Jesus – I Cor. 15:7
10. 11 disciples & ascension – Acts 1:1-12

During the 40 days after His resurrection, Jesus will teach and confirm six different truths with His disciples. These lessons will be repeated many times during those 40 days after the resurrection! These were not new lessons but had been taught during Christ's earthly ministry as well.

1. The reality of His resurrection. v. 3a The disciples did not believe that Jesus had risen from the dead. Jesus first had to deal with their fears, doubts, and uncertainty, then He could proceed teaching them.
2. The truth of the Old Testament concerning Himself. Luke 24:27; 44 This became one of the first lessons as Jesus came from the grave. Even resurrection Sunday, it is recorded in Luke 24, Jesus talking with the two followers on the road to Emmaus concerning how the Old Testament was fulfilled in Him. That same lesson is given again later in that same chapter taught to the 11 disciples. This has been a continual theme of Jesus' earthly ministry.
3. The coming of His spiritual kingdom. v. 3b "kingdom of God:" - "domain of divine rule over believer's hearts". Other words, to the spiritual rule God would have in the hearts of men here on earth. This would include God's desire for His followers in the church age. This has been a continual theme of Jesus' earthly ministry and will become a theme of the church. Philip – Acts 8:12; Paul – Acts 20:24-25; 28:23, 31
4. The power of the Holy Spirit. v. 4-8 Jesus had said much about the coming of the Holy Spirit even before His death. But during the Upper Room and again after the resurrection, the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer became one of the main points **in every teaching!**
5. The assurance of His coming again. Acts 1:9-11; John 14:1-3
6. The task of world evangelism. Matt. 28:18-20; Acts 1:8 ambassadors, witnesses Even during the earthly ministry the disciples were sent out to preach the kingdom of God.

The Bridge between Luke and the Acts.

“The former treatise (Gospel of Luke) have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach , Until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen: To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God:” Acts 1:1-3

Treatise – written work dealing formally and systematically with a subject

Notice the first sentence. It is very long – 4 verses! It becomes a summary of the Book of Luke and the opening statement for the Book of Acts! Luke will describe his first work, the Gospel of Luke, as “all that Jesus began both to do and teach, until the day in which he was taken up,” or the ascension. Now, in the book of Acts, Luke will continue the narrative of the work of Jesus Christ “after that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen:” The next line Luke double-backs to the fact that the disciples were convinced of the bodily resurrection and interacted with Him 40 days. One of the main teaching subjects during that time was “things pertaining to the kingdom of God:” This is a pretty broad subject, but in this context, the “kingdom of God:” would pertain to the spiritual rule God would have in the hearts of men here on earth. It is a spiritual kingdom established in the hearts and lives of believers. It would entail God’s desires for His followers in the church age. “domain of divine rule over believer’s hearts”. This has been a theme of Jesus all His ministry. Matt. 4:23; 9:35; Mark 1:15; Beatitudes - Sermon on the Mount - Matt. 5:3-11

I. Disciples’ Last Instruction This post-resurrection teaching was Jesus’ last on earth. He will literally teach and encourage right up to the moment His feet leave the ground!

“And, being assembled together with them (Gk – eating or lodging), commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father , which, saith he, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.” Acts 1:4-5

Again, we get a glimpse into the interaction between Christ and His followers during those 40 days after the resurrection. About half of the English translations will state that Jesus and the disciples were in a relaxed setting of fellowship and eating at the time of this teaching. Peter gave testimony about special times like this and highlights some of the teaching of those days in Acts 10:38-43 while preaching to Gentiles.

“wait for the promise of the Father” – It will be just 10 days after the ascension that the Holy Spirit would come on the followers of Jesus. Did you catch this? The Holy Spirit was a “promise of the Father”. Jesus had taught this before and even Paul will state it. Luke 11:13, 24:49; John 14:15-16; I Cor. 2:12; 7:19-20; Eph. 3:14-16

“For John truly baptized with water;” – Jesus is quoting John the Baptist from Matthew 3:11! What an honor to John, but remember Jesus’ statement in Matthew 11:11, “Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist.” One baptized by John was declaring a heart of repentance, but John the Baptist prophesied a greater baptism coming, the baptism of the Holy Spirit. And now it was about to happen!

Peter will remember back to this time with Jesus and quote Him in Acts 11:16 during a meeting with the church of Jerusalem. The Gentiles of Joppa had been saved and the Holy Spirit came upon them, Peter will tell the church council he remembered these words of Jesus and knew it was of the Lord.

II. Disciples' Last Question and Jesus' Reply

“When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power (Gk - authority). (Key Verse of the book of Acts) But ye shall receive power, after that (lit. – “when the”)the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.” Acts 1:6-8

“wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?” – Here’s the disciples last big question of Jesus. It had been a recurring issue of their hearts and minds throughout the ministry of Jesus. Luke 19:11; 24:21 The Jewish nation of Jesus’ day knew that the Old Testament taught the restoration of Israel to power and prestige under their Messiah. This was their great hope while under the tyranny of Rome, and actually so many other foreign governments that had ruled over them for centuries! Christ’s followers expected and waited for Jesus to set up His kingdom and rule from the throne of David!

