

Acts 1:4-11 NIV

"What Jesus considers a waste of time"

"On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: 'Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. ⁵ For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.'

⁶ Then they gathered around him and asked him, 'Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?' ⁷ He said to them: 'It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. ⁸ But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.'

⁹ After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight. ¹⁰ They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. ¹¹ 'Men of Galilee,' they said, 'why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.'"

Acts chapter 1 provokes many questions:

What gift did God promise the Apostles?

What is the Baptism of the Holy Spirit?

To what does the term Kingdom refer?

What primary task did Jesus give his apostles?

The Lord willing, we'll eventually deal with these questions.

Today, we focus on the chiding two men dressed in white dropped on the Apostles.

Ever been sharply reprimanded?

I've been corrected numerous times and deserved most of them.

Once when I was about 12, a heated family dinner discussion was not going my way.

My dad asked me why I was always "sucking the hind" one.

Those of you familiar with livestock know my pop wasn't referring to the last lollipop.

Learning from this scolding the Apostles received, will spare us terrible disappointment.

A few details help us understand:

Some of our most memorable life moments occur at mealtime.

Has that been true in your life?

Numerous Bible events centered on food.



Frank Blair (Bob's dad) in U.S. Army at cold Fort Sam Houston prior to 1918 flu epidemic

After Jesus resurrection, while eating with his eleven disciples, he told them not to leave Jerusalem, but wait for their Holy Spirit baptism.

They gathered close to him wanting to know if Jesus soon planned to restore Israel's kingdom.

That kingdom subject has lots of implications, which, God willing, we'll talk about soon.

Jesus didn't directly answer their question.

Here's what he did say:

"It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

Note what happened next:

"After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight." The eleven stood there looking up.

Two men dressed in white appeared beside them as they watched Jesus rise into that cloud.

Those two angel-messengers reprimanded the disciples: "Why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven."

We Christians spend lots of time eyeing and staring, don't we?

We speculate, estimate, conjecture, contemplate, hypothesize, argue, world events, and spend sleepless nights fretting about our health and worrying about family matters.

We also ponder Jesus' return.

What's wrong with thinking about those matters? Shouldn't we be concerned about what's going on around us?

Jesus brought a new perspective to life events. Note fascinating connections between Jesus and the God's voice from heaven.

1. One, recall Jesus' baptism?

At the age of 30, Jesus asked John the Baptizer to immerse him in the Jordan River.



The Jordan River near where John baptized Jesus. 1980 photo by Bob

To "fulfill all righteousness," the Father wanted Jesus to set an example.

Jesus didn't sin so he needed no forgiveness.

"And as he (Jesus) was praying, heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: *'You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.'*"¹

¹ See Matthew 3:13-15 & Luke 3:21, 22 NIV

Jesus’ loving, consistent obedience delighted God.
Our first connection between Jesus and God’s voice from heaven; at his baptism.

2. Two, consider Jesus’ transfiguration.

“Jesus took with him Peter, James and John the brother of James, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. There he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light. Just then there appeared before them Moses and Elijah, talking with Jesus.

“Peter said to Jesus, ‘Lord, it is good for us to be here. If you wish, I will put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.’

“While he was still speaking, a bright cloud covered them, and a voice from the cloud said, ‘This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!’”²

What’s the situation here?

With his three closest disciples, Jesus ascended a mountain where his appearance radically changed.

The Greek term Matthew used is the basis for the English word *metamorphous*.

You know the transition that takes place from caterpillar to butterfly.

Jesus’ face shone and he became as light.

Two of Israel’s greatest heroes, Moses and Elijah appeared, and talked with Jesus. Peter thought it’d be nice to make a shelter (a tent) for Jesus and the other two greats.

Peter didn’t get to finish his speech.

The Lord abruptly interrupted Peter.

“This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!”

Moses and Elijah became exceptional leaders, but both behaved cowardly at times.

