

What To Do When God Doesn't Do Acts 1:9-26

This Jesus whom we see worshipped in the book of Revelation, as the Lamb who is worthy *“to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing”* ([Rev. 5:12](#)) is the same Jesus in the book of Matthew who says *“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me. 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 follow all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”* ([Matt. 28:18-20](#)) High and “lo” He is with us through the end of time and beyond. Last week we transitioned from the books of the gospel into the book of Acts, where Luke records the works of this newly established group of people that would be known as the “church.” What great timing for us as One Church to be looking at and learning from the early, first church.

I like what Pastor Dave said last week about how Matthew recorded that as the disciples gathered around Jesus in Galilee, some doubted- and by “doubted” Pastor Dave mentioned that perhaps they were doubting themselves and the role that Jesus was entrusting them with. Jesus definitely addressed their doubt and fear by immediately putting their focus back on Him, saying that all authority was His; and in his command calling for them to be His representatives, He was emphasizing that He would be with them- they wouldn't be alone or have to work in their own efforts. They, (we) would have adequate support from Jesus as we attempt to share with and teach others about Jesus' teaching.

I have been studying and attempting to connect Jesus' great commission command in the book of Matthew (Go and make disciples of all nations) to His great commission command in the book of Acts (You shall be My witnesses in Jerusalem, Samaria, and the remotest part of the earth). I think in the past I had considered both commands being given by Jesus around the same time, and Luke and

Matthew just give different parts of the conversation. Before either Pastor Dave or I had looked too much into this, we were talking and I asked, “Are both passages describing the same event?” And Pastor Dave responded “Well, I think Jesus just ascended back into heaven one time, right?” All joking aside, if we look closer, the setting of Matthew is in Galilee ([Matt. 28:16](#)) and then when we get to the book of Acts, Jesus’ ascension into Heaven is set on the Mount of Olives, just outside the walls of Jerusalem. ([Acts 1:12](#))

Now maybe you’re like “It doesn’t bother me one way or the other, who cares if Jesus left His disciples from a mountain in Galilee or a mountain in Jerusalem,” but for me I am wired to where I need what I am reading to make sense, and if there appears to be a contradiction in the Bible, I know there has to be logical reason behind it appearing that way. When that happens there must be something I am not seeing correctly, and I want to find out what it is. For those of you who might feel like that too, here’s what I think makes sense of these two passages. Jesus was crucified in Jerusalem, during the Feast of Passover, and when He arose the disciples were still there in Jerusalem, and He appeared to them a few times there, but then instructed them to meet Him in Galilee. So, they went up to Galilee, and that’s where we see in the book of John Jesus meet them on the lake’s shore, where He served them breakfast and encouraged Peter’s love for Him to be shown through caring for His sheep. So why did they end up back down in Jerusalem at the beginning of the book of Acts? Well, the book of Acts tells us in [chapter 1 verse 3](#) that Jesus appeared several times to His followers over the course of 40 days. Now perhaps they immediately heeded Jesus’ command in the book of Matthew and left the small villages on the shores of Galilee to go where the biggest concentration of people would be- Jerusalem. But, consider also that 7 weeks after Passover, was the Jewish Festival of Weeks- a celebration of the wheat harvest and a

time of nation-wide remembering of God's provision for them as a people. 7 weeks is 49 days after Passover, and the 40 days mentioned in the book of Acts would be in range for when people from all over Israel (including the disciples) would again be returning from their home towns and villages back into Jerusalem.

And so, the disciples are there, just a short walk from Jerusalem's walls, on the Mount of Olives which overlooks the city. And it probably seemed like something heavy was about to happen, in [verse 6](#) they asked Him *"Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?"* They were hoping their political situation would at that time be fixed. They had hoped Jesus would fulfil the prophecies foretelling His forever rule of justice- in other words they were hoping Jesus would exercise His authority as King and Judge, and kick out the Roman occupation. But there is another, future day coming in which Jesus will exercise His authority as King and Judge. As you and I wait for that day, it is so easy for us to ask questions like this, *"Lord, is it at this time You... will make life better for us?"* We all are waiting for that *better* life: better finances, better house, car, job, improvement in our relationships, happiness, health. And as we get antsy for these better things- as we pray for them- I wonder if Jesus wants to answer us in a similar manner as He did His followers here in [Acts 1:7-8](#): *"It's not for you to know God's timing, he's sovereign and in control of those things, but focus rather on these two things: being filled with the Holy Spirit and being a witness here in your hometown, in your greater vicinity, and even beyond."* (my paraphrase) We need to take our focus off of the things we want God to hurry up and do, and place our focus onto the things God is wanting *us* to hurry up and do." You might want to write that down, that might be really helpful the next time you are feeling impatient. Let's look now at [verses 9-11](#)...

