

What Jesus Left Behind

Acts 1:1-11

Goodbyes aren't easy, especially if the one leaving will be gone long. Babe Ruth said goodbye at Yankee Stadium, eaten up w/ cancer, and w/ tears he said goodbye. After the Watergate hearings, Nixon said goodbye to his staff, walked across lawn, then said goodbye and waved again on Marine 1. If you've ever said a final goodbye to a child, you know how bad goodbyes can be...or a spouse, sibling, parent!

In Acts 1 Jesus is saying goodbye to His disciples...for 3.5 years they've been intimately intertwined, thru good times and bad! He had changed their lives! They'd never be the same.

They spent 40 incredible days together after He arose...and now it's time to say goodbye, He's leaving, He's going home...and He tells them to do His work in the meanwhile (v. 8) He has given them His great commission, to go into all the world with the gospel. (v. 9) This is real...as real as the virgin birth, perfect life, sacrificial death, burial, glorious resurrection...it was as real as if you'd seen it w/ your own eyes that day! (v. 10) He'll return the same way He left, physically!

As He left the earth ascending into heaven He left behind some things. In our text passage for today I want to point out 4 things that Jesus left behind when He ascended to heaven. Jesus said in John 19:30, "...it is finished..." He was saying that the atonement for sin was finished. That tells us that nothing more need be done. Salvation is complete in Christ. But the first thing He left behind was:

I. AN UNFINISHED TASK. (vs. 1) *"The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach."*

A. His Task Was Not Finished. (Luke 19:10) *"For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."* As long as there is one person who has not heard the message, the task is not finished.

B. He Left The Task To Be Finished By His Churches (Mat 28:19). The mission fields cry out "unfinished!" The remote areas of every city and town cry out, "unfinished!" The whaling of the unsatisfied soul cries out "unfinished!" The voices of your neighbors cry out "unfinished." You have some loved ones who cry out "unfinished!" Perhaps your own soul is crying "unfinished."

Are you actively participating in carrying out His unfinished task? If you don't help, much of it will go undone. (John 9:4) *"I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work."* **Jesus left an unfinished task.**

2. AN UNMISTAKABLE PLAN (vs. 8) *"...and ye shall be witnesses to the uttermost parts of the earth."* A witness is sworn to tell the truth of what he / she saw or experienced. Sometimes we get the plan wrong. It is an unmistakable plan. We are to be witnesses--not a super salesman, attempting to persuade the person with our ability. Man can't persuade another man to be saved. (John 6:44) *"No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day."* It has to be Christ in us. We witness to that which has happened to us.

Here's the plan: A. We are to witness first in Jerusalem. That is our surrounding area: our neighbors, our co-workers, our friends. B. Judea - That is farther out from home base, into some of the outlying towns. C. Samaria - That is still further out...our nation. D. The uttermost part of the earth - that is foreign missions. Let's not mistake the plan.

3. AN UNSTOPPABLE FORCE (vs. 11) “...ye men of Galilee...” (Luke 24:49) *"And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high."* (Acts 2:4) *"And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost."* This group of men returned that day to the upper room, and there with some of the other saints began to call upon the Lord in prayer; and then we see them in Acts 2 where 3,000 got saved. In Acts 4:4, 5,000 more got saved. In (Acts 5:14) *"And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women."*

A. The Fear Of Man Didn't Stop Them. (Acts 5:28) *"Did we not command you that you should not teach in this name? And, yet you have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine."* (29) *"Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We obey God rather than men."*

1. They took their command personally. “Go into all the world.” These people weren't going to let some two-bit official hinder their work. We are part of an unstoppable force.

2. They had the power of the Holy Spirit on them. (Acts 4:31) *"And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spoke the word of God with boldness."* When people of God fall in love with the Lord Jesus Christ and yield their bodies to the control of the Holy Spirit of God, you have an unstoppable force. The gates of hell shall not prevail against them.

(Acts 4:13) *"Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marveled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus."* The N.T. Church suffers today because those who would oppose us cannot see Jesus in our lives. These disciples had “JESUS” written all over them. It makes a difference when you are doing the work of God through the power of ‘the God of the work.’

B. Persecution Didn't Stop Them. (Acts 8:3) *"As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison." (4)"Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word."*

1. They were scattered because of persecution. They had to literally run for their lives. Saul (who became Paul) was leading the persecution against them. 2. Persecution allowed them to take the Gospel to the "uttermost parts of the earth." That thing which they feared became their greatest tool in accomplishing their task. (Acts 19:10) *"And this continued by the space of two years; so that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks."* We haven't yet gotten hold of this thing like they did in the 1st Century. We seem to huddle up and hunker down trying to protect our little flocks. When we wake up and realize that we are an unstoppable force that the world must reckon with and we are willing to go out on the limb a little farther, then we can begin to see the fruit of N.T. results.

They were empowered by the Spirit and they held onto His unfailing promise. Look at vs. 11. *"Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who is taken up from you into heaven, will come back in the same way."*

When I think of this I am reminded of Gen. Douglas McArthur. He was in charge of the S. Pacific Theatre and was stationed in the Philippines. During the latter days of WW2 Gen. McArthur's men had taken a beating and he withdrew them and moved them to Australia for a time of rest and retraining. As he boarded the DC9 in the Philippines the people looked to him as their savior. He made his famous statement in saying, "I shall return." Several months passed by and one day the people of the Philippines heard the roar of airplanes and looked up into the sky and saw the sky was filled with American airplanes. Gen McArthur kept his promise.

2,000 years ago Jesus stood on a mountain overlooking Jerusalem and said to His disciples: (John 14:1-3) *Let not your heart be troubled: you believe in God, believe also in me. [2] In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. [3] And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.*

I know the battle gets tough. Don't be discouraged, one day soon that trumpet is going to blow, (1 Th 4:17) *"Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."* That's an unfulfilling promise. If it wasn't so He would have told us so. I believe it. I am holding on to it. I am looking for Him to come today. Are you ready? If He comes today, will you go with Him? Until He comes, you are part of what He left behind to do His work!