

Vision of a World Reborn – Easter to Pentecost

Thomas Robinson, *The Life of Resurrection 3*, April 7, 2013

Acts 1:1-14

¹ In the first book [the Gospel of Luke], O Theophilus, I have dealt with all **that Jesus began to do and teach**, ² until the day when he was taken up, after he had given commands through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen.

³ He **presented himself alive** to them after his suffering by **many proofs**, appearing to them during **forty days** and speaking about **the kingdom of God**. ⁴ And while staying with them he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the **promise of the Father**, which, he said, “*you heard from me*; ⁵ for John **baptized with water**, but you will be **baptized with the Holy Spirit** not many days from now.”

⁶ So when they had come together, they asked him, “**Lord**, will you at this time **restore the kingdom to Israel**?”

⁷ He said to them, “*It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority*. ⁸ But you will receive **power** when the **Holy Spirit has come upon you**, and you will be **my witnesses** in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and **to the end of the earth**.”

⁹ And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, **he was lifted up**, and a cloud took him out of their sight. ¹⁰ And while they were **gazing into heaven** as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, ¹¹ and said, “*Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven*.”

¹² Then they **returned to Jerusalem** from the **mount** called **Olivet**, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day’s journey away. ¹³ And when they had entered, they went up to the **upper room**, where they were staying, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot and Judas the son of James.

¹⁴ **All these with one accord** were **devoting themselves to prayer**, together with the **women** and **Mary** the mother of Jesus, and **his brothers**.

John 11:25

Jesus said to her, “*I am the resurrection and the life*.”

1 Corinthians 15:1-8

¹ Now I would remind you, brothers and sisters, of **the gospel I preached** to you, which **you received**, in which **you stand**, ² and by which **you are being saved**, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you – unless you believed in vain.

³ For I delivered to you as of **first importance** what I also received: (1) that **Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures**, ⁴ and that he was **buried**; (2) that **he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures**, ⁵ and that he **appeared** to Cephas [Peter], then to the twelve.

⁶ Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers and sisters at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. ⁷ Then he appeared to James [Jesus’ brother], then to all the apostles. ⁸ Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me [Paul].

Romans 6:3-5

³ Do you not know that all of us who have been **baptized into Christ Jesus** were baptized into his death? ⁴ We were **buried therefore with him by baptism into death**, in order that, just as **Christ was raised from the dead** by the glory of the Father, **we too might walk in newness of life**. ⁵ For if we have been **united with him in a death like his**, we shall certainly be **united with him in a resurrection like his**.

Easter to Pentecost – A Lot to Learn

Christian faith/life is like concentric circles around a core event. Very center is the cross: *“Jesus Messiah and him crucified”* (1Cor 2:2). *“While we were powerless... sinners... enemies, Messiah died for us.* (Rom 5:6,8,10). But the cross is meaningless without what goes before and follows. First, who Jesus is – incarnation, advent – God with us, manifested through his teaching, healing, service, his life. Second, his conquest of death – resurrection, Easter – new creation, giver of life, savior from sin, giver of the Holy Spirit. All is one whole event in Jesus. Every part is essential.

Luke highlights the period from Passover (crucifixion and resurrection) to the feast of Pentecost, 50 days later [this year, Sunday, May 19] when the first proclamation of the Gospel begins. Both were great pilgrim feasts with vast crowds filling Jerusalem. Harvest feasts (barley, wheat) and also Israel’s gospel: Exodus and the giving of the Torah at Mt. Sinai. The Disciples had their world exalted, crushed, and put back together. Now they open their eyes to the world in the light of Jesus’ resurrection.

The Disciples’ Search for Understanding

It was a lot to take in. Nothing that happened had fit the disciples ideas of what Messiah and ‘Kingdom of God’ meant. The crucifixion smashed everything. The resurrection was an utter surprise. And yet, here Jesus was. For 40 days he helped them grasp the new reality. ‘Many proofs’ needed. Every appearance of Jesus surprised them: burning revelation, all authority, breathe Holy Spirit, touch wounds, James, 500.

Luke highlights the kingdom as an example. The Messiah, anointed king, was risen! Is he now ready to take David’s throne, restore the kingdom? Jesus says God still has surprises: He points to the Holy Spirit. Then ominous words: You will be witnesses. Why them? Why not Jesus? Jesus departs/ascends. He crosses the boundary between our world and the realm of God in a recognizable sign. Disciples gaze in surprise.

From Camp Followers to Witnesses: Work to Do

Jesus is alive. But ascended. Absent, but more present than ever. He is King with all authority in heaven and earth! Victorious over death itself—the disciples had seen it! But he lives to deliver all of us still enslaved to death and all its powers: sin, suffering, injustice, brokenness, self-deception, alienation, fear, etc. The disciples look back to earth. Back to Jerusalem with priests, Romans, and political turmoil. Yes, the kingdom is here, but in God’s surprising way, through them and the Spirit.

Jesus is not abandoning them but empowering them. They have work to do. Prayer and preparation. What will it mean to live out God’s kingdom in the realm of the resurrected Jesus and the Holy Spirit? They prepare by renewing the 12 as Israel. They begin to see the meaning of what has happened in Jesus both for themselves personally and for the world as a whole. The man they knew shares God’s throne. The crucified Jesus offers God’s love, forgiveness, new life. Always Surprises!