Moses displeased God when he kept telling the Lord he wasn’t qualified to lead Israel.³

Elijah defeated the 450 prophets of Baal,

but he couldn’t stand up to Queen Jezebel.⁴

Jesus never disappointed God; he always pleased Him.

Jesus deserved total respect.

God told the Apostles:

“Listen to him!”

Listen is an imperative.

God commanded forcefully-unequivocally.

“When the disciples heard this they fell face-down to the ground terrified.”⁵



Mt. Hermon in Israel; thought to be the Mount of Transfiguration. ClipArt photo

² Matthew 17:1-4 NIV

³ See Exodus 3.

⁴ 1 Kings 18, 19

⁵ Matthew 17: 5, 6 NIV

God our Creator wants us to listen to Jesus.

That’s why Jesus warned:

“Consider carefully how you listen.”⁶

God expects us to listen carefully to Jesus.

- Not as filtered through Bob, the preacher.
- Not as interpreted by Martin Luther, John Calvin, John Wesley, Pope Francis, the College of Cardinals, a politician, or professor.

Unless we depend directly on God’s word, we’re living dangerously.

The Gospels reliably give Jesus’ words and teachings; we look to God’s authority.

3. Three, at Jesus’ ascension, the Apostles needed their cages rattled again.

They forgot Jesus’ divine, loving obedience and his words.



Mt. of Olives

They hadn’t listened to Jesus, God’s Son.

Standing there gazing into the sky, they hadn’t obeyed the orders Jesus earlier gave them:

Just shortly before, Jesus told the Apostles:

“This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance for the forgiveness of sins **will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.** You

are witnesses of these things. I am going to send you what my Father has promised; **but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.**”⁷

So now the Lord reprimanded the eleven saying: *Jesus told you that a significant— powerful moment will begin in Jerusalem.*

Jesus meant for you to be there till he gives you special power.

You men are a long way from town; you should be high-tailing it back there; not gazing into the sky.

- *You’ll be baptized by and with the Holy Spirit.*
- *Then you’ll be my witnesses to the entire world.*

Recall the term *witness* from last week?

- The eleven would witness to Jesus’ sinless life, his unselfish death for us, and most of all, his powerful resurrection.
- From Jerusalem, they’d go everywhere telling people Jesus’ Good News.
- Those who accept Jesus, are born again, and faithfully witness to his death, burial and resurrection.
- Faithful witnesses will overcome death, too.

Jesus defeated death for us: that “big elephant in the room” that frightens so many people.

⁶ Luke 8: 18

⁷ Luke 24: 46-49

The angels reminded the Apostles of a vital fact:

“This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.”

Jesus is alive and will return to judge everyone.

We’ll all account for our decisions, actions, love, and faithful witness.

**Mt. of
Ascension**



Suppose you hear tomorrow that someone’s discovered a 100% effective cure for Covid19?

It works for people of all ages, all backgrounds, and all other conditions.

Would your outlook change today?

Jesus proved to the Apostles that he had cured not just all deadly diseases, but death itself.

“For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like his,” Romans 6:5 NIV.

Adult baptism is our first death and resurrection.

If we give up the world’s ways and unite with Jesus, he’ll raise us as he was raised.

That’s better than a cure of any disease.

Think of the way Jesus lived:

You know from experience; great temptations from power, money, and fame.

Many politicians go to Washington with nothing, and on a government salary become rich.

Though Jesus had more human potential than anyone ever, he renounced it.

Jesus could have enjoyed power, fame, and splendor.

He became poor and powerless for our sake.

Jesus never let greed control him.

He treated women with respect and dignity;

he never used or abused them.

He gave up worldly ambitions and sacrificed his life.

Jesus could have ruled the world.

Instead, he died penniless, powerless, rejected, and probably naked.

He gave up everything to please God, resist the devil’s hold on us, and to destroy death.

He proved to be trustworthy; he keeps his promises

Accept him, trust him, and live for him.

You’ll be eternally healthy and happy in God.

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