“restore again” - 1) Once a literal kingdom had existed 2) A literal kingdom was not now present 3) A literal kingdom was to come again 4) The Messiah would be the King This was the heart of their question, and theologically they were correct, Jesus did not correct them on their theology, only on the timing!

“not for you to know the times or the seasons,” – “times or the seasons,” are not two synonym words. They both have separate meanings. “Times” – was just that, when, day, date, year; but “seasons” has more to do with the notable events surrounding or preceding the Kingdom of God. Jesus had told the disciples this just weeks before his death in Mark 13:32. It was not for them (or us) to know. We really don’t need to know; it is not our business! It is God’s business! God knows all things and holds all things in His hand! This is a principle of God the Father. He has the answers to all things, our responsibility is to trust Him and live in obedience! Deut. 29:29

“But ye shall receive power,”/ “ye shall be witnesses unto me” – The word “But” is connecting what is God’s business----to bring about the Kingdom of the reigning Messiah on His time table-----verses the true business of the disciples----receive power and be witnesses for Christ! Jesus answers that their concern now is world evangelism and discipleship! Theirs was to work, not rest; suffer, not triumph. Instead of great power to reign; they would receive great power to witness! **Here’s the Great Commission again!**

The word “ye” highlights the individual responsibility. This is not a cooperate assignment. But each individual person was responsible to be a witness! Done with the power of the Holy Spirit! This power may be seen in courage, boldness, confidence, insight, ability, and authority! None of this exists without the Holy Spirit. Every attempt to witness or disciple, whatever the avenue, is futile without Holy Spirit power! Warren Weisbe said, “The ministry of the Holy Spirit is not a luxury; it is an absolute necessity.” p. 323

“unto me” – clearly, our witness is of Jesus. We don’t pedal our church from door to door, we don’t enlist people into our buildings to boister our budgets, we don’t keep lists of names that prayed a prayer to impress our peers. We witness of Jesus through the power of the Holy Spirit in obedience to God! We witness of Jesus!

Jesus will give them the **Game Plan** one more time!

“Jerusalem” – They were to start right where they were, their home area and neighborhoods. This was the same place that weeks before had called out, “crucify Him, crucify Him!” What an example of the grace of God!

“Judaea” – Their community and greater area

“Samaria” – the outcasts – I think it was JVMcGee that said, those on the “other side of the tracks.” We might not be really comfortable with these folks, but they are dear to Jesus and that is how we must look at them too! “Uttermost part of the earth” – Our witness is to go out to the whole world!

*“Those preaching the Gospel, though ordinary people with human frailties and limitations, were empowered by the Holy Spirit to turn the world “upside down.”
Acts 17:6 - Life Application Bible p. 1870*

We are moving into a much-anticipated moment in Jesus’ life. In just a few moments He will be reunited with His Father. At least 7 times the disciples heard about this wonderful event! John 16:5, 10, 17, 28; 17:5, 11, 13; 24; 20:17 It is also mentioned in Luke 9:51.

III. The Ascension Notice, Luke will describe the ascension in both of his books. But it is in the Book of Acts where he expounds the narrative more fully.

“And when he had spoken these things, (“And he led them out as far as to Bethany, and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight” Luke 24:50-51 “and Christ sat on the right hand of God.” Mark 16:19) And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men (lit. angels) stood by them in white (shining) apparel; Which also said, Ye men of Galilee (all disciples were from Galilee – Judas was from Judea), why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.” Acts 1:9-11

“led them out as far as to Bethany” – When the last of His teaching was over, Jesus, in His resurrected body, lead the group of disciples out of Jerusalem on the short walk to Bethany. This town must have been one of Jesus’ favorite places. Lazarus, Mary, and Martha lived there, and many good memories were made in their home. The town was located on the east side of the Mt. of Olives a little over 1 ½ miles from Jerusalem. It is somewhere in this area, on the Mt. of Olives and near Bethany, Jesus ascended to His Father.

“he blessed them,” – The last thing Jesus did was bless them! How sweet, what a wonderful memory those disciples had in the hard times that were to follow, they knew the last thing Jesus had done for them was blessed them! This was an act of commission and love!

“a cloud received him out of their sight” – As Jesus blessed them, His feet left the ground, and He began to ascend higher and higher into the sky! This was very unlike the other times in the last 40 days when Jesus came and went by appearing and disappearing before their eyes. This time Christ was visibly being removed from their present up into the heavens! He was disappearing out of their sight. This was different and final. It was important for the disciples to see Jesus ascend. Then they knew without a doubt that He was returning to His Father and His home in heaven!

The “cloud” was not a condense vapor but a glow of “shekinah” glory. This is the same kind of cloud that filled the temple.

