

I'm A Christian, Now What? (Part 3) – Acts 1:1-14

Acts 1:9-14. Before we get going, I want to apologize for not drawing your attention to Martin Luther King Day 2 weeks ago. Especially in this time of racial unease. After my comments about Sanctity of Human Life last weekend, someone asked why I didn't mention MLK Day as well. And I should have. I just didn't think about it.

It's a day to remember and commemorate not just the man, but more importantly, the civil rights he championed in our country. And the fight to end racism.

And while it's only a day, it serves to remind us all year long, that we're *all* made in the image of God, no matter *what* our skin color.

And that we should remain ever vigilant, in our country as *well* as our hearts, to keep sinful attitudes toward one another at bay.

Ever sensitive to the plight of minorities. Ever faithful to love one another fully.

So I'm sorry for not bringing that to your attention. And trust that doing so now, will cause you to think on these things appropriately.

➤ That said, we're a month into our *Journey Through Acts*, and I feel like God is already stirring our hearts and compelling us to greater love/good deeds. Just like he did then. And *this* message, is the last of a 3 part mini-series about what to do as a Christian. So often, when someone becomes a child of God through faith and repentance, they ask or wonder, "Now what?" And part of the answer, found in v1-5, is to . . .

1. Know the facts about Jesus (v1-5)

From his ministry up to his promise. His promise to give us the Holy Spirit and bring us under his influence. Your faith, can and should be based on *facts* instead of feelings. But you have to know them.

- His ministry timeline
- His works and teaching
- His commands
- His death and resurrection
- His post-resurrection appearances
- His preaching
- His promise

➤ 2nd, from v6-8, we should . . .

2. Live and speak for Jesus (v6-8)

Now that you're a follower of Christ, live and speak for Christ.

B/c that's what witnesses do. And that's who we *are*. Like Jesus said in v8.

You will be my witnesses. People who *live* in such a way as to draw *attention* to him, and *speak* in such a way to *point* people to him.

• We have the power.

You will receive power he said (8).

• It's our responsibility.

To *be* the witnesses we *are*.

• Everywhere we go.

Here, there, and everywhere. That was last week.

➤ Which brings us to Part 3 and v9-12.

Having just relayed Jesus' words in v8, that "You will receive power and you will be my witnesses," Luke writes in v9 . . .

[9] And when he had said these things [Jesus that is], as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. [10] And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, [11] and said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven." [12] Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey away.

The 3rd answer to the question, "Now what?" is . . .

3. Waste no time (v9-12)

Now that you're a child of God, now that you're a part of his family, now that you're part of his kingdom – waste no time. That's the *gist* of these verses.

But before we get there, let's talk about v9 and the *ascension* of Jesus. B/c it's so little understood and often ignored. Just glossed over like it's no big deal.

But it happened. In a real time and real place. Just like *all* the miracles in the Bible.

➤ So what do we know?

Well, first of all, it took place on the Mt. of Olives. Just outside of Jerusalem. V12. *They [the apostles] returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet.* Near the town of Bethany as Luke says in his gospel (Lk 24:50). *They* returned, but Jesus didn't.

Why? B/c he went to heaven. V11. *This Jesus [the angels said], who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven."* *He was carried up into heaven* as Luke says it in his gospel (Lk 24:51).

And there sits, at the right hand of the Father. Something *Peter* is explicit about in his famous *sermon* at Pentecost. Coming up in chapter 2 (v33-35).

Those are the facts.

➤ But that's not all we can discern from this. There are also . . .

• 10 Implications of Jesus' Ascension

Truths I want you to know/understand, b/c they help us see him for who and how he is.

Here's the first:

1. Jesus was no longer going to come and go.

That's the first implication of his ascension. This was it. The *past* 40 days of going and coming was an anomaly. Now, he was just going. Period.

2. He was received into God's presence.

Not only b/c heaven is where God *is*, but b/c the cloud that *took him out of their sight*, v9, was most likely the *glory* cloud of God.

Sometimes called the *Shekinah* glory in extra-biblical writings. Referring to the visible aura of God's presence. We can't be certain of it, but it sure does fit.

Mainly b/c it doesn't say that a cloud happened to *obscure* him as he ascended, but that a cloud *took* him (v9b), carried him up (Lk 24:51). And when you combine that with . . . The glory cloud that enveloped *Moses* on Mt. Sinai (Ex 19:9,16) . . .

