

JESUS' ASCENSION FROM THE MOUNT OF OLIVES

BIBLE TEXT : Acts 1:1-26

LESSON 253 Senior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11).

BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

Acts 1:1-26

¹ The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach,

² Until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen:

³ To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God:

⁴ And, being assembled together with *them*, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, *saith he*, ye have heard of me.

⁵ For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.

⁶ When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?

⁷ And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power.

⁸ But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

⁹ And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was

BIBLE REFERENCES:

I Jesus' Last Commands to the Disciples

1. The Gospel of St. Luke tells of Jesus' teachings and deeds until His ascension, Acts 1:1, 2;

Luke 1:3

³ It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus,

Mark 16:19

¹⁹ So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God.

2. Jesus showed Himself alive for 40 days, talking with the disciples concerning the Kingdom of God, Acts 1:3;

Mark 16:14

¹⁴ Afterward he appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen.

Luke 24:36

³⁶ And as they thus spake, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace *be* unto you.

John 20:19

¹⁹ Then the same day at evening, being the first *day* of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace *be* unto you.

3. He commanded the disciples to wait for the promise of the Father, Acts 1:4, 5;

John 14:16

¹⁶ And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever;

4. The disciples asked about the kingdom of Israel, Acts 1:6;

Matthew 24:3

³ And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what *shall be* the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?

5. The disciples were told that the Father alone had the information they wanted, Acts 1:7;

1 Thessalonians 5:1

¹ But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you.

Mark 13:32

³² But of that day and *that* hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father.

6. Power would be given and the disciples would be witnesses for Christ, Acts 1:8;

Acts 2:1-4

¹ And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.

² And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting.

³ And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them.

⁴ And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight.

¹⁰ And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel;

¹¹ Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.

¹² Then returned they unto Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a sabbath day's journey.

¹³ And when they were come in, they went up into an upper room, where abode both Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, Philip, and Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew, James *the son* of Alphaeus, and Simon Zelotes, and Judas *the brother* of James.

¹⁴ These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren.

¹⁵ And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples, and said, (the number of names together were about an hundred and twenty,)

¹⁶ Men *and* brethren, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas, which was guide to them that took Jesus.

¹⁷ For he was numbered with us, and had obtained part of this ministry.

¹⁸ Now this man purchased a field with the reward of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out.

¹⁹ And it was known unto all the dwellers at Jerusalem; insomuch

Luke 24:48

⁴⁸ And ye are witnesses of these things.

John 15:26-27

²⁶ But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, *even* the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me:

²⁷ And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning.

II The Ascension of Jesus

1. Jesus was taken up into Heaven, Acts 1:9

2. Two angels gave the promise of Christ's return, Acts 1:10, 11;

Daniel 7:13

¹³ I saw in the night visions, and, behold, *one* like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him.

Matthew 24:30

³⁰ And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

Mark 13:26

²⁶ And then shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds with great power and glory.

Luke 21:27

²⁷ And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.

John 14:3

³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, *there* ye may be also.

1 Thessalonians 1:10

¹⁰ And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, *even* Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.

1 Thessalonians 4:16

¹⁶ For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:

III Choosing an Apostle

1. After returning from Mount Olivet the disciples continued in prayer and supplication, Acts 1:12-14

2. Matthias was chosen to take Judas' place, Acts 1:15-26;

Psalms 69:25

²⁵ Let their habitation be desolate; *and* let none dwell in their tents.

Psalms 109:8

⁸ Let his days be few; *and* let another take his office.

NOTES:

Luke, in his Gospel, gave us a detailed account of the miracles and teachings of Jesus from His birth to His ascension. Now, in the Acts of the Apostles, Luke takes up the ascension of Jesus and the work of the Apostles.

For forty days after the resurrection, Jesus had met with His disciples, had talked with them, and had eaten with them. He proved Himself to be alive after His cruel death on the cross and subsequent entombment. By His post-resurrection acts and words Jesus banished all doubts from the minds of the disciples as to His existence as their glorified, living, resurrected Lord and Savior.

The resurrection from the dead is the grand central theme of the Gospel. So indelibly did Christ write it on the hearts of the

as that field is called in their proper tongue, Aceldama, that is to say, The field of blood.

²⁰ For it is written in the book of Psalms, Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein: and his bishoprick let another take.

