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THE PRE-ASCENSION BRIEFING

A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF THE ACTS
NUMBER 3
ACTS 1:5-8

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At most there were 120 people who saw the Lord Jesus Christ launched into space. Technically, there has been only one successful astronaut. Jesus had a human resurrection body that could travel in space. We now have several nations on the globe who say they have individuals who can travel in space. But the space is very limited, even when you include going to the moon. That's like saying you are going to the corner drug store compared to the distance to the throne room of God the Father in the Third Heaven which is billions of light years away. We will never get there until the resurrection. But Jesus, in his human resurrection body, went through space to the throne of God. As God, he controls space. But here we are to study him just before he launched himself into space. It is as if he said "Now listen, I won't be back for a long time, so listen carefully to instructions. There are some things I want you to do before I come back." Indeed, the resurrection of Christ is a very great miracle.

THE PRE-ASCENSION BRIEFING

There are two things mentioned. It is very similar to the upper room discourse for it had to do with the techniques of The Church Age. Jesus said two very important things just as he was preparing to leave.

Verse 5 tells of our union with Christ. The Holy Spirit comes in when we are saved. We share everything Christ is or has. We share his Kingdom, his Priesthood, his Righteousness, his all. This is as close as you can get to Jesus until his Second Advent. The Church will run her course, then there will be the seven year Tribulation period, at the end of which Christ will return to this earth. During his absence the closest we can get to him is union with him through the Holy Spirit. Please notice that both promises made during the pre-ascension briefing have to do with the Holy Spirit.

1. Union with Christ once you are saved
2. The filling of the Holy Spirit and the power of the Holy Spirit within.

The early church made a great mistake in listening to their own desires and they elected the wrong Apostle. He is phased out and you never hear his name again after his election. Paul was the 12th Apostle and Christ had a long training period for him before he moved into this spot.

Acts 1:5 "For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence." There are two baptisms in this verse. John baptized them in water. Here water represented the Kingdom of God. Christ is going to baptize them with the Holy Spirit. Water baptism for the church age simply means identification with Christ and with his church. Baptism never has had and never will have anything to do with salvation.

1. The baptism of the Holy Spirit did not occur in previous dispensations.
2. Baptism by the Holy Spirit was prophesied by John and by Jesus in Matthew 3:11.
3. We are given here the mechanics of the baptism of the Holy Spirit.
4. The baptism of the Holy Spirit unifies all believers.
Ephesians 4:5 "One Lord, one faith, one baptism". People are not unified by personality or by the way they look or dress. Many people are greatly worried because there are many denominations and they think all people should be in one church. The only union is the union of the Holy Spirit in believers. Every believer is in union with Christ.
5. The baptism of the Holy Spirit is not an experience we work up. It is not emotion, not the result of long praying, doesn't come as a result of deep sincerity. The coming of the Holy Spirit is the work of God.

The implication of the baptism of the Holy Spirit is found in Galatians 3:26-28. "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus." Here we see all social, sexual, racial distinctions are erased. In the baptism of the Holy Spirit and in union with Christ these distinctions are removed. The only true union is the union made by the Holy Spirit. Both male and female have the same privileges in Christ. Both Jew and Gentiles have the same privileges in Christ. Indeed, this was a tremendous revolutionary thought for the Jews and the Greeks.

Even after 1900 years of Christianity we have learned just enough doctrine to give the woman some freedom. Christianity is the only reason why women are free today. Christianity has made a wonderful person out of a woman. She has personality and freedom and volition. This is the only way a woman can develop her personality and develop into the kind of person God wants her to be. The baptism of the Holy Spirit gives equality and freedom to all members of the human race.

By physical birth, no two members of the human race are equal. Socialism or legislation can never make people equal. Put them in the same school and give them cars and jobs and homes and money - this will never make people equal. You can't make people equal by sending them through the same college. People just don't have equal athletic ability, or equal mental ability, or equal business ability. Satan has been trying to make people equal through Socialism, through Communism, and through religion. But it can't be done in this way. One way people can be made equal is through the work of God in the heart. Remember salvation is by grace always, never by works. Only God can do this great work in the heart. It is done through the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. So we are all made equal in Christ. Then the Holy Spirit gives leadership gifts and thus all of us are made equal. In the baptism of the Holy Spirit Christ placed emphasis not on respectability, or reformation, but on regeneration. Regeneration is an act of God through the power of the Holy Spirit in a life. "If any man be in Christ he is a new creation." We are not new creatures because of a clean life, new habits, and reformation - but by an act of God in and through the Holy Spirit. Not what we have given up is the emphasis, but what the Holy Spirit has done in us. Now if the Holy Spirit leads us to give up certain harmful things, then that is an entirely different thing all together. Let us be sure that we do not do these things in the energy of the flesh. It is not what we do for Jesus Christ but what he does for us that is most important.

