

Acts 1:1-14

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[0 : 00] Let's turn again to the chapter we read in the Acts of the Apostles, chapter 1, and these verses, verses 1 to 11, really.

We read there that, verse 3, with regard to Jesus, to them he presented himself alive after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during 40 days and speaking about the kingdom, and so on.

For three years, the disciples had become really accustomed to seeing amazing things in the life of Jesus.

From the very beginning, from the time they had started following him and sharing with him, they had seen quite spectacular things.

They had seen him feed a few thousand folk from just a few fish and loaves. They had seen him heal. They had seen him raise people from the dead.

[1 : 15] They had seen him walk on the water. They had become accustomed to so many things, and I'm sure their minds were full of these things, experiences that would stay with them for the rest of their days.

But the experience that they saw on the mountain, Mount Olivet, or the Mount of Olivets, was one they would never forget either, where Jesus was with them.

And as he raised up his hands to bless them, he was lifted up from them and carried into heaven. It looks very much like it was an act of the Father, although even when we read about the resurrection of Jesus, we believe, as in all things, Father, Son, and Spirit are involved.

But there that he was lifted up, as if he was lifted up, we believe the Father is lifting him up back into heaven.

It was a very public display. And if you were there, or if I was there, it's something I would never, ever forget. Even, I'm sure, if our memory started to become impaired, and you know how we do.

[2 : 25] There's just so many things in life I just don't remember anymore. Quite positive that that's something I would never forget. And so we find that this is exactly what happened.

Because these men that Jesus had following him, they were the ones who were going to go around, and they were going to share with a needy world, not just the story of Jesus, but what Jesus can bring into their heart, into their lives.

And so it was fitting that the Lord should leave this world in such a spectacular way. Now, although the Lord left, rose up publicly before the disciples, and they witnessed him rise into heaven, I don't believe that anybody other than his followers saw this resurrection, this ascension, I should say.

Because it tells us that Jesus revealed himself to many people after he rose from the dead. It tells us on one occasion he revealed himself to 500.

But it was only to his followers. We don't hear of him ever revealing himself to any but those who loved him, those who believed in him, those who followed him.

[3 : 44] The last the enemies of Jesus had seen was him on the cross, and him, in fact, being taken, his body being taken down from the cross for burial.

That was the last the world saw of Jesus. They didn't want him, and they were quite happy to get rid of him. So Jesus, when he rose from the dead, didn't show himself to any but to those who loved him.

But it's going to be very, very different when Jesus returns. It tells us here that Jesus is going to return. And, in fact, the angels tell the disciples that it's in like manner.

In the same way as you saw Jesus rise up, he will come back down again. He's going to return. But there's going to be a difference when he returns, because everybody's going to see him.

When he rose up, it was only his followers that saw him. When he returns, we're told that every eye will see him. It's something that I can't even begin to imagine.

[4 : 47] There are many things that are beyond our understanding, but that's what we're told in Scripture, that everybody will see him. It's going to be a public return, and it's going to be very, very different for different people, because those who do not want Jesus, those who have made it their life's work to push him away or to remove him, for them, that's going to be quite an awesome moment because they're going to see that the very one they didn't want is real.

You know, in that moment, there will be no atheists or agnostics. There'll be no doubters. There'll be no scoffers. There'll be nobody mocking the Christian faith at that moment.

Not one person anywhere in the world will be mocking Jesus just then. In fact, we're told in the Bible what's going to happen, that those who have done that very thing, they're going to be calling out on the hills and the rocks to cover them from the wrath of the Lamb.

That's what it tells us in the Bible, because it's going to be such a fearsome picture, a fearsome moment when Jesus returns for those who have despised him and hated him and mocked him.

Now, we find anyway here that there was a 40-day period between the resurrection and this ascension, and Jesus revealed himself many times to his people.

[6 : 19] He gave many proofs of his resurrection. And we read of some of these. There are many that haven't been recorded. We saw in John's Gospel, and we know if we go through in Luke's Gospel and so on, if we follow through the Gospels, we find Jesus making returns.

But only some of them are documented. But we're told that he made many. But he didn't just return in order to prove to them that he was alive, that he was the same Jesus.

