

DEVOTIONAL TIME

10-14-2014 @ 0900

“Have You Obeyed the Order Yet?”

Acts 1:1-5

HOLY GROUND

We are standing on holy ground, and I know that there are angels all around;
Let us praise Jesus now! We are standing in His Presence on holy ground!

Acts 1:1-5

“Dear Theophilus: In my first book, I wrote about all the things that Jesus did and taught, from the time He began His work until the day He was taken up to Heaven. Before He was taken up, He gave instructions by the power of the Holy Spirit to the men He had chosen as His Apostles. For forty days after His death, He appeared to them many times, in ways that proved beyond doubt that He was alive. They saw Him, and He talked with them about the Kingdom of God. And when they came together, He gave them this order; “Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the Gift I told you about, the Gift My Father promised. John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit!”

QUESTIONS FOR TODAY

- Have you ever been in such a hurry to meet someone special, or go someplace exciting, only to find yourself “outta gas” in the middle of nowhere ‘cause you failed to “refuel” before leaving?
- Have you ever gotten upset at being “pulled over”, or even angry at the trooper for giving you a ticket for “speeding” or “reckless driving”, when the legal speed limit was clearly posted?
- Did you ever wait patiently for a special gift, or a big day, and find that the waiting made the moment all the more memorable and “rich” in meaning?

Even as Christians, we can still get very stubborn, especially about doing things “our way.” Jesus Christ has “gone way out of His way” to teach us how to live a “victorious life”, one He has promised to “fill with Power from on High”. In the opening of this book, Luke reminds us of an Order that Jesus Christ gave us. After reminding his original readers (and us) that there was credible eyewitness testimony to the reality of Jesus’ Resurrection through multiple appearances over the course of a forty day period, Luke communicates a solemn Order issued by the Lord Himself. When these early disciples had all gathered together, He commanded: “Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the Gift I told you about”. (Why is it so difficult for us to do things “God’s Way”? We’re often in such a rush, when we need to wait for the things of God! We claim to want to “live a godly life”, but won’t “tarry with the Lord” in patient prayer and diligent devotion while He prepares our spirits for the task(s) ahead. Then when He does “clothe us with Power from on High”, we’re slow to go, because we’ve not prepared fully enough!) To pray “transformational” prayers that release Grace and bear fruit in miracles to “lead many to God”, we need to learn the “seasons of ministry”, when to wait on direction from the “Voice of God”, and when to act fearlessly “in the Name of God”. It takes patience and humility to await the “Outpouring” of the Holy Spirit, who will immerse us fully in the Grace and Peace we require to do our part in the “Work of the Lord”. Luke’s insight in this passage clearly specifies a “waiting process” as an integral part of living a Christ-like life. God, grant us the Grace to “wait before You” patiently until You baptize us with the Holy Spirit, and re-energize us for the life and work to which You call us. Jesus has promised us the Spirit’s Guidance and Presence; help us to spend some time each day in quiet readiness to receive the Gift You know best to send at the Perfect Time!

DEVOTIONAL TIME

10-15-2014 @ 0900

“What Will You Do?”

Acts 1:6-8

HOLY GROUND

We are standing on holy ground, and I know that there are angels all around;
Let us praise Jesus now! We are standing in His Presence on holy ground!

Acts 1:6-8

“When the Apostles met together with Jesus, they asked Him, “Lord, will You at this time give the Kingdom back to Israel?” Jesus said to them, “The times and occasions are set by My Father’s own authority, and it is not for you to know when they will be. But when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, you will be filled with Power, and you will be witnesses for Me in Jerusalem, in all of Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” After saying this, He was taken up to Heaven as they watched Him, and a cloud hid Him from their sight.”

