

A WALK TO THE CROSS (And Beyond)
THE LORD'S COMMISSION
His Promise and His Plan
Acts 1:1-11

The work of Jesus Christ is both *finished* and *unfinished*. His *work of providing redemption* is *finished*, and nothing may be added to it. His work of *ministry* and *proclamation* is *not finished*. That work, He only started. The rest of the New Testament describes the *continuation* of His work...*first by the apostles* and then by *the Church*. And we are still at this work today...and will be until He returns.

As we continue to *walk beyond the cross*...an *important transition takes place*. When Jesus was on earth, the work of *preaching* and *teaching* was done primarily by our Lord Himself as He *trained* His disciples. Now it's time to *pass that responsibility on to the Church*. So, with Christ's *work of redemption completed*...the Church's *work of missions* and *evangelism* began.

I. THE MANIFESTATION: (vs. 3)

To these He also presented Himself alive after His suffering, by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a period of forty days and speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God (vs. 3)...

By many convincing proofs...

- *An empty tomb that had been sealed and guarded by Roman guards.*
- *Multiple eye-witness testimonies that the tomb was empty* (Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, other women, Peter, and John).
- *Jewish religious leadership wanting to proclaim that the body had been stolen by His disciples.*

- *Proclaimed by an angel at the tomb that He was alive.*
- *Multiple appearances in many different locations to many different individuals* (Cleopas, Cleopas' companion on the road to Emmaus, James, the disciples).
- *Seen by over 500 brethren at one time.*
- *Showing His crucifixion wounds, He was physically touched and embraced on multiple occasions.*
- *People testified that they had eaten and drank with Him.*
- *He entered a room where the doors were locked.*

Appearing to them over a period of forty days...literally reads, *through forty days*. This affirms that He was not with them continuously, but that He appeared at different times.

“And that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep; then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles; and last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared to me also.”

~I Corinthians 15:5-8

These *manifestations* were the *assurance* that gave the disciples the *boldness* to preach the Gospel to the very people who crucified Christ. The *transformation* of the apostles from *fearful, cowering skeptics*...to *bold, powerful witnesses* is potent proof of the *resurrection*.

Speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God ...The Lord wanted them to know that the *crucifixion did not nullify the promised kingdom* that will be manifested in its fulness at His *second coming*.

II. THE MESSAGE: (vs. 4-5)

Gathering them together, He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised, “Which,” He said, “you heard of from Me” (vs. 4)...

“And behold, I am sending forth the promise of My Father upon you; but you are to stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.”

~Luke 24:49

All the *preparation* and *training* that *knowledge* and *experience* can bring are *useless without the power of the Holy Spirit...for what the Father had promised*. That *promise* had been *made repeatedly* during the Lord’s earthly ministry ([Luke 11:13](#); [Luke 24:49](#); [John 7:39](#); [John 14:16](#); [John 15:26](#); [John 16:7](#); [John 20:22](#)).

That *promise...the promise of the Holy Spirit...would be sent as God’s pledge just ten days later on the Day of Pentecost*. Inaugurated at *Pentecost*, the *Holy Spirit* would *permanently indwell* and *empower every believer* in a very *powerful* and *unique way*.

“While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who were listening to the message. All the circumcised believers who came with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also...Surely no one can refuse the water for these to be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we did, can he? And he ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ...”

~Acts 10:44-45, 47-48a

“For John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.” (vs. 5)...

This is reminiscent of what **John the Baptist** said in [John 1:33](#)...at the beginning of Jesus’ earthly ministry.

“I did not recognize Him, but He who sent me to baptize in water said to me, ‘He upon whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining upon Him, this is the One who baptizes in the Holy Spirit’.”

~ John 1:33

All believers since the church began are commanded to be *filled with the Spirit* ([Ephesians 5:18](#)) and to *walk in the Spirit* ([Galatians 5:25](#)). In the present Church age, *baptism* by Christ *through the agency of the Holy Spirit* takes place for all believers at *conversion*. At that point, the Spirit takes up *permanent residency* in the converted person’s soul, so there is *no such thing* as a Christian who doesn’t yet *have the Holy Spirit*.

“You are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.”

