

# The Importance of the Ascension

by **The Reverend Sir Knight Dr. J. B. Morris**

The importance of Jesus' ascension allowed his followers to become independent and account for themselves. Jesus laid the path for the disciples to follow; now he commands the disciples to go forth to teach, preach, and baptize in the name of the Lord. So Jesus, with his ascension into heaven, allowed the disciples to be on their own, but the Holy Spirit would be available.

Ascension is the passing of Christ from earth to heaven after the resurrection as revealed in Acts 1:9. After the resurrection, Jesus spent forty days instructing his apostles. Jesus promised that he would ascend into heaven as indicated in Acts 1:3-14. Jesus said, "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses . . . to the ends of the earth" (v. 8). As Jesus prepared to leave them, Jesus offered them the "3P's." The three things they would need were; a promise, a purpose, and a preparation. We have those same things in our lives today.

Jesus gave us a promise of the power of the Holy Spirit, as indicated in Acts 1:8. We can expect to receive power when the promised Holy Spirit arrives. The presence will bring comfort (Acts 9:31) to the believers but also power. Today, all across the land, disenfranchised people are clamoring for power. Just look at the news. Jesus' last words to his followers were that they would get power. You can count on it. You will receive the power if you will only allow yourself to accept the Holy Spirit. The problem with some people is that they do not want to give up their old ways of sin and turn their lives over to the Lord.

We have a purpose in being witnesses for the Lord. When the time comes, it will be power with a specific purpose. When the power of the Holy Spirit arrives, the people will be given power to fulfill God's plans on the earth. "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you . . . to be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (v.8). The power of the Holy Spirit is for the purpose of witnessing to others not restoring the kingdom to Israel. Witnessing begins where you are now, but from there it reaches out to the world. In the case of the disciples, they were in Jerusalem, so they would be reaching to Judea, Samaria, and the ends of the earth. As the disciples heard these last words from the lips of Jesus, He ascended into heaven. As they "were watching" and "were gazing up toward heaven," two angels appeared and said, "Don't just stand there. Do something." Actually, they said, "Why do you stand looking up toward heaven?" (v.11) Too often the people have not been told what to do, and they have settled for watching and gazing instead of trusting and obeying. These disciples, however, had to be told what to do only once. They knew what they should do next, and they did it.

Jesus offered us the time and means of preparation. "All these were constantly devoting themselves to prayer" (v.14). The Acts of the Apostles begins with prayer. When told not to just stand there but to do something, the apostles obeyed. They prayed. The apostles' response to instruction, to the promise of the Holy Spirit, to reproof, and to exhortation was immediate. They talked to God in prayer. We should be ready for his sudden return (1 Thessalonians 5:2), not by "standing around looking into the sky," but by working hard to share the gospel so that others will be able to share in God's great blessings of salvation.

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