Wow. The answer to the question about ushering in the full heavenly Kingdom was answered not just with a statement putting the responsibility of action onto His followers; Jesus also answered that question by immediately ascending into heaven- basically enforcing His words with a physical act that showed there was work now for *them* to do on Earth before the day of His full Kingdom installation. And the two men in white, assumedly angels, reinforced that as well: *“Don’t just stand around- get to moving- He’ll come back in the same manner.”* (again, my paraphrase) So, what did they do? Verse 12... [**\(Verses 12-14\)**](#)

So, after Jesus ascended into Heaven, they went back to the house where they were temporarily staying at in Jerusalem, and were gathered together with other followers of Jesus in an upper room. Perhaps this is the same upper room in which the disciples ate the last supper with Jesus before His death, but not necessarily so. Most of the houses in Jerusalem during this time had flat roofs with fencing on the edge, that provided a large open space for meetings and gatherings that often took place in the cool of evening after the day’s work- and these spaces were called “upper rooms.” This passage tells us in the following verse ([**verse 15**](#)) there were about 120 persons gathered on this rooftop, and that leads us to believe this particular home seems to be a very large one, probably a multi-family unit owned by a fairly wealthy family. You can imagine them all gathered under the setting sun, maybe there’s kids running around, there’s emotion in the air as everyone is attempting to process the past month and a half of events: Jesus declared King, then he’s killed, then He raised Himself back to life, He’s appeared and re-appeared in closed rooms, it’s assumed that *now* He’ll be the King they expected, but instead He says wait in Jerusalem for His Holy Spirit to come down (and what does that really mean anyway?), and they are to be His witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea/Samaria, and to the furthest parts

of the earth, and then He flies away like Superman. Talk about an emotional rollercoaster. So, there's men and women talking, praying together and for each other, supporting each other, sharing meals together- as they all process through everything. This is the setting, and all of a sudden someone clears their throat "ahheem" ... verse 15. **(Verse 15-22)**

This is the new Peter. He's starting to get it. Maybe for the first time in his life he is beginning to see the bigger picture, seeing that God is sovereign and in control, and that God has a plan He is working, and not even those who would appear to be enemies can stop it. This guy Judas who betrayed Jesus- who seemingly caused Jesus' death- wasn't an unexpected blip on the radar, he wasn't a glitch in the matrix, he wasn't a surprise variable thrown into the equation, no- God saw it coming from a long time beforehand, and everything was still working out according to His plan, for the benefit of His Kingdom and His people. And Peter is starting to see it. In **verse 20** he recalls to them the verses in the book of Psalms that, at the time were descriptive of King David's experience, yet also were foretelling of the man who would betray the Messiah. The old Peter, in response to Jesus speaking of His death, was like *"God forbid it, Lord! This shall never happen to You!"* **(Matt. 16:22)** And here's the new Peter, whose perspective has been shifted, who has found new understanding and new life perspective from His time reading scripture. He's now like "Oh, I get it. God has been working His plan from the beginning. It's all good." The question is no longer "Why did all this happen," or "Why won't God do what we expected Him to do?" or "When will God do what we wish He would do?"- the question is "What are we going to do *now* in moving forward?" And Peter's suggestion, is that they would assign to full time dedicated ministry, one more eye witness who knew and experienced Jesus first

hand, from the start of His ministry when John baptized Him, all the way up to when He ascended up into Heaven. [Verse 23-26...](#)

According to the criteria of needing to have known and been with Jesus over the span of His 3-ish years of ministry, they nominated Joseph (who had two other nicknames) and Matthias. And they prayed. I love this short, one sentence prayer, basically “God, You know all things, so show us the decision to make.” And they didn’t debate over it, have a vote over it, go home and “sleep on it.” And we don’t know exactly how they “drew lots” but it was a similar concept to our modern-day coin toss. “Heads Joseph, tails Matthias. God- may you guide the coin to land how You want it to land.” And the denarius landed on tails. Matthias was now set apart and recognized by the church for the specific work of being sent out as an apostle to make Jesus known.