²¹ Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us,

²² Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection.

²³ And they appointed two, Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias.

²⁴ And they prayed, and said, Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all *men*, shew whether of these two thou hast chosen,

²⁵ That he may take part of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place.

²⁶ And they gave forth their lots; and the lot fell upon Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.

disciples, through His many appearances to them, that all doubts were swept from their hearts and minds. The facts were before them. Their own eyes had beheld Him. They saw the prints of the nails in His hands, in His feet, and the mark of the spear in His side. He had conversed with them. They saw that He was the same Jesus who had fed the multitudes, raised the dead, cleansed the lepers, and opened the eyes of the blind. Now He was alive forevermore, the same wonder-working Jesus.

The Kingdom Question

After the resurrection the disciples seemed to grasp more readily the real truth of the Gospel. There still remained in their minds the thought of an earthly kingdom: of Israel's being restored to a place as an independent nation, and the possibility of their occupying places of responsibility in that kingdom.

The disciples ventured the question, "Wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" But Jesus answered, "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power." He was pointing them to the real Kingdom, directing their minds from the earthly to the heavenly, from the kingdoms of this world to the Kingdom of Heaven.

Additional Preparation for Service

The Lord's last command to the disciples was for them to tarry in Jerusalem and wait for the promise of the Father which was to come upon them. Jesus explained that He was going away, and the Comforter would come. He told them that they would be baptized with the Holy Ghost and fire not many days hence. He was leaving them, but they would have another Comforter — One who would abide with them forever. If it was necessary for the disciples, in that important day, to tarry until they received the endowment of power promised by the Father, it certainly is necessary that we also tarry and seek until we receive the same power in our lives.

Some contend that this outpouring of the Holy Spirit was only for the early church. But the Scripture tells us: "The promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." Peter, when preaching his sermon on the Day of Pentecost, quoted Joel's statement that the Lord had said He would pour out His Spirit upon all flesh (**Joel 2:28** ²⁸ And it shall come to pass afterward, *that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions*:). Have you received the Comforter since you believed?

Witnesses for Christ

"Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." Jesus confined His ministry mostly to the Jews, that the divine purpose concerning them might be fulfilled. But the Jews, as a nation, did not receive either Him or His message. He gave those who did receive Him a commission to go to all the world that everyone — both Jew and Gentile — might hear the glad Story.

When the seventy were sent out, Jesus said they were not to go in the way of the Gentiles, nor were they to enter into any city of the Samaritans. This was that the Israelites might have their opportunity to accept the Gospel and fulfil the God-ordained place to which they had been called. But now the disciples saw

that their commission was enlarged. They were now to go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature.

The disciples did go to all the known world. They were faithful to their responsibility. Tradition tells us that most of them died as martyrs in lands far-distant from Jerusalem. What a testimony that gives us of the fervent desire and determination to completely fulfil Jesus' command! How much of a missionary spirit have you?

The Ascension

After Jesus had given His commandment and promise to the disciples that they should tarry in Jerusalem for the promise of the Father which would come to them, He lifted up His hands and blessed them. We are not told the words of that final benediction, but it must have been very sacred to them. This was the final Amen to all He had taught and said. As He blessed them, His feet began to leave the earth and He began to ascend toward Heaven; and the disciples saw Him for the last time during their lives on earth.

The disciples saw Jesus go. They continued looking at Him until a cloud received Him out of their sight. Jesus did not vanish from their midst as He had done at the end of His other appearances following the resurrection. This time He was going to Heaven, not just vanishing to make a future appearance to them. It was necessary as a witness to all succeeding generations that they see Him go. Jesus' personal work on earth for the present was finished. He was leaving the disciples to carry on that work. They watched Him as far as their eyes could see Him — and then they realized that their Master was gone.

But immediately another strange and miraculous thing happened. Two angels stood by them and spoke to them, saying, "This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." This same Jesus! The One they had communed with, eaten with, and drunk with, would come back to earth again!