QUESTIONS FOR TODAY

- Have you ever sat looking at the questions on a Final Exam, wondering, “Did I pay attention at all in this class, because none of these questions are ringing any ‘bells of remembrance’?”
- Have you ever gotten “all fired up” to do “something big” for God, (at a revival-type service or rally, maybe after a special devotional time,) but then never “followed up” afterwards?
- If you ever did share a “ministerial moment”, in which your church outreach met some real need, what was it like to be “living Gospel” to someone whose life you brightened?

This is a very interesting passage of Scripture; it challenges and warns at the same time. After some three years of walking and talking with Jesus, being taught by Him, after being sent out on trips, and after His death and resurrection, His closest friends still missed the real point of the Master’s Message. The Apostles are still wrapped up in the “messianic hopes” of an earthly scope, (and their own place in that earthly realm,) not in what Christ really came to do: lead us to His Father! Many times today, we are just as bad about getting all “wrapped up in our little worlds”, and fretting over our “desperate crises”. Note how Christ clarifies the point for them, (and us) “But when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, **you will** be filled with Power, and **you will** be witnesses for Me in Jerusalem, in all of Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” Many today talk about “being filled with the Holy Spirit”, but if we read this passage correctly, there is a definite *sign* of this infilling. Note the “you will” that is used twice in Christ’s statement to the Apostles. Christ tells them that after the Holy Spirit comes upon them, they “*will be*” filled with Power and they “*will be*” witnesses for Him. Christ did not say they might be or may be or they may feel like it on some days; He never says they may! Rather He said they “WILL BE” filled with Power, and “WILL BE” witnesses for Him! Today, are we truly willing to tarry and “wait before the Lord” for this *infilling of the Holy Spirit*? Are we willing to become all that Christ calls us to be? With the infilling of the Holy Spirit comes all the Power we need to be all that Christ sees in us, because that Spirit of Truth empowers us! When that Holy Spirit “burns” within us, we *will* be witnesses. God, grant us the infilling of Your Spirit, so we are empowered to witness well to the reality of Jesus, to the fullness of His Life, and the perfection of His promised Peace! Teach us to look beyond the world we know, even beyond the Heaven we think we know, to await Your Guidance and Grace, so we go “all-in” to witness to Your Love... *Your way!*

DEVOTIONAL TIME

10-16-2014 @ 0900

“Why Are You Waiting to Get Started?”

Acts 1:9-11

HOLY GROUND

We are standing on holy ground, and I know that there are angels all around;
Let us praise Jesus now! We are standing in His Presence on holy ground!

Acts 1:9-11

“After saying this, He was taken up to Heaven as they watched Him, and a cloud hid Him from their sight. They still had their eyes fixed on the sky as He went away, when two men dressed in white suddenly stood beside them and said, “Galileans, why are you standing there looking up at the sky? This Jesus, who was taken from you into Heaven, will come back in the same way that you saw Him go to Heaven!”

QUESTIONS FOR TODAY

- Have many projects, missions, and enterprises have you put on your “bucket list”, even planned to start “soon”, but are just “gathering dust” at the moment?
- Can you remember being given a task by your parents, or assigned a project by a boss, only to see the disappointment on their faces when you admitted later, “I’m sorry. I never got to that.”?
- On the other hand, what was factor or encouragement that motivated you to “jump in with both feet” on a task or project you did finish? What did you feel at the “moment of completion”?