All those gathered together were considered *disciples* of Jesus, and they would *all* be His *witnesses*, but some would be His witnesses as they continued working their “secular” job, some would be His witnesses as they continued their role in taking care of their family, but there were others dedicated to the specific work of being an apostle- an eyewitness of Jesus sent out on mission to teach, preach, and tell others about Him. The word apostle is most likely related to our word “postal” with the same Greek root meaning of being sent out- as in letters sent out to other places, or pastors/missionaries sent out to other places. We each, as followers of Jesus, are called to be His witnesses. We each are to be His disciples. But there are some that He draws out from traditional places of employment, into specialized areas of ministry. And while full time ministry is a heavy path to be led on, please don’t consider your journey with the Lord any “less than” than those whom He has called to full time ministry. Your obedience, your witness for Jesus in the place He has placed you

is just as precious in His sight as the missionary called to the other side of the world. Somehow over many years, there has been this perspective cultivated that if you are really serious about following Jesus, then you will become a pastor or missionary. This just simply isn't true. Jesus wants to use *you* right where you are. He desires for people to seriously follow Him- from all walks of life, in all different areas of life. Having personally, myself, worked in the music industry, in the white-collar corporate industry, the blue-collar manual labor industry, overseas mission field, and pastoral ministry; I have sensed God's call to be His representative in each area and I believe He is calling *each* of us to walk with a missional, ministerial focus no matter where He leads us. I'll never forget what my wife Nikki felt the Lord saying to her one day as she considered this concept. She sensed His conviction saying "Nikki, your obedience is just as important whether I tell you to move overseas to minister in a refugee camp, or if I tell you to take soup to your neighbor." We each are called to be His representatives and witnesses. We just have been given different areas in which to do that in. Ok, back to the passage...

Now, maybe Peter and this first church should have waited, for the special filling of the Holy Spirit they were all anticipating, before making any ministry decisions. Maybe specifically nominating one other person was unnecessary, maybe God wanted to use Paul as this "12th Apostle." The Bible doesn't give any guidance to if this is what they should have done or not. But I have a feeling that if they were functioning with one mind and devoting themselves together in prayer, as [verse 14](#) states, that surely God wouldn't have let them somehow screw it up and make a wrong decision. God was surely moving amongst them and leading them, and leading even Peter in His speech here. But either way, the whole point is that they took what Jesus said seriously, and were able to view this hurtful betrayal by Judas through the lens of scripture and through the lens of

knowing God is in control. They heeded Jesus' instructions and stopped worrying about when God was going to do this or that. They took initiative and made a decision to move in a way that would give momentum to redeeming the past, and at the same time give momentum to building the future Kingdom. God was going to use them to spread the good news of His salvation no matter what curves or twists in the road were ahead- if they would continue to view life through the lens of His truth.

Now, I want us to walk through some practical truths that we can discern from this passage. Whenever we are tempted to ask all the "when" questions, all the "Are you going to do this thing *now* Lord?" questions, may we be reminded of Jesus' words in [verses 7 and 8](#). May we recognize He is in control, and may we wait for His Spirit to work in us, and allow His spirit to use us in speaking His truth to those around us.

Secondly, I can't emphasize enough the importance of followers of Jesus meeting together with "*one mind*" and "*continually devoting themselves to prayer*" as [verse 14](#) tells us. How do all of us from different experiences and backgrounds meet together with one mind? We all come with the mind that recognizes Jesus as Lord- Jesus as the way, the truth, and the life. We humbly want Him to teach us and for Him be honored above all else, knowing that one day we will share in His greatness. We devote ourselves to prayer- praying for each other throughout the week, praying with others on the phone, before meals, along with the Pastor on Sunday morning as he leads in prayer, with others gathered on Wednesday nights for prayer. Whether gathered formally on Sundays or Wednesdays or through other church activities during the week, or gathered together informally over meals, in homes, at the workplace, on the phone or

online- Jesus intends to work and move through, shape and mold, encourage and equip His followers as they meet together.

And a huge way in which we encourage and equip ourselves, and encourage/equip one another is through applying scripture to our current situations and life. Peter found scripture that spoke to what was weighing on his heart. He studied the scriptures to gain insight for his present situation. He found comfort in seeing in scripture that God knew beforehand what Judas would do, that God was going to judge Judas accordingly, and that scripture foretold of another who would take Judas' place. Now scripture might not speak to you as specifically and detailed as it did concerning Judas, but there is an enormous amount of wisdom, and direct transferrable, truth-application-life-lessons to be gained from the Bible that speak on some level to any situation we have ever or will ever face here on earth. But you will probably need more than just our Sunday morning time in God's word, to be most fulfilled and equipped for the mission Jesus has for you in this world. I encourage you to seek Him in His word throughout the week. He wants to speak to you. He wants to use you. He wants you to live with purpose and mission. And I'm sure there are questions we could be asking, concerning when is God going to do this, or that. But the question right now for you and I in our relationship with Jesus is "What are we going to do *now* in moving forward?"