

2. Christ Commissioned All Christians for Ministry

In our last topic, we see that Christ promised the disciples in the first few verses of the book of Acts that they would soon receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit. We also saw that the Holy Spirit gives us boldness to witness when we are yielding to Him. In our topic today, we are going to see that the Holy Spirit will give us His power to cross barriers as we share the Gospel. Then, we will learn what the disciples did as they waited for the coming of the Holy Spirit.

In Acts 1:8, we read the final words of Christ before He returned to heaven. That verse says, “But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” In this verse, we see that the Holy Spirit gives us power to be witnesses of Christ. The disciples were to be witnesses of Christ in a progressive order beginning at Jerusalem and proceeding out to the end of the earth.

That promise also helps us to understand a very key lesson for our own lives as we help our children develop a vision for the world. Each of the four geographic locations that are mentioned also help us to understand that the Lord will give us power to cross the barriers that might hinder us as we give witness to Christ. Jerusalem was the place where the disciples were. To be a witness of Christ, in the local area where we live, we have to cross the barrier of our own fear. In 2 Timothy 1:7, we read, “For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.” We want to help our children understand that the Holy Spirit gives us the spirit of power, of love and of a sound mind and He makes it possible for us to witness of Christ to others with boldness.

Judea was the area surrounding Jerusalem. To bear witness to Christ in our surrounding area, we have to cross the barrier of making contacts. When we are yielding to the Holy Spirit, He will lead us to make contacts with others. In Acts 8:29-30, we read, “Then the Spirit said to Philip, ‘Go near and overtake this chariot.’ So Philip ran to him, and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah, and said, ‘Do you understand what you are reading?’” We want our children to see that as we are yielding to the Holy Spirit He will give us a question or some other way to begin a conversation with new contacts.

Samaria was a nearby area that had a different culture, religion and ethnic group. The Holy Spirit will also show us how to cross the barriers of different cultures, religions and ethnic groups. Acts 11:19-20 says, “Now those who were scattered after the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to no one but the Jews only. But some of them were men from Cyprus and Cyrene, who, when they had come to Antioch, spoke to the Hellenists, preaching the Lord Jesus.” We show our children that the Holy Spirit led the early Christians and helped them cross the barrier of another culture, religion and ethnic group.

Finally, to share the Gospel to the end of the earth usually means sharing the Gospel with people of a different language. Acts 14:11 shows that the Holy Spirit helped Paul and Barnabas to overcome the language barrier. That verse says, “Now when the people saw what Paul had done, they raised their voices, saying in the Lycaonian language, ‘The gods have come down to us in the

likeness of men!” In addition to crossing the language barrier, we also see that Paul and Barnabas began with creation. Acts 14:17 says, “Nevertheless He did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good, gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.” With many people today, we will also need to begin with creation to lay the foundation for witnessing to what Christ has done to bring us back to God.

Acts 1:9-11 says, “Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, who also said, ‘Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This *same* Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven.’” Christ had shared His final words with the disciples. Once He had spoken His last words, Christ was taken up as the disciples watched. Then, a cloud came between Christ and the disciples and they saw Him no more.

As the disciples continued to look up in the sky, two men suddenly stood by them. These two men were dressed in white clothing. These two men were actually angels who looked like men. This is not the first-time angels had appeared as men. In Genesis 18:1-2, we read, “Then the Lord appeared to him by the terebinth trees of Mamre, as he was sitting in the tent door in the heat of the day. So he lifted his eyes and looked, and behold, three men were standing by him; and when he saw them, he ran from the tent door to meet them, and bowed himself to the ground.” This is an Old Testament appearance of Christ. The two men with Christ later departed for Sodom. Genesis 19:1 says, “Now the two angels came to Sodom in the evening, and Lot was sitting in the gate of Sodom. When Lot saw them, he rose to meet them, and he bowed himself with his face toward the ground.” Here, we see that these two men were actually angels.

The two angels asked the disciples a question. They asked why they were continuing to look toward heaven. The angels let the disciples know that Christ would come just as they had seen Him go. 1 Thessalonians 4:16 says, “For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.” Here, we see that Christ is going to descend from heaven just as He went to heaven while the disciples were watching.

Acts 1:12-14 says, “Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey. And when they had entered, they went up into the upper room where they were staying: Peter, James, John, and Andrew; Philip and Thomas; Bartholomew and Matthew; James *the son* of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot; and Judas *the son* of James. These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.” Here, we see that the place where Christ ascended to heaven was a mount called Olivet. Luke 22:39 says, “Coming out, He went to the Mount of Olives, as He was accustomed, and His disciples also followed Him.” Here, we see that the mount of Olives (Olivet) was a place where Christ and His disciples frequently went when they were in the city of Jerusalem so they had not expected Him to leave and return to heaven this time. This hill or mountain was only about one-half mile from Jerusalem.

As the disciples returned from the mount called Olivet, they returned to the upper room in Jerusalem where they were staying. This is probably the upper room where Christ ate the Last Supper and later appeared to the disciples after His resurrection. Mark 14:14-15 says, ““Wherever he goes in, say to the master of the house, ‘The Teacher says, ‘Where is the guest room in which I may eat the Passover with My disciples?’” Then he will show you a large upper room, furnished and prepared; there make ready for us.”” Here, we see that this room was the guest room of the owner of the house.

We also notice that this upper room was a large upper room. This is important, because Acts 1:15 says that there was a total of about one hundred and twenty disciples gathered in that upper room. That verse says, “And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples (altogether the number of names was about a hundred and twenty), and said.” Since there were a total of one hundred and twenty disciples that were praying together daily from the time that Christ returned to heaven until the Holy Spirit came, it was important that it was a large room.

The names of the eleven disciples that remained after the death of Judas are all named in these verses. In addition, we see that part of those who were gathered there were women including Mary, the mother of Jesus. Although the women are not named individually, it certainly would have included the women that came to the tomb the morning of the resurrection of Christ plus a good number of other women. Mark 16:1 says, “Now when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, that they might come and anoint Him.” This helps us to realize that the women were an important part of the church in its early development.

We also see that the 120 included the half-brothers of Christ. Their names are given in Matthew 13:55 where we read, ““Is this not the carpenter's son? Is not His mother called Mary? And His brothers James, Joses, Simon, and Judas?”” Just a little over a half year earlier, these brothers had not yet believed in Christ. John 7:5 says, “For even His brothers did not believe in Him.” As a result, this makes it clear that some of the 120 had not followed Christ from the beginning of His ministry. Instead, at least part of the 120 had become followers of Christ at a later time.

We see that all were of one accord. The word translated “one accord” means *with one mind, with one passion or in agreement*. Here, we see a real spirit of unity among these who would lead the church. We see that they spent their days waiting for the coming of the Holy Spirit in prayer and supplication. The word translated “prayer” speaks of prayer to God. “Supplication” speaks of prayer that is based on a need. The early church leaders realized their need of the Holy Spirit to guide them in the development of the church. In the same way, we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand our own great need to be guided by the Holy Spirit if we are going to serve the Lord effectively. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children understand our great need for moment by moment dependence on the Holy Spirit as we serve the Lord.