~Romans 8:9

“Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.”

~I Corinthians 6:19-20

The **passive voice** of the verb translated **be baptized** indicates the *baptism* by Jesus Christ *with the Holy Spirit* is *entirely a divine activity...it comes*, like *salvation*, *through grace, not human effort* ([Titus 3:5-6](#)). God sovereignly pours out the Holy Spirit on those He saves.

III. THE MYSTERY: (vs. 6-7)

So when they had come together, they were asking Him, saying, “Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?” (vs. 6)...

Often Jesus had taught the disciples prophetically about the future (**Matthew 13:40-50**; **Luke 12:36-40**). Now with the resurrected Messiah speaking to them, they were asking if *the earthly form of the kingdom* would be *established immediately* since they knew that **Ezekiel 36** and **Joel 2** connected the coming kingdom with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit that Jesus had just promised.

He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority” (vs. 7)...

Scripture teaches many things about the *earthly reign* of Jesus Christ in His kingdom...but *not the precise time* of its establishment.

Times...Gk. *chronous*, describes a *duration of time* or *periods of time, seasons...not a specific date*.

By His own authority...God...and God alone *has determined all the aspects* of the future and the kingdom.

IV. THE MISSION: (vs. 8)

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you (vs. 8a)...

Power...Gk. *dunamis*, we get the word *dynamite* from it. All believers have in them *spiritual dynamite* for use in their *worship*, exercising of their *spiritual gifts, service, fellowship*, and *witness*.

“That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts

through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God. Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen.”

~Ephesians 3:16-21

And you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth (vs. 8b)...

Rather than *engage in speculation* over the time for the *coming kingdom*, the apostles were to *focus on the work* at hand.

You shall be My witnesses...an **imperative** in the **future tense**...*an immediate and continuous command*.

Witnesses...*those who see something and tell others about it*.

This is what **John** wrote and *his* and the *other apostles witness*.

“What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life—and the life was manifested, and we have seen and testify and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us—what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.”

~I John 1:1-3

A **witness** for Jesus Christ is simply *someone who tells the truth about Him*. This is the very purpose for which the *empowering of the Holy Spirit* came. The early church was so effective that they **upset the world** (**Acts 17:6**).

This is the same *commission* that has been given to every believer...**The Great Commission**.

“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

~Matthew 28:19-20

Witnesses...Gk. *martures*, from which we get the word *martyr*. Many Christians have sealed their **witness** to Christ with *their blood* through the centuries.

That’s why we are instructed to...

“Sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence; and keep a good conscience so that in the thing in which you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ will be put to shame. For it is better, if God should will it so, that you suffer for doing what is right rather than for doing what is wrong. For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit.”

~I Peter 3:15-18

Verse 8 provides the *general outline* for the **book of Acts**. It chronicles the *irresistible march of Christianity* from **Jerusalem**, into **Samaria**, and then through the **Roman** world. This beginning dramatically altered the course of

history. And the spread of the *gospel message* has continued past **Acts** to reach all the earth.

V. THE MAJESTY: (vs. 9-11)

The Lord Jesus Christ was about to depart for heaven to return to His former glory (**John 17:1-6**).

And after He had said these things, He was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud received Him out of their sight (vs. 9)...

Jesus, *in His glorious resurrection body*, left this world for the realm of heaven to *take His place on the throne at God’s right hand*.

And as they were gazing intently into the sky while He was going, behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them (vs. 10)...

Back on the **Mount of Olives**, *two angels* confirmed *the promise of Christ’s return* as true.

They also said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven.” (vs. 11)...

They confirmed the promise of **Zechariah 14:4**...that the Messiah will return to the **Mount of Olives**. The truth that Christ will return provides a *powerful motive* to serve Him. This is the only *unfulfilled prophecy* remaining in Scripture.

LESSONS WE CAN LEARN:

- With Christ’s work of **REDEMPTION** completed...the Church’s work of **MISSIONS** and **EVANGELISM** began.

- All the preparation and training that knowledge and experience can bring are **USELESS** without the **POWER** of the Holy Spirit.
- No one knows when Jesus will come, but everyone **MUST LIVE** in anticipation that it could be at any moment.