He returned in order to teach them. That's what we read about there, that he, until the day that he was taken up, after he had given command through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen, to them he presented himself alive after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during 40 days and speaking to them about the kingdom.

Because these were the men who were going to go out into the world. And they had a message that the world needed to hear. So here is Jesus, and he is teaching them about the kingdom and what the kingdom is.

And these must have been amazing times. Here he is, he's teaching them as one who has risen from the dead.

[7 : 42] And when you think about the personal experiences that the Lord Jesus Christ went through, because nobody else, nobody else ever experienced what Jesus experienced. And so he's teaching here.

And then he's telling them that it's only a matter of time. Of course, there is a fixed time, but that the Holy Spirit is going to come upon them in power, in enabling power, where they are going to be able to teach and to preach.

And the Holy Spirit will give them courage, because that's one of the amazing things that happened to the disciples. Remember when the disciples, to begin with, they're hiding behind locked doors.

When Jesus rose from the dead, that's how the disciples were. They were scared. Fast forward about two, three months from there, and you'll find these same men, and they're in the public places, teaching and preaching about Jesus.

They're being arrested. They're taken. They're beaten up. What do they do? They go, they shout for joy. They go straight back into the marketplace, straight back into the center, and preach Jesus all over.

[8 : 55] You couldn't get a more different picture, because as we say, a couple of months before, they're hiding behind locked doors in fear of the Jews.

Fast forward, there is absolutely no fear in them at all, because the Lord has given them this courage, and he has given them the wisdom in what to say. He has given them the words in what to say.

And so there is this enabling, the power of God's Spirit was upon them. And that is what we must seek as well. And we've always got to remember that in our witnessing, that it is by the power of God's Spirit.

We've always got to rely upon the enabling of God's Spirit. And so they were being taught by the Lord, and we must seek to be taught by the Lord. You know, it is so important in our own personal lives that we ask the Lord when we come to the Bible, Lord, will you teach me from your word today?

And the Lord will. He wants to teach us about himself. And he wants your mind to be opened, so that you will understand more.

[10 : 10] And the Lord is able to do that, because this is a prayer that he will always answer. If we come to the Lord and say genuinely to the Lord, Lord, I really want, there's so little I understand.

We're all like that. Lord, open my mind. Open my understanding. Help me to see wonderful things out of your word. Help me to grasp them.

And the Lord says, I will. And the Lord will. This is part of what the ministry of the Holy Spirit is, to take the things of Christ and to reveal them unto us.

And so we should all be being taught of the Lord. And then we find that the disciples there, they're asking the Lord then at this particular time at verse 6, so they, when they had come together, they asked the Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?

Now we've said this on many occasions. The disciples were still of the mind that Jesus was going to restore Israel to, as they saw its rightful place, as being a proper power, a people of supremacy.

[11 : 23] And they were looking at Jesus coming as king and establishing, delivering Israel from the power of Rome and making them an identity on their own, a power once again, like they were in the days of David.

They didn't understand that's not what Jesus was about. He wasn't creating nationalistic barriers. The kingdom that Jesus is establishing isn't bound by sort of culture.

It isn't bound by language. It isn't bound by race. It isn't bound by gender. It isn't bound by any of these things. It is universal. You cannot go to a map and color in red or green or brown or whatever, and say, well, that's, that, that part of the world there, that's part of God's kingdom.

God's kingdom is wherever any believer is. Because the Bible tells us that the kingdom of God is within you.

So where, where we see the kingdom of God is where, wherever a believer is. And that is why the kingdom of God is spread throughout the world.

[12 : 41] There are areas of this world today where the kingdom of God is really flourishing. Places like China. Where hundreds and thousands and thousands are coming to embrace the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior.

Masses of people. But it, so it goes on in different parts of the world. Every place where, uh, the, a patient becomes a believer and accepts Jesus, this is where the kingdom is.

And so, the, the disciples hadn't understood this. They were soon going to understand it. They had, they actually had quite a, quite a bit of difficulty because they, they were so inward looking.

They couldn't see beyond their own borders. Sadly, they had no place for people who were non-Jews. Remember, if we go to Acts chapter and the whole thing with Cornelius, Peter had a huge problem in going to see this really devout man, Cornelius, because he wasn't a Jew.