And the cloud that overshadowed the *Tabernacle*, in the desert (Ex 13:21-22; 40:34) . . .
And the cloud that engulfed Solomon's *temple* at its dedication (1 King 8:10-11) . . .
And the cloud that surrounded the *apostles* on the Mt. of Transfiguration (Lk 9:34ff) . . .
It leads us to believe that the cloud at Jesus' ascension was the very Shekinah glory of God. His very presence. Which, given his *love* for the Son, it's really no surprise. You'd meet him too. He was received into God's presence.

3. He's fit to be in God's presence.

Perfect and altogether holy. Otherwise, how *could* he be in God's presence?

4. He was exalted even more.

As if rising from the dead wasn't enough, he rose to heaven. Wow.

5. He remains in bodily form.

That's how he was when they saw him ascend, and that's how he will return it says. Implying that's how he is now. As we speak. In bodily form.

6. He will return in bodily form.

An implication, b/c he *will come in the same way as [they] saw him go*, v11.

They saw him go in the flesh, and he will return in the flesh.

7. He will be visible when he returns.

He was visible when he ascended, and will return the same way. (11)

8. He will descend from above.

Once again, just like he went (11). Which is affirmed in 1 Thess 4:16.

The Lord himself will descend from heaven it says.

9. He will come with the power and glory of God.

Once again, that's the idea of *coming* in the cloud, just as he went.

Something that's indicated in the gospels as well. Like Mk 13:26. Where Jesus is speaking of his return, and says . . .

They will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory.

And then last, the 10th implication, is that . . .

10. The Holy Spirit could now come.

B/c that's what Jesus said in Jn 16:7 – *If I go, I will send him to you.*

The condition was Jesus' departure. And with the condition met, the Spirit could now come.

10 implications of his ascension. (**Summary**)

Helping us know him for who and how he *is*. High and lifted up. Exalted. Worthy of our awe and reverence.

➤ But that's not the *main* point here. The main point, is that Jesus is going to return, and there's much to do. So get busy. That's the point.*****

V11 – "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven."

They're not saying it as a statement of fact – that Jesus left and Jesus is coming.

If that were the case, what would it *matter* if they stood there?

No, they're saying it to spur the disciples on. To get them going. And us too.

It would be like the owner or CEO of your company visiting your office one day, and telling your group he needs to see some improvement in your productivity.

And then, as he's leaving, says, "I'll be back."

And as soon as he's out the door, your manager says, "What are *you* looking at? Why all the standing around?"

Is he really asking? No. It's a rhetorical question to say, "Get going. Get busy. B/c I guarantee, he'll return."

That's the point. Waste no time. Be productive with the life you have in Christ.

Especially so b/c it's short, at least on this side of eternity. And his return is near.

Life is short and Jesus is coming.

And yet the gospel needs to be preached to all *nations*, the saints need to be discipled, the church needs to be prepared, the least of these need to be loved . . .

The lost need to be found, and we need to represent. Our plate is full.

➤ And yet we are *masters* at wasting time.

From video games and TV, to Facebook, YouTube, Snapchat, Instagram, and phone games. Not to mention news feeds, blogs, sports, drinking, music . . .

And who *knows* what else?

Did I leave anything out? Anybody's toes *not* stepped on?

I was walking through Walmart in Ames, IA the other day, just buying time while Becky shopped, and happened on the video game aisle.

And while I was overwhelmed at the sheer *number* of games, the thing that struck me the most was the *Red Bull* display right in the middle of the aisle.

It dawned on me, that that's how people spend 10, 12, 15 hours at a time playing video games.

➤ We are *masters* at wasting time. Kingdom time. Borrowed time.

Meanwhile, the words of the angels ring in our ears.

Why do you stand looking into heaven? Why do sit looking at a screen? Why do you stare at your phone? Why do you veg like it's your job?

He's coming again. And there's a whole lot to do.

Not that we shouldn't rest, but that we shouldn't waste.

Waste no time.

And then last . . .

4. Pray like crazy (v12-14)

Know the facts about Jesus, live and speak for Jesus, waste no time, and pray like crazy.

The Christian life may be hard at times, but it's certainly not complicated.

V12 – Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey away.

A Sabbath day's journey was about 1 kilometer. 6 tenths of a mile. The maximum distance you could walk on the Sabbath without doing any work.

Not that it was an *Old Testament* concept or command, but a Jewish tradition or rule.

One they *added* to the Law. Thinking it would help them keep the Sabbath *holy*.

➤ And just as a side note, Rabbis of old came up with that distance with some pretty creative interpretation.

First of all, they took Ex 16:29 – *let no one go out of his place on the seventh day* – a command for the time of *manna* while they traveled the desert . . .