The sacred feet of our Savior had trod the brow of the Mount of Olives for the last time until that glorious day comes, of which the Prophet Zechariah has told us, when those same glorified feet will again touch that mountain of sacred memory, and it will be split in two, half of it removing toward the north and half of it toward the south. (**Zechariah 14:3-11** ³ Then shall the LORD go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle. ⁴ And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, *and there shall be* a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south. ⁵ And ye shall flee *to* the valley of the mountains; for the valley of the mountains shall reach unto Azal: yea, ye shall flee, like as ye fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah: and the LORD my God shall come, *and* all the saints with thee. ⁶ And it shall come to pass in that day, *that* the light shall not be clear, *nor* dark: ⁷ But it shall be one day which shall be known to the LORD, not day, nor night: but it shall come to pass, *that* at evening time it shall be light. ⁸ And it shall be in that day, *that* living waters shall go out from Jerusalem; half of them toward the former sea, and half of them toward the hinder sea: in summer and in winter shall it be. ⁹ And the LORD shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one LORD, and his name one. ¹⁰ All the land shall be turned as a plain from Geba to Rimmon south of Jerusalem: and it shall be lifted up, and inhabited in her place, from Benjamin's gate unto the place of the first gate, unto the corner gate, and *from* the tower of Hananeel unto the king's winepresses. ¹¹ And *men* shall

dwell in it, and there shall be no more utter destruction; but Jerusalem shall be safely inhabited)

"From Mount Olivet our Savior went to Heaven,
In a cloud of glory entered in the sky; But an
angel spoke these words of glorious comfort, 'In
like manner He'll be coming, bye and bye.'"

What a glorious hope! What a blessed hope! This is the hope that burns brightly in the heart of every true Christian today and is the source of comfort in that Christian's heart (**1 Thessalonians 4:18** ¹⁸ Wherefore comfort one another with these words).

Strange Events

What strange and miraculous things the disciples of this lowly Nazarene had witnessed the past days! They had seen their Lord crucified. Their hands had placed His body in the tomb. On the third day they were startled to find an empty tomb. And again they were affrighted by His sudden appearance in their midst while the door was shut. Once Jesus stood on the seashore in the early morning after they had fished all night and caught nothing, calling to them to cast their net on the right side of the ship and find fish.

Now another strange sight had just been seen. The disciples had been with Jesus on the Mount of Olives. He had talked with them about things concerning the Kingdom and also about the Holy Ghost who would come and give them power and lead them into all truth. Suddenly He had lifted His hands and blessed them, and then ascended into Heaven. They had watched Him ascend until a cloud had received Him out of their sight, and then had heard the message of the two angels whom they saw standing by. Spurred on by the brightly kindled hope they returned to Jerusalem to wait for the promised power.

Choosing Judas' Successor

The disciples went into an upper room in Jerusalem. It may have been the very place where they had recently eaten the Last Supper and where Jesus had washed their feet. The eleven Apostles, with Mary the- mother of Jesus, and His brethren, and others — a total of 120 who had loved and followed Jesus — were there. Throughout the next ten days they continued in prayer and supplication.

Peter felt that someone should be chosen to take the place of Judas, who by transgression had fallen. Peter took his authority from the words of the prophets concerning Judas. Acting upon their best judgment at the time, the disciples appointed two candidates, Barsabas and Matthias; and after praying that the Lord would direct them in their choice so His will would be carried out, they cast lots. The lot fell upon Matthias.

The place that Judas had filled was empty and the disciples would naturally feel that it should be filled. Judas had carried the moneybag for the group, and that part of Judas' former position must necessarily be assumed by someone in order for the temporal needs of the group to be provided. But we can see the exact will of God as it was eventually carried out in the divine selection of Paul for the position of Apostle to fill the vacancy. That Paul became the twelfth Apostle is beyond doubt or dispute, for the Holy Spirit has given us many statements to that effect in the Epistles.

How wonderful it would be if the people of our nation would pray as did the Eleven and ask God to direct in the choice of national and state officials and statesmen! No combined

powers of the world could then overthrow us, for we would be following the will of God. But we, as individuals, need to take notice that we pray and lean upon the Lord for guidance in the little details of our everyday life. If we do He will direct our paths, for "the steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD" (Psalm 37:23).

QUESTIONS

- 1 Where were Jesus and the disciples assembled for this last event?
- 2 What was the topic of the conversation at this time?
- 3 What question did the disciples ask? and what was the answer?
- 4 Describe Jesus' last blessing and His ascension.
- 5 Memorize the angel's message.
- 6 Where was the Gospel to be preached after the ascension?
- 7 Who was chosen at this time to be an Apostle in Judas' place?
- 8 What was God's eventual choice for that vacancy?