In fact, some of the Jewish, uh, Christians, opposed the Apostle Paul because of his love for the non-Jew, for the way that he went out into the whole world, bringing the message.

[13 : 53] they were forgetting that Jesus, in fact, had said to them at the beginning there, uh, this is, this is what he said in verse eight, but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you and you will be my witnesses, yes, here in Jerusalem, but in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth.

An awful lot of the immediate followers of Jesus had forgotten or cared not to take that on board, but that Jesus is saying, my message is global.

My message is for all the world. There are to be no boundaries. There are to be no barriers. You are to go with this message and proclaim this message to each and to everyone.

And so this is one of the, one of the, the wonderful thing. Now, I suppose for most of us, if we were to apply that to ourselves, most of us won't be going to the ends of the earth, or maybe some will, of where is the end of the earth?

But when you look at it, if we apply it to where we are ourselves, we are, what Jesus is saying to the disciples is first of all, you'll be my witness here where you are in Jerusalem.

[15 : 08] Then you'll move out and you'll move out and you'll take it further and further and the gospel will move and move. And for ourselves, the majority of us will be just where we are.

And Jesus is saying, that's where you are the witness. That's where you're to witness. This is where you're to work. In the different places that the Lord has placed you, whether it's in your own sphere of work, in your home, in your community, wherever you are, you witness for me.

That's how the early gospel spread. But again, when the disciples, they said to the Lord, Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?

He said to them, it is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. Now, Jesus is not saying to his disciples, it's not for you to be asking any questions of God.

It's not for you to be knowing God's will. That's not what Jesus is saying here. because God wants us to come to him in order that we will know his will in everything.

[16 : 20] Because as we go through life, our decisions should be God decisions. And particularly in the sphere of the church, we should always be seeking that the Lord will lead us, that the Lord will guide us.

And we go to him and say, Lord, show us, as we're just going to enter into a vacancy. It's one of the things that we're going to have to do is say, Lord, show us the way to go. Direct us in the right way.

It's your church. We want you to show us the way to go. And the Lord wants us to do this. This is the way that he wants us to operate. But that's not what the disciples were asking here.

They were wanting to get into areas that the Lord is not going to reveal. What they asked there was very similar to us asking the Lord, Lord, when are you coming back?

Could you give us the date? Could you tell us which year you're planning or you have planned to return? The Lord's not going to tell us because, in fact, Jesus tells us that very thing.

[17 : 29] He said, you know, there is a time when the Son of Man is going to return. But you know what? Not even the angels of heaven, not even the angels in heaven know when that time is going to be.

Because there are certain things that belong to the Lord alone. The secret things belong to... He has revealed... The Lord has revealed so much to us. There is so much in the Bible here that the Lord has revealed to us about Himself.

And in fact, He is inexhaustible. He is an inexhaustible being. We could spend our life probing into what God has revealed to us and never come to a full knowledge of it.

And very often, I suppose it's part of human nature, we bypass what has been revealed but we want to know what's not revealed. There's always something about us that wants to know into the future and want to know things.

And the Lord is saying, now, there are certain things that are not for you to know. And let us be thankful that the Lord in His wisdom has hidden many things from us, even into our own personal lives.

[18 : 40] I'm sure as you look back in your own life, if you had known, I'm sure if some of you here had known some of the things that were to take place, you'd be saying, no, I can't bear that.

That's going to be too painful. Can you imagine living in the light of knowing that at a certain time this was going to happen? You couldn't bear it.

You barely bore it when it did happen, but if you had lived your life in the knowledge it was going to happen, it would have been unbearable. So God in His wisdom hides from us things that lie ahead.

The hidden things belong unto Him. But anyway, we find that Jesus, that He, there's this discussion taking place.

Now, if we had read from Luke's gospel and following on to this similar, this kind of parallel passage here, it would tell us here in verse 50 of chapter 24, then He led them out as far as Bethany and lifting up His hands He blessed them and while He blessed them He parted from them and was carried up into heaven.

