

## Understanding Jesus' Resurrection through the Lens of the Book of Acts (#6)

By Bob Young

### Resurrection to Ascension, 40 Days of Getting Ready to Be Sent Forth with the Story

Luke, in Acts 1, writes about Jesus' presence with his disciples for 40 days after his resurrection, "speaking to them about the kingdom of God." Jesus had been preaching about the kingdom during his entire ministry (Mark. 1:14-15). The kingdom was a frequent subject, in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5-7), and in the parables of Jesus (Matt. 13). In Matthew 18, Jesus again teaches about principles of the kingdom.

Wouldn't you like to have been present during the 40 days after the resurrection? Surely Jesus would have been speaking from a different perspective. Jesus was preparing his disciples for his departure. He was teaching and giving them instructions. The Great Commission (Matt. 28:18-20, Luke 24:46-48, and see Acts 1:8) was most likely given during the 40 days. We probably have abbreviated versions of what Jesus said and explained.

Jesus' teachings were challenging to his followers. Luke mentions that some followers associated the kingdom Jesus was describing with Jewish glory in a restored Jewish kingdom. Jesus replied by telling them about a "Holy Spirit-driven" kingdom. The kingdom would be characterized by the presence of the Holy Spirit, giving the church discernment, empowering and emboldening the church, sealing God's promise. In the same breath, Jesus told them that the Holy Spirit would enable their testimony (witness) "to the ends of the earth."

The modern church that so easily speaks of "being led by the Holy Spirit" seems to have forgotten that Jesus described a primary purpose of the coming of the Holy Spirit as enabling the gospel message. A person led by the Holy Spirit will, of course, make good decisions. But Jesus said the leading of the Holy Spirit would empower evangelism. A person filled with the Holy Spirit will be boldly telling the story of Jesus to others (Acts 4:31).

Paul later writes that a person led by the Holy Spirit rejects physical pleasures (deeds of the body) and does not fulfill the desires of the flesh (Gal. 5:16; Rom. 8:12-13), empowered by the Holy Spirit. But the first promise of the Holy Spirit's coming, from Jesus' lips, highlights God's eternal purpose to make disciples. Jesus told his disciples that their primary task was preaching the gospel to the world, preaching repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

Have you heard the phrase, "back to basics?" To get back to Holy Spirit basics, we have to go back to the forty days between Jesus' resurrection and ascension, when the Spirit was promised and the disciples waited. Jesus said that as the Father had sent him, he was sending his followers (John 20:21). The verb "to send" is where we get our word for "mission." The Holy Spirit was given to exhort us forward to complete Jesus' mission. (While the word *parakaleo*, is often translated as "comfort," a variety of meanings are possible: to beseech, implore, urge, exhort, and encourage.) The Holy Spirit is much more than a Comforter. The Holy Spirit exhorts us, empowers our testimony (Acts 1:8), increases our boldness (Acts 4:31), and explains why disciples make more disciples everywhere they go (Matt. 28:19-20).

Christ himself associated the coming of the Holy Spirit with evangelism. The Great Commission—some of Jesus' final words. Are you listening? Can you read between the lines? "No disciple-making, no Holy Spirit." "No evangelism—because the Holy Spirit is being quenched, restrained, and grieved." Paul describes Scripture as "the sword of the Spirit." Does it not make sense that a person in whom the Holy Spirit lives would be capable in using and living out the Scriptures – wielding the sword of the Spirit effectively?

During 40 days, the resurrected Jesus taught his followers about the kingdom, the gospel, and the need to share the gospel and make disciples – all to be made possible by the coming of the promised Holy Spirit. How easily we gloss over Jesus' own words! If preaching the gospel was a priority for Jesus, should it not also be our priority? We are sent "on mission" to preach the gospel and make disciples. Biblical mission work preaches the gospel and makes disciples. Does soul-salvation have first place in your life and the life of your church? Is the full power of the Holy Spirit being applied? May God bless us with pliable hearts to hear afresh the last teachings of Jesus and go forth doing what he has sent us to do. The Jesus Story led the early church to share the story! Can it happen today?