For three years, pre- and post-resurrection, Christ has been teaching by example and instructing these people verbally in all the demands of discipleship. In fact, Jesus has just finished giving one last instruction, (which will involve worldwide evangelism,) and yet they do not move from the place where they are standing! Are they expecting Him to “be right back”? It takes a couple of angels to get them moving. If we were there, would we have done much differently? If we had seen a dear friend murdered brutally, only to find him alive in a whole new way days later, what would we think? If we had first-hand experience of “life-transforming” Grace, wouldn’t we be “eager for more”? How many times have we expected God to work in our lives in one fashion, only to be totally surprised by the actual answer the Lord provided? For example, people usually don’t come back from the grave, so the disciples in this passage have experienced some pretty strange and drastic things the past few weeks. This moment is just one more “shock” in that series of events. Of course they were distracted. What about us? What things are we allowing to distract us? Do we *know* what God has asked us to do? If so, why are we “standing around”? There’s WORK to do! We have witness to share, testimony to offer, and hope of Eternal Life to bring to a desperate world. Like those first disciples, we *know* exactly what had happened to Jesus Christ. To do His Work, we need the same Power, Courage, and Wisdom these first disciples did. Like them, we must find these elements in the Gift of the Holy Spirit. God, grant us a fresh outpouring of Your Holy Spirit! We need this Spirit of Love and Truth to carry on the Work of Your Son, Jesus Christ. While He is enthroned beside You, He prays that we unite in the Power of the Spirit You send, with the Courage that Spirit of Peace will bestow on all who spread His Gospel. Holy Spirit, come to us anew! Only in Your Wisdom can we work to be “light” in a world darkened by sin and beset by sorrow. Enkindle in us renewed conviction of our Father’s Love and Care, so we brighten all the world around us with His Grace!

DEVOTIONAL TIME

10-17-2014 @ 0900

“The Promise of God is Worth the Wait!”

Acts 2:1-4

HOLY GROUND

We are standing on holy ground, and I know that there are angels all around;
Let us praise Jesus now! We are standing in His Presence on holy ground!

Acts 2:1-4

“When the Day of Pentecost came, all the believers were gathered together in one place. Suddenly there was a noise from the sky which sounded like a strong wind blowing, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then they saw what looked like tongues of fire, which spread out and touched each person there. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to talk in other languages, as the Spirit enabled them to speak.”

QUESTIONS FOR TODAY

- Have you ever started a new fitness program, which promised outstanding results, but quit because you found it “too hard” or “too long” to achieve the results for which you hoped?
- Did you ever “jump ship” from a career full of potential over some “minor issue” or “petty squabble”? In hindsight, do you wish you had stayed with it?
- Was there ever a challenge you did accept, with all its inconvenience, struggle, and pain, to find the reward(s) made all the effort “worth the price”? (What did you *become* in the process?)

Remember Jesus told these believers to “wait for the Gift”, (the coming of the Holy Spirit). He said, “Wait until it comes”, but He didn’t tell them how long their wait would be. (Isn’t it amazing how impatient we can become when we have to wait for some fulfillment which we desire?) Remember how far off Christmas seemed as child? How far away was graduation from High School when you were a freshman? When you finally got your learner’s permit, how hard was it to wait for the day you would get your driver’s license? Yet those days all finally arrived...for those of us willing to *wait* for them. Sometimes, however, we get tired of waiting, or get frustrated with “lack of progress”, and look for “short cuts”, or “quick fix” alternatives. How many drop out of high school or college, quit a job, end a relationship, or even abandon church, because things were not “working out”, coming fast enough, or “going the way I had hoped”? Impatience can be one of our greatest enemies, and lead to some of our greatest defeats. Consider how many commercials assure us we can “have it all now”, as well as “have it our way”! In our “push-button”, “flip-switch” world, we don’t deal easily or willingly with a need to “wait” for what we want. In the face of delay, we get frustrated, angry and often quit. This is a real liability in the spiritual realm, in which God is “up to something else”, or has “an even better Plan in mind”. In this passage, we see God “waiting” until He has them all together in one place, in a spirit of unity, humility and patience; then “Suddenly there was a noise from the sky...” What “work” God has in store for each of us is a “Mission of Mystery” that only God Himself knows fully. Our job is to “stay on task”, keep believing, continuing to ponder His Word prayerfully, and be ready to “follow His Lead” when He “opens the Way”! God, grant us the Grace to trust You! When it’s time to wait upon Your Guidance, keep us faithful and patient. Open our hearts and minds to the Love and Wisdom we will need to do Your Work Your Way! Let Your Spirit move in our midst with a fiery clarity until we are fully equipped to proclaim Your Presence in Power to all who need the Love You share!