

Which Side of Acts 1 Are You On?

Are you living on the right side of Acts 1? The answer will determine the course of your life.

Every morning when we awaken from a long night of sleep, we stretch, yawn and eventually step into a new day. In the natural, we are functioning from a collection of experiences, training, opportunities, challenges and other influences that have helped determine our current experience.

Some are waking up in the morning to get ready to operate on somebody's heart because his natural training provided him that opportunity. Others are headed to classes in a university as a result of healthy planning. Still others are depressed, lonely, fearful, expectant, determined or are experiencing a myriad of other very real feelings due to their position in life. It's their natural position.

Spiritually, where are you? Specifically, which side of Acts 1 are you living on when you wake up each morning? Acts 1 says:

"So when they had come together, they asked Him, 'Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?' He said to them, 'It is not for you to know the times or the dates, which the Father has fixed by His own authority. But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you shall be My witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.' When He had spoken these things, while they looked, He was taken up. And a cloud received Him from their sight. While they looked intently toward heaven as He ascended, suddenly two men stood by them in white garments. They said, 'Men of Galilee, why stand looking toward heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you to heaven, will come in like manner as you saw Him go into

heaven’” (Acts 1:6-11).

Of course, the first chapter of Acts’ position on the historical timeline comes after the death and victorious resurrection of Jesus. The question I’m asking is directed toward those who have been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb—Christians—those who have responded to the greatest gift man has ever been offered. Christian friend, it’s possible to be functioning on the right side of the cross and on the wrong side of the rest of the story.

Read the short passage in Acts 1:6-11 again. Let the power of that dramatic moment impact you. Put yourself in the position of the disciples of Jesus.

They had just experienced, to put it lightly, a dramatic season of life that culminated with their hero, their friend, God Himself being brutally and savagely tortured and mutilated. They were suddenly alone, fearful and confused. Their holy hope was gone forever—so it seemed. Dead people don’t just wake up and walk out of their tombs after all, right?

Lazarus might disagree with that. So would Jesus. The disciple’s overwhelming hopelessness was miraculously displaced by the impossible. Jesus walked out his tomb.

They were fearful, alone and confused no more. Now the celebration begins! Now plans for the future can be discussed! This was the day the Lord Jesus Himself created and it was time to rejoice and be glad!

The obvious next step was for Jesus to set up His kingdom and to reign! The disciples’ question was an honest yet misguided one:

“So when they had come together, they asked Him, ‘Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?’” (Acts 1:6).

They didn't understand at all what the future held. The victory on the cross, in their minds, would result in Jesus doing much more of what they saw Him do previously. Jesus was the man of the hour, and they wanted to be in the front row for the show.

After all, Jesus had just spent 40 days talking to them about the kingdom, right?

"... to whom He presented Himself alive after His passion by many infallible proofs, appearing to them for forty days, and speaking concerning the kingdom of God" (Acts 1:3).

Yes, the kingdom was coming, but not at all the way everyone had presumed. Jesus was about to launch them out of Acts 1 and into Acts 2.

If you'll remember, Jesus had already given them a mandate that it seems they casually overlooked:

"Being assembled with them, He commanded them, 'Do not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, of which you have heard from Me. For John baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now'" (Acts 1:4-5).

The disciples had necessary teaching about the kingdom and a mandate to wait for a promise that would enable them to initiate a world-shaking mission.

However, in their minds, they wondered why they would need a promise if Jesus was there with them. Why would they need anything else? Jesus was going to work wonders, and they would be there as His most fervent supporters!

Jesus Left—Again

"When He had spoken these things, while they looked, He was taken up. And a cloud received Him from their sight" (Acts 1:9).

Again, put yourself in the shoes of the disciples. What type of emotional crisis were they going through? First Jesus died, then He defied all odds and returned in victory. Now, their plans for Jesus to build His kingdom were cut down as they received an inconvenient mandate to pray and wait for some nondescript promise—as Jesus again left them.

Now, their close friend, their superhero who would protect them from the threats of the many enemies in the land, was gone from them a second time—this time for good (at least in their lifetimes).

The Bible says that they were just standing there gazing into heaven.

My question to you is this: Are you gazing into heaven waiting for Jesus to show up and do what you are yearning for Him to do? Or are you taking action in the power of the Holy Spirit to do it yourself?

On the cross, Jesus famously said, “It is finished!” His part is done. We have been left with an extreme mandate and a costly mission that must be in front of us every morning when we awaken, stretch and yawn and move into our day.

So often, we are crying out for Jesus to heal the sick when He commanded us to heal the sick. Those on the wrong side of Acts 1 will gaze into heaven, waiting for Jesus to do it. Those who have been baptized with power and who have embraced their spiritual mission will function in the power of the resurrection by looking at someone and commanding that they take up their mat and walk!

True baptism in power results in an inconvenient life.

I’m convinced that casual “gazing into heaven” type prayer is often unanswered because Jesus is putting the pressure on us to get into the prayer rooms where supernatural baptism can be found.

The angelic question in Acts 1 remains for us today:

"Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven?" (Acts 2:11).

Those who are living on the wrong side of Acts 1 have bought into the resurrection power of the cross but have yet to step into their life mission that requires a devotion that will put every other life focus at risk. They want to continue in their day-to-day life, hoping that Jesus will be the hero and rescuer they might need in times of trouble. The call to greater consecration is unnecessary since they are already saved and the victory of the cross was complete.

The truth is that the victory of the cross launches our mission. It doesn't end it. When Jesus said, "It is finished," for us, it meant, "It has begun."

The enemy is moving across the earth, stealing, killing and destroying. How could we even begin to think our work is done or unnecessary?

The blood of Jesus doesn't grant us immunity; it grants us authority—authority to tread on serpents, authority to heal the sick, authority to advance the kingdom, and authority to go and make disciples.

Those living on the right side of the chapter are burning with that mission every single day. They wake up on fire with an urgency to fulfill their extremely important commission.

The life of someone living in Acts 2 and beyond looks radically different than the lives of other Christians.

Stay tuned Monday for part two of this three-part series.
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