[19 : 59] So this, we find that on this occasion Jesus has walked out with the disciples to Bethany. Now as I said, nobody but His followers could see Him because He hasn't revealed Himself to any but His followers.

and they go to the Mount of Olives and many people, we've said this before, but many people have suggested that it is that Jesus goes as far as Bethany and that it's a testimony that this is where He's leaving from, that Jesus, it's almost as if He's saying to this home in Bethany that He so loved and there was Mary, Martha and Lazarus who lived there and particularly Mary who was the most spiritually minded follower that Jesus had.

Some people believe that Jesus is saying I'm actually, this is where I'm leaving from. And I'm sure when Jesus revealed Himself, although again it doesn't say to us, although Jesus revealed Himself often to different people, I would say that He was bound to have visited, revealed Himself to that home in Bethany.

He would have come to Mary, Martha and Lazarus. He would also have revealed Himself to His own mother. And it's very interesting to see that in verse 12 when the disciples returned to Jerusalem from Mount Coltolivet, they entered, they went to the upper room where they were staying.

And it gives us a list of the disciples and they were all with one accord there. And you notice that Mary, the mother of Jesus, is there. And notice who else? His brothers. something has happened because these are the brothers who earlier in Jesus' life didn't believe in Him.

[21 : 43] But we find now that they must, they must have come to trust Him and they must have come to accept Him and believe because His brothers are there along with His mother.

So there's no doubt whatever but that Jesus would have also revealed Himself to His mother. So He led them out as far as Bethany and it's here they are on this mountain or the Mount of Olives.

And again, it's interesting how often in the Bible the significance of mountains. Again, even in Jesus' life we have the Sermon on the Mount. We have the temptation which took place in the wilderness but within the mountain ranges and it was on the mountain that the devil was showing Jesus the kingdoms of the world and he says, look, hey, it's all you if you'll just bow down and worship me.

You know, I've often thought about it. Remember, Satan is called the God of this world and Satan is saying to Jesus, I will prosper you in this world beyond belief.

I can give you just about anything. I wonder how many people have actually sold their soul to Satan in order to prosper.

[23 : 02] I wonder how many people Satan has whispered into their heart. He says, I'll give you. Just turn away from God. I have nothing to do with the Lord.

You just listen to me. I will get you. I think we might get a shock at how many people who have made a decision that in order to get on that they're prepared to sell their soul in order to prosper in this world.

What shall it profit a man supposing he gain the whole world and lose his own soul? Because that's what Satan was doing in the mountain promising Jesus everything if he would just bow down and worship him.

It was on a mountain that Jesus was crucified and it was on a hill on a mountain that he was transfigured I should say and on a hill that he was crucified. Again you go to the Old Testament and you see the likes of Abraham on the mountain that the Lord spoke to him when he was going to offer Isaac.

It was on the mountain that Moses spent the 40 days and 40 nights in the presence of the Lord when getting the Ten Commandments. It was on the mountain that God spoke to Elijah where he was redirecting him and redirecting him with regard to his prophetic role and so we find that here is Jesus and he is just about to part with the disciples and he does it in such a beautiful way by way of benediction.

[24 : 35] I'm sure it's one of the things in life that we often look back on and say I wish I had parted better. I'm sure as we look back over our own lives because we never know we never know when we part whether it's to be a final parting or not.

So we should always seek to part in good terms. That might be almost a wee bit idealistic but it's something we should be seeking to do to part with one another in good terms.

Well certainly the parting that Jesus had with his disciples here couldn't have been a better one because he has raised his hands in benediction blessing and as he does so he's carried up into heaven carried up into the clouds not the rain clouds the ordinary rain clouds these clouds signify the presence of God.

You have the cloud in the wilderness leading Israel to the promised land you have this cloud at the time of the dedication of the temple you have the cloud on the Mount of Transfiguration where he was overshadowed by the cloud here is the cloud demonstrating the presence and the glory of God.

And the angels come and they say men of Galilee why do you stand looking into heaven? This same Jesus who was taken up from you into heaven will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.

[26 : 06] You know there's almost a little rebuke here men of Galilee why do you stand looking into heaven? I wonder why they're giving this almost like a gentle rebuke. Well I suppose it's that Jesus has given them a work to do.