This fifth verse tells us what makes the church age different. The difference is the baptism of the Holy Spirit. It is not what we do but what he does for us. Morality is not Christianity, rather Christianity is the filling of the Holy Spirit. In one second of time we become new creatures by the Holy Spirit.

Look at the question asked by the disciples - "Wilt thou at this time restore the Kingdom to Israel?" This shows really how dumb the disciples were. Of course Jesus is not going to turn the clock back to anything like this. Some few of Christ's followers understood these things. Mary Magdalene understood doctrine and she was first at the tomb the morning of the resurrection. Evidently the disciples didn't understand. Christ has just talked about a new kingdom of believers, in union with Christ, making up the body of Christ. This is an entirely different Kingdom, and certainly is not confined to Israel. The nation of Israel is to be scattered and they will no longer have responsibility for the giving of the Word of God to the world. You see the disciples were thinking about the present conditions under the domination of Rome. They want to go back and live free from domination and thus have their Kingdom restored. They also want to be big shots in the new kingdom, independent of Rome.

Acts 1:7 "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." Times comes from the Greek word CHRONOS (a succession of events). Seasons comes from the Greek word KAIROS (a grouping of events). Literally, the language says this - "It is not FROM you to understand the times or the seasons."

CHRONOS, the succession of events are the events of history.

In 721 B.C. the Jews went under discipline.

In 586 B.C. they were taken captive to Babylon.

In 516 B.C. they were returned to Palestine.

Then they had their Golden Age down to 323 B.C., the Death of Alexander.

In 68 B.C. they came under the domination of Rome.

In 70 A.D. Jerusalem was destroyed and the Jews were scattered.

They have been scattered ever since - and will be until the Second Advent of Christ.

So the word is this - "It is not FROM you to know the times or the seasons." That's what Christ is saying. It is the Genitive of source. In other words, man does not determine the events of history but God does. But these disciples didn't understand the discourse Christ had with them in the upper room in Matthew 24 and 25. Leviticus 26 teaches the outline of CHRONOS. But they are ignorant, they didn't understand.

Now KAIROS means a grouping of events together, a period of time, or a dispensation. There are four of them:

1. The age of the Gentiles - Genesis 1-11,
2. The age of Israel - from Abraham to the cross,
3. The age of the church - here the Holy Spirit is given and he is the director of the events of this period,
4. The age of Christ.

This is how it was and how it is to be, but the disciples didn't understand these things. These disciples didn't realize that they would begin the church age. All of this is under Christ's own authority.

Acts 1:8 "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." This power they are to receive is inherent power. It comes from DUNAMIS, the word from which we get dynamite. They are going to receive the omnipotence of God. God had the authority over the times and the seasons. But we are to receive power within to live in and through these times and these seasons. This power indwells every Christian - Does this power control you?

The one purpose of the Holy Spirit is to glorify Christ. He is coming to establish an institution in the earth called the Church. At the end of the Church Age we will have the Second Advent of Christ. At that time there will be the Second Advent of the Holy Spirit to provide spiritual power for this kingdom.

Be witnesses is the task of the church. The geographical pattern is given. The Church began in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost. It is to be Jerusalem - Judaea - Samaria.....and then to the ends of the earth. Why did God do it that way? Why did he not open up many centers in the earth? God knew best, and he wanted stability to his movement. You see, the man who has been picked out to be the stabilizer of the Church isn't saved yet. He is out persecuting and killing Christians at this time. The true secret of the church is the Word of God.

THEY LOOKED UP

When Jesus ascended they were all looking up. They were certainly impressed. They were totally amazed. At this point two angels joined them - two persons, two men.

The heavenly messengers 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."

Christ left the Mount of Olives; he will come back to the earth to the same spot. Zechariah 14:4 says "And his feet shall stand in that day on the Mount of Olives."

He was launched from the Mount of Olives and he shall return to the Mount of Olives. The Mount of Olives is the historic launching pad. This is the most important launching pad in history and Christ was the original astronaut. This is an announcement of great importance. Christ is not coming back for a long time. Get down from this mountain and begin the work of the Church Age.

1 Corinthians 2:16 "For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ." This verse says that the Bible is the mind of Christ. Thus, we are able to see here what he is thinking and what he is planning. The Bible has an answer for time and eternity. Come and get off the mountain and start learning what it is all about.