

Is This the Time?

What was the last word that our Master's disciples (His apostles) heard?

*But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.
(Acts 1:8)*

He spoke this just before He ascended to His Father. They hardly knew anything about “the ends of the earth” back then. They certainly didn't know the ends of the earth as we know it today. They only knew “the ends of the earth” according to the populated world of their day. The disciples didn't go to the actual ends of the earth. When our Master said, “You will be my witnesses ... to the ends of the earth,” He was speaking about today.

So when they had come together, they asked him, “Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?” (Acts 1:6)

That was the last question the disciples asked Him. When is the time to restore the Kingdom to Israel? They had heard Him say to the Jews, “*Behold, I am taking the Kingdom away from you and giving to a nation that will produce the fruit of it*” (Mt 21:43), but they didn't really understand what He meant. So then our Master answered them a little vaguely, as He didn't really have a clear answer to their questions. He may have known that the nation they would be establishing would not endure past the second century. By the third century there was certainly no longer any manifestation of the Kingdom — just going to church on Sunday.

In Mt 21:33-45, He was talking about old Israel. They were apostate, fallen away. They were not bearing the fruit of the Kingdom, and they weren't even the Kingdom. Israel was a dying nation, especially after they chose to crucify Him. There was no longer any fruit. They were called “Jews” (from *Judah* or *Judea*) because the rest of the tribes were scattered abroad all over the earth — the earth they knew — and they kept on being scattered.

Jesus said to them, “Have you never read in the Scriptures: ‘The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; this was YHWH’s doing, and it is amazing in our eyes’? Therefore I say to you, the Kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it. The one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; and it will crush anyone on whom it falls.” (Mt 21:42-44)

We have to fall on the Stone and be broken lest it fall on us, and we’ll be crushed. Either we fall on it, or it falls on us. So the Kingdom was taken away from “Israel,” but they didn’t even have twelve tribes at that time; they only had maybe one or two — Judah and Benjamin. But Israel is only Israel if it has twelve tribes (1 Kng 18:31).

So they were asking, “Is THIS the time?” Our Master knew what they were thinking, but He also knew that the Kingdom of Israel, that is, *natural* Israel, wouldn’t be restored until the *end* of the age. The disciples didn’t know exactly when the end of the age would come.

And this good news of the Kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the world, as a testimony to all nations; then the end will come. (Mt 24:14)

They didn’t know that the actual fulfillment of Mt 21:43 and 24:14 would take 2000 more years, before the “*witness of the Kingdom*” could be demonstrated to the whole world — to the “ends of the earth.” And also, “bearing the *fruit* of it” (Rev 14:1-5) cannot happen until the very end of the age, in order for the Kingdom to be given back to Israel *in the next age*, fulfilling the promise made to Abraham.

“I will plant them on their land, and they shall never again be uprooted out of the land that I have given them,” says the LORD your God. (Amos 9:15)

Old Israel, of course, never celebrated a year of Jubilee because they never could get along long enough. They always had tribal wars, divisions, and everything else under the sun. They never actually lived together in peace for 49 years or they would have celebrated the Jubilee. They never produced the fruit of the Kingdom.

Only when there is a people — a *nation* — who will produce the fruit of the Kingdom will Israel be *Israel* (those who rule with Elohim) again, which is in the next

age. Our Master said to the apostles back then, in the first century, that “*in the regeneration*”, *in the next age*, “*You who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the Twelve Tribes of Israel*” (Mt 19:28). It will be restored in the next age. It cannot be restored until our Master returns, and heaven holds Him until the fruit is produced.

... whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets... (Acts 3:21)

Then He will come and restore Israel, in the next age, which is the promise our Father made to Abraham.

So, in answer to the apostles’ question in Acts 1:6, He replied, “*It is not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority*” (Acts 1:7). He wouldn’t tell them, because it wasn’t the time. If He had told them, “You’re all going to fall away within 100 years,” that would have been very discouraging. They would have thought, “We are laboring in vain,” as Paul sometimes wondered (Gal 4:11; Phil 2:16-17). But we know they didn’t labor in vain, because now we have the New Testament Scriptures, and because of that we know how the first church fell; we know what they did to not produce the fruit of the Kingdom. And we know that the first-century church was a twelve-tribed nation because Paul, in Acts 26:7-8, said, “*Our twelve tribes who earnestly serve God night and day for the hope of the promise made by God to Abraham.*”

Our Master did tell them, “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you,” and “You will be my witnesses,” just as He also said, “This gospel must be preached to the ends of the earth as a witness to all the nations” (Mt 24:14), as was also prophesied in Isa 49:6, “that My salvation may reach to the ends of the earth.” He knew that they would raise up the tribes of Jacob, but He also knew they could not be that Kingdom — “a light to the ends of the earth” — at that time, and would not bear the fruit of it until the end of the age.

The disciples were full of zeal to take over and replace old Israel. There was a new twelve-tribed nation being formed and if that had been “the end times” then, they would have taken the place of old Israel. But it was not His will for the church to take the place of old Israel eternally; we are called to bring Israel back — the natural seed of Abraham — back to being a twelve-tribed nation in the millennial age.