He has told them that they're to go and to witness for him and there they are they're gazing up. But I don't think we could be because I'll tell you if I was there and I'd been one standing in the middle I would have been doing exactly the same.

It's the sort of thing you would do. You would look you'd be just so amazed and you'd be keeping there be a lingering look. I could well imagine if I was there that's exactly what I would be doing.

But there's a work for Jesus to be done. And as Jesus has ascended up into heaven what does that mean for us? Well it means first and foremost Jesus has finished the work the Father gave him to do.

Everything was done. And he is demonstrating before the church that's it. Here is my public departure from you. I have marked, I have completed, I have fulfilled every single thing the Father has given me to do.

[27 : 14] And in doing that I have conquered all the enemies. I have conquered sin, I have conquered death, I have conquered the grave, I have conquered hell. All these things for the church.

And Jesus is saying I am now the conqueror. We're really singing about that in Psalm 68. And because now I am ascending into heaven, I will now send the Holy Spirit in power upon you.

And I go to heaven to appear before the Father on your behalf. We're told that in Hebrews. For Christ has entered into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.

Isn't that wonderful? We're told he makes continual intercession. All the time on our behalf. What's he doing?

How does he, how does he make intercession for us? Does he, is he saying to God the Father, oh excuse them, they can't help it. I know they've sinned there and they've done this and that and the next, I know, will you, will you overlook it?

[28 : 23] No, that's not what Jesus does. What he does is he presents himself. He presents his own finished work.

work. And the Father accepts the finished work of Jesus on behalf of his people. So that as the Father looks on us, he looks on us through the completed work of Jesus.

And he says, perfect. Their sins and their iniquities, I will remember no more. The slate is wiped clean because Jesus has done it all for us.

It's a wonderful thought. And the last thing he has gone to heaven is to prepare a place for us. And he's, well, he has prepared the place for us by what he did, but he has gone to heaven to welcome us because he's going to take us to that place that he has prepared for us.

Is that where you're going? Because it won't be long. Our time here is short. Are you going to a place prepared by Jesus?

[29 : 42] Let us pray. Oh, Lord, our God, we give thanks for your word. We give thanks for being under it. We pray that we may have heard it in a way that it will do our souls good.

We pray if any are struggling with regard to faith, we pray that they will be led to put their trust in you. We ask, oh, Lord, to guide us and to keep us, each and every one, and we pray that our trust will be in you.

We pray for all who are in need today and those in hospital. We remember again as we were praying on Wednesday for Joanne Murray and Rachel, who were, Joanne in particular, who were so badly injured in the crash, and we pray also for Stephen Ferguson.

We pray, Lord, that your healing hand will be upon those who have suffered through the crashes. Bless them, we pray, and watch over us all and all who are in hospital, all who are in need.

We commit to your care, taking away our sin. In Jesus' name we ask it. Amen. We're going to conclude singing from Psalm 24 this time, and sing Psalms.

[30 : 49] Psalm 24 from Sing Psalms, and from verse 7 to the end. Junus and George's Edinburgh.

You engine gates, lift up your heads, your doors be opened wide. So may the King of Glory come forever to abide. This is on page 28. But who in this is this exalted King?

What glorious King is he? It is the Lord of strength and might, the Lord of victory. You engine gates, lift up your heads. Your doors be opened wide. So may the King of Glory come forever to abide.

But who is this exalted King? Who can this sovereign be? The Lord Almighty, he is King of glory, none but he. Psalm 24 from verse 7 to the end.

You ancient gates. You ancient gates, lift up pure heads, your doors be opened wide.

[31 : 59] So may the King of glory come forever to abide.

but who is this exalted King? What glorious King is he?

It is the Lord of strength and might, the Lord of victory.

it is the Lord of strength and might, the Lord of victory.

You ancient gates, lift up new heads, new doors, be open wide.

[33 : 12] So may the King of glory come forever to abide.

abide. But who is this exalted King?

Who can this sovereign be? The Lord Almighty, he is King of glory, none but ye.

The Lord Almighty, he is King of glory, none but ye.

Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah, amen, amen, amen.

[34 : 45] Now may the grace, mercy and peace of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit rest and abide upon each one of you now and forevermore. Amen.