

# ***When the Hero goes away***

*Acts 1:1-11*

*CrossLife Helensvale online Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> April 2020*

## ***1. Introduction ...***

2007 a turning point for the Australian cricket team when we said goodbye to these **three** heroes of the team: Warne McGrath and Langer. After nearly 20 years of dominance since 1989, Australian cricket was about to enter a downward trajectory culminating most would say with sandpaper gate in 2018 in South Africa. Reminded me of 1984 when we said goodbye to these **three** greats: Lillee, Greg Chappell and Rod Marsh in the same season and the team had five long years of “rebuilding” ahead of itself.

Sporting teams of any age have this experience don't they – saying goodbye to the great players of a generation as they move up the age bracket, or retire to greener pastures.

Well, the disciples of Jesus had a similar experience one day outside of Jerusalem 40 days after the wonder of Jesus' resurrection: the star player left them and the questions was – what next? Let hear of it

*... bible reading Acts 1:1-11 ...*

The ascension of Jesus: that moment the risen Jesus left this earth to sit at the right hand of the Father for a time until he returns again. This pivotal moment in the ministry experience of the Lord Jesus, and of the Christian faith, gets little attention. But we should give it attention because much of how we live now and the expectations we can have of God, are defined by our how we see this moment when the great star of heaven left this globe, and God's church, in the hands of flawed, broken, struggling humanity like Peter, Mary, Phoebe, Phillip, Nathaniel, Martha and ... you and me. What was and is Jesus up to after his resurrection? Sometimes we can think the resurrection is the end of the matter I mean death is defeated and the power of the devil and sin is broken: but we couldn't be further from the truth. Let's begin this short series of Jesus after the resurrection looking at this remarkable, often ignored moment of Jesus ascension.

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## **1. When He's still around (3-8) ...**

One of the things that can help us when we look at significance of the ascension is what Jesus was doing before he left!! When he was still around!

### ***(a) He teaches...***

#### *(i) ... of "the kingdom of God" (3)*

Jesus was a teacher – with authority! Mark 1:15 summarised his message, *"Repent and believe for the Kingdom of God is at hand."* Indeed Jesus was merely building on the history of the significance of God's kingdom in God's dealing with Israel throughout the OT. When we talk of kingdom we think a king and queen with a physical kingdom with knights stuff!! Well that's sort of like what the Jews of Jesus Day, including the disciples, had in mind!! King David beating Goliath, Joshua blowing the trumpets and the walls of Jericho falling down!! All the OT stories of the history of Israel when God worked to establish Israel's ... kingdom. And it spoke of a time to come when this kingdom would be established under the rule of God's anointed King, the Messiah, God's special chosen One.

#### *(ii) They hear? (6)*

So what sort of expectations would you have if you were a disciple? This guy has come back from the dead!! Is there a greater hero? Is it little wonder the disciples ask in verse 6, *"Lord are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?"* It was the big question they would have had for Jesus. They were under the thumb of this pagan, ungodly Romans!! Come on God!! Rescue us from these Romans!! Send us the King!! Start the Kingdom again!! Aren't you going to do it now Jesus? It's a yes or no answer really isn't it. Are you or not Jesus?

#### *(iii) Its none of your business!!(7-8)*

But Jesus doesn't answer the question. At least not that way. What does he say? *"It's none of your business!"* That's the answer he gives. Its none of your business!! Have you ever

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got a “its none of your business” answer? Its frustrating isn't it!! You really want to know something, but you're not allowed to know it!! Well that's the test these disciples were given. No matter how much they wanted to know exactly when the kingdom would come, they were not to know. And neither are we. Sure, we're not in the business of wanting a kingdom in the same way as the disciples were looking for one, but we can get caught up in wanting know when Jesus is coming back (because its really the same issue!). Over the years some people have devoted their whole ministry to working out the time and even the place of Jesus' return. But Jesus says, “It's none of your business – the Father has set the times and the dates by His own authority.” In effect he says, “When the time comes you'll know, but don't worry about it now!!”

### ***(b) You spread the word!!***

But that isn't all Jesus teaches the disciples, He also tells what IS to be their focus now ...

*“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.”*

You know what is your business? Not the times and dates of Jesus return, rather spreading the Word about!! Interestingly Acts 1:8 is not a command, it is a statement of fact. In Acts 17:6 the Jews in Thessalonica complained about Paul and his co-workers arriving in town saying, *“These men who have caused trouble all over the world have now come here ...”* Jesus tells the disciples what not to worry about, and also what to worry about. Acts 1:8 is like a contents page of the book of Acts, *“You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”*

## **2. When He's gone (9-11) ...**

### ***(a) He goes (9)***

These were Jesus' last words to his disciples. Verse 9 says *“After he said this he was taken up before their very eyes.”* This is what we call Jesus **Ascension**. That is, when he was taken

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away from the earth to be where he is now – sitting at the right hand of the Father. Luke notes *a cloud hid him from their sight*. This cloud was a sign of God's presence. And yet Jesus absence was on their mind. Jesus had spoken about his leaving them before, and now it was happening to them before their very eyes. Their great hope was going. The leader was leaving. Their hopes for the kingdom, if indeed Jesus teaching hadn't sunk in yet, dashed as the Saviour was gone. Like I said I reckon they'd feel a bit like when your best player on the football team retires or gets injured during a game. "Great, now so-and-so's gone it'll be even tougher to win!!" Like the All Blacks without Richie McCaw, Aussie tennis without Ash Barty. What will the Aussie cricket team do when Steve Smith is gone? Here we have the disciples with no Jesus. The passage paints the scene well. Jesus goes up through the clouds, and the disciples are left bamboozled. Looking up at ... nothing really!! No doubt jaws on the ground, dumbfounded by what they've just seen. Is it really over?