And combined it with Nu 35:5, which sets the perimeter of the Levites' pastureland, from their house, at 2000 cubits. 1 kilometer.

Concluding, that was the allowable distance you could move or travel on the Sabbath, without *leaving* your place.

It's eisegesis at its worst. Starting with a conclusion and forcing Scripture to support it.

And lest you're quick to condemn it in them, we tend to do the same.

We start with a thought, and then look for verses to support it all the time. Often times twisting them and using them in ways they were never intended.

Or, we add our personal convictions to the biblical principles on which they're based, and think they're equal. And that *everyone* should live and think like we do.

Everyone should be passionate about the things we are.

Be careful of your "Sabbath journeys."

➤ V13 – They returned to Jerusalem . . . [13] And when they had entered, they went up to the upper room [whether it was the upper room, we don't know], where they were staying, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot and Judas the son of James.

The 12 apostles minus Judas Iscariot. With *James the son of Alphaeus* presumably the same as *Thaddaeus* in Matthew's list. And Mark's. (Mt 10:2-4; Mk 3:16-19)

[14] All these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers [a word that also includes sisters].

IOW among those praying, were the brothers and sisters of Jesus that Mary and Joseph went on to have *after* him. Including *James, Joses, Judas, and Simon* found in Mk 6. All of which flies directly in the face of the belief that Mary was a perpetual virgin. She wasn't. And doesn't need to be. Despite the myths in extra-biblical literature, apocryphal writings, that she made some sort of a vow.

But the point here, is that the disciples, those who loved and followed Jesus to the bitter end, *prayed*. They devoted themselves to *prayer*. (14) As in, they prayed like crazy. Presumably, for the entire 10 days until the Spirit came at Pentecost.

➤ Question: Should we do any different?

There are some things in the book of Acts that we *shouldn't* necessarily do. That we *shouldn't* emulate. Things that aren't taught elsewhere in the New Testament . . .

But serve only to inform us of how the church started, and to increase our awe of the Holy Spirit in doing so. Some things are purely *de-scriptive* in this book.

But with all the teaching about prayer *outside* the book of Acts, this isn't one of them.

We absolutely should pray. And pray like crazy. Just like this little band of brothers and sisters in *Christ*. Huddled in the upper room of a house.

They gathered, they waited, and they prayed.

And did so . . .

• **With one accord**

V14 – All these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer (14)

With one mind, one heart. Agreeing with each other in prayer. Focusing on the same things and the same goals.

And we should too. We should pray with one accord for more **pastors** to plant churches.

More **missionaries** to go overseas. Our 10 in 10 initiatives.

We should pray for the South End **build-out** – for the timing and the means.

We should pray to be better **witnesses**. We should pray for **the lost** to be reached and saved. We should pray for greater **love** among us. As good as it is.

And for God's **protection** of our church.

We don't know *what* the first disciples prayed for in that upper room, but we do know *how*. With one accord. And we should too. (**Summary**)

And last, we should pray like crazy . . .

• **Together**

All these with one accord [v14] were devoting themselves to prayer, together.

We need to pray *together*. Few things unite a *couple* more, few things unite a *family* more, and few things unite a *church* more.

Few things carry such weight before the Lord.

Sure, we pray together in our Small Groups. But is that enough?

We pray together in our Bible Studies, but is that sufficient?

I think not. I think we're *lacking* in our "together prayer."

I think we sluff it off, excuse it, and avoid it like the plague sometimes. Let's be honest. Sometimes out of fear, sometimes out of laziness.

So I'd like to spend the rest of our *time* together, *praying* together.

Gathering in groups of 2-4, and praying for things worthy of Jesus' name.

➤ I heard a message to that effect this week. (Jeff Iorg, Midwest Advance)

That when we pray in the name of Jesus we ought to ask for something *worthy* of his name. Something requiring his infinite *power*.

Something that will advance his *kingdom*. Something bigger than *ourselves*. (**Summ**)
Pray for kingdom things. Like the things listed on the screen.

Can we do that? Just get into groups of 2 or 3 or 4 right now, and begin praying.

You don't have to know each other. In fact, I'd recommend you introduce yourself when you're *done*. Just start praying, *with one accord*.

(**Corporate prayer**. Followed by a brief **song** that the worship team sings over us.)

Pray – Lord, will you fill us with your Spirit? Will you use us to spread a passion for the fame of your name, both here in the Quad Cities and around the world? Will you impress on us to waste no time? Will you show us and convict us in the ways we do? We trust you, and worship you, and love you.

And give now our tithes and offerings. Find us faithful.