“sat on the right hand of God.” – God took Jesus from this world to His rightful place, at the Father’s right hand. Hebrews 1:3; I Tim. 3:16 Now He resumed His glory and position! Christ also begins the tasks given to Him by the Father. His work was not over! **See Homework #13.** No lazy-boy throne for Christ!

“this same Jesus,...,shall so come in like manner” – The disciples found themselves mesmerized by the sight of Jesus drifting higher and higher into the sky! Suddenly, two angels stood by them with the last heavenly message that day! With a gentle rebuke the angels asked them why were they standing looking so intently into heaven? Christ will come again, just as He left! Now it’s time to work! Did you notice, the angels helped to answer disciples’ question. They had asked about the establishment of the Kingdom with Christ sitting on the throne! The angels just told them that Jesus would come just as He went! We know it is at that time Christ will be setting up the Kingdom! Matthew 24:30; 26:64; Rev. 1:7; Dan. 7:13-14; Zech. 14:1-4

IV. Disciples – Fearful & Fretful to Praising & Preaching

(“And they worshipped him,” Luke 24:52) Then returned they (“with great joy:” Luke 24:52) unto Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a sabbath day's journey (1/2-2/3 mile). (“And were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God. Amen” Luke 24:53 “and they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen.” Mark 16:20)” Acts 1:12

After the crucifixion the disciples reacted in fear, confusion and sadness; they went in to hiding, staying out of sight. Now, after the ascension things were different! They had 40 days with the resurrected Jesus and learned the truths of the Gospel from Jesus’ lips. Now had a commission and a job to do!

How did the disciples react? –

1. The disciples **worshipped** Christ as He ascended into heaven. He was God, worthy of worship. They had full understanding; their dark, dull, confused minds were enlightened! Jesus was deity and He was ascending to His Father! They worshiped Him!
2. The disciples were **glad!** They understood the job before them, they would have the power to complete it, and Christ would return and set up His Kingdom! These men realized their privilege and their responsibility and met them both with joy! We should be sharing in that joy! We too know our job here on earth, we know we have the power to complete it, and we know Christ will soon return! Do you live in joy?!

Where did the disciples go? –

1. The disciples returned to **Jerusalem**. This was a dangerous place for them. It had only been 43 days since the crucifixion. They had all been seen with Jesus, who had been betrayed to Rome by the Religious Leaders.
2. The disciples were continually in the **temple**. The book of Luke will start in the temple with the announcement of the angel to Zechariah concerning the coming of John the Baptist. It will then end in the Temple with the disciples praising and blessing the Lord for the truth of their Savior! Sandwiched in between is Jesus the Messiah! We should be not surprised; the temple was the Jewish place of worship, prayer, and praise.

Naturally, that is where their hearts drew them. The temple became the first place of gathering for the followers of Jesus, it became the “church building”. All around the courtyards were rooms set up for religious meetings and teaching, these were the areas the believer’s in Christ would meet. Acts 2:46; 3:11; 5:20-21, 42 There was no more hiding, no more fear; they went boldly into the temple neither doubting or ashamed. Praising and blessing God!

3. The disciples went **everywhere** preaching, confirming the word of God with miracles. Here we have Mark’s summary of the book of Acts. Of course, the Holy Spirit had come on the believers within ten days of the ascension. And this was the result – the Gospel work in action! “The Lord working in them,” is a wonderful statement. Heb. 2:3-4 And God works in us to get out the message everywhere! Phil. 2:12-13

Believer’s Application:

“But wait”, were words to the disciples given by Jesus shortly before His ascension into heaven. How are you with waiting? Like the disciples, we too must wait for God to move in our lives. We all hate to wait! I hate waiting for a reply to a text, a package in the mail, my morning coffee, the bathroom, and I hate to wait in line! A student might hate waiting for an important grade, a husband might hate waiting in the car for his wife, a child might hate waiting for their birthday! We all hate to wait! But waiting is part of the human experience and more importantly, waiting is part of the Christian walk!

We are called to wait on the Lord – Lam. 3:25; Ps. 27:14, 37:7, 34; Is. 40:31

We are called to wait for His return – Luke 12:36; James 5:7; Galatians 6:9; Titus 2:13; I Cor. 1:7; Phil. 3:20

From many of these verses, we are encouraged to be patient, stay busy in the service of the Lord, and obey God’s commands while we wait. And that is exactly what the followers of Jesus did after He ascended into heaven. Look at Acts 1:12-26. They gathered for prayer, stayed in fellowship with one another, and selected a disciple replacement for Judas. They stayed in Jerusalem, prayed together, and stayed busy! Then, 10 days later, while all were gathered, the Holy Spirit came, just as Jesus had said! God always keeps His promises!

You must also wait! Wait for God to move on your behalf; wait for His return; wait patiently and while you wait, obey the Lord, pray, and stay busy faithfully serving the Lord. Luke 12:34-48