### ***(b) What's next? (11)***

Is it really over? Has Jesus gone? Yes. And the two men in white confirm it. "*Men of Galilee, why do you stand here looking at the sky?*" Are these men, more than likely angels, surprised by the response of the disciples? Where's their sympathy for the disciples? Can't they see their leader has gone?? But these angels aren't scolding the disciples. They are responding to what "looking up into the sky" says. They say to the disciples,

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

If the disciples are looking upwards with a look of gloom and grief at Jesus leaving them, the angels are quick to encourage them. This same Jesus will come back!! You'll see him again!! He has not left you forever. A reunion will take place. And not just any "Jesus", if I can put it that way. The angels make it clear in saying "*this same Jesus!*" will come back.

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Although we are not to worry about the *times and dates* of Jesus return. The Bible clearly encourages us to never forget that he will return!! And in our “I want it now” world nowadays we need to keep reminding each other wait it out!! Persevere with Jesus he is coming back!! Its worth the wait. As Jimmy will set out in two weeks time!

### ***3. Application***

So what is the impact of this extraordinary moment in history in our COVID-19 world today? Author Phillip Yancey is greatly challenged by reality of the Ascension. In *The Jesus I never knew* he put it this way,

*“I have concluded, in fact, that the Ascension represents my greatest struggle of faith – not whether it happened or not, but why. It challenges me more than the problem of pain, more than the difficulty of harmonising science and the Bible, more than belief in the resurrection and other miracles. It seems odd to admit such a notion – I have never read a book to article conceived to answer doubts about the Ascension – yet for me what has happened since Jesus departure strikes at the very core of my faith. Wouldn’t it have been better if the Ascension had never happened? If Jesus had stayed on earth, he could answer our questions, solve our doubts, mediate our disputes of doctrine and policy.”*

Yancey speaks some truth here. The astounding thing is who carries Jesus around now? You and me. And I can tell you the names of lots of Christians who I think don’t carry around Jesus very well thank you very much!! And I’m sure I’m on the list for some other Christians – that is they don’t think I do as good a job as I should.

But isn’t God amazing? Jesus leaves the face of the earth and leaves the face of the earth in whose care? Yours and mine!! Do you feel up to the task? I don’t!! Why did Jesus have to leave? It would have worked so much better if he had stayed!! But he didn’t, he left and left his church, his people, his mates, his followers with the task he telling people of what

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he had done. Flawed, weak, selfish people like you and me. But that doesn't mean we hang off the task, and this passage tells us he hasn't left us alone – he sent the Holy Spirit to fill his disciples and empower them in the task he has left them!! Jesus' last words to his disciples and there were to become their first priority. There is a stark comparison between Jesus final words to the disciples about being his witnesses all over the world, and their response to his going. They are nailed to the ground, head facing upwards, and eyes fixed intently on the cloud that hid Jesus. The disciples were not to be into star-gazing!! They were to be into soul-gazing!! So the angels question, *"Why do you stand here looking into the sky?"* That's not the job!! He'll come back!! Get with the agenda guys!! Wait for the Spirit's coming and get on with spreading the Word!! Well we have the Spirit in us, and all the power that comes with him. And we have the same agenda before us because we follow the same Jesus. What should we do to be ready for His coming? Getting on with spreading the word all over the globe. How did they do it? Not by their own power. They were not the superheroes, rather it was God within them. The Holy Spirit did come on them with power and drove them out.

And his last words are to become our first priority too. We stand in the same place as these disciples if we are a Christian. We too have received the Holy Spirit as they did, and so have the same job to do: ordinary people doing extraordinary things. You see Jesus words continue through to today. We are all in the business of continuing to spread the message of Jesus' gospel right around the globe. We must get our theology right, we must be well taught and let the Bible direct our conclusions about the truth about Jesus, ourselves and the world. But we must also let the Bible dictate our priorities. To have Jesus' last words as our first priority.

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### **4. Conclusion**

Let me make a confession. This wonderful little by-line, that Jesus last words are to be our first priority, is not mine. I stole it from Olive Tree Media. Well I didn't steal it, rather I'm using it to introduce to us our series of messages and studies in May and June as we look, with churches across the nation, at and their second season of Jesus the Game Changer. Watch this and to whet your appetites for our services in May and June as we seek to rightly respond to Jesus ministry after the resurrection ...

*... Play JCG season 2 trailer ...*