*And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached **in all the world** as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come. (Mt 24:14)*

“To the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8) is the last thing He spoke to them. “*This gospel must be preached to the ends of the earth...*” It cannot be just television preachers or even handing out freepapers, but a *witness*. There needs to be a *WITNESS*. There is a “play” and there must be a “narration.” The narration explains to people what they are seeing played out before them. People will not understand what they SEE until they HEAR an explanation about what they see.

With them indeed is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah that says: “You will indeed listen, but never understand... look, and never perceive.” (Mt 13:14)

And why is that? Because they don’t see anything; they don’t see the reality, the witness. They don’t see the demonstration of a people living together in love.

For this people’s heart has grown dull, and their ears are hard of hearing, and they have shut their eyes; so that they might not look with their eyes, and listen with their ears, and understand with their heart and turn – and I would heal them. (Mt 13:15)

So therefore people have to look with their eyes and see the demonstration of life. They have to observe our behavior (1 Pet 2:12). And then they hear with their ears what they are seeing. Then they can understand with their heart. But they have to see both the play and hear the narration. If you don’t have any narration, people may not understand what the play is all about, as in Acts 5:20. The angel told the apostles, “*Go stand in the temple courts and proclaim the whole message of this new life.*” Tell them what they are seeing, the message of this new life. Peter and Paul had to let them know what they were seeing. They didn’t understand what they were seeing; they saw all these marvelous

things going on, but they didn't really understand it until they heard. Faith comes by hearing (Rom 10:17).

What is faith? Faith is the very persuasion of the Holy Spirit. Faith is a mystical concept unless you understand what faith is. Someone who has faith is persuaded and takes that persuasion and runs with it — he DOES it. Faith without works is dead (Jms 2:26). Faith takes action, doing what our Father wants us to do in obedience to the gospel. Isa 49:6 has to be fulfilled in order for the end to come. Our Master prophesied in Mk 9:12 and Mt 17:11 that the church would fall away, and then there would be a restoration¹ of the church – not a reformation.²

You can't reform; you have to restore. A reformation just means that you still have the same old thing. Restoration means to go back to the original pattern, before it fell away – before it became that diseased tree of Christianity (Mt 7:17-20, ESV). So what must happen in the last days is this: a new sprout must come forth from the old root system (Rom 11:17), which is pure. But that original tree is diseased.

For there is hope for a tree, if it is cut down; it will sprout again, and its shoots will not die. If its root grows old in the ground, and its stump starts to die in the soil, the scent of water will make it thrive and produce sprigs, like a sapling. (Job 14:7-9)

Job 14:7-9 really gives us understanding. It is talking about us, and this is exactly what is happening, right now. If a tree is diseased, what will happen? If a tree is fallen, what will happen? New shoots will come forth “at the scent of water” and grow like a young plant. We're just growing, right now, “*by the scent*” of water. It's not as if it has rained yet. We just have a *scent* right now. That's all we're living by now – just a scent.

¹ **Restoration** (Collins English Dictionary & Thesaurus, 2004 reprint)

~ to return (something) to its original or former condition; to bring back to health;
 ~ to return something lost or stolen to its owner; to re-introduce or re-enforce: to restore discipline;
 ~ L. restaurare (to rebuild), instaurare (to renew).

² **Reformation** (Collins English Dictionary & Thesaurus, 2004 reprint)

~ to improve an existing law/institution by alteration
 ~ to give up/cause to give up a habit
 ~ a campaign to correct legal or political abuses through change of Law

We don't understand the whole thing; but the day will come when we will understand more and more and more. Faith comes by hearing and understanding. We know who we are now, but we don't know as much as we are *going* to know, as faith continues to come to us and give us that understanding. Then the Holy Spirit's power will come upon us and we'll no longer be ashamed of the gospel.

We can see that the disciples, in the first century had a little misunderstanding when they asked our Master, "Are you going to restore the Kingdom to Israel NOW? Is this the time?" It couldn't be the time, but He couldn't tell the apostles, "Oh, it's going to be another 2000 years." Even Paul thought that maybe our Master might return in his lifetime (1 Ths 4:17), and some of the apostles misunderstood our Master when He spoke about John. The rumor went out that John was going to live until our Master came back, but John emphasized what He actually meant:

"If it is My will that he remain until I come, what is that to you? Follow me!" So the rumor spread in the community that this disciple would not die. Yet Jesus did not say to him that he would not die, but, "If it is My will that he remain until I come, what is that to you?" (Jn 21:22-23)

He was trying to communicate to Peter not to compare himself with others.

Back in the early days in Chattanooga, I was talking about when our Master would return, because a lot of people are going to say, "The Messiah is here! The Messiah is out in the desert..." But our Master said,

Then if anyone says to you, "Look! Here is the Messiah!" or "There he is!" — do not believe it. For false messiahs and false prophets will appear and produce great signs and omens, to lead astray, if possible, even the elect. Take note, I have told you beforehand. If they say to you, "Look! He is in the wilderness," do not go out. If they say, "Look! He is in the inner rooms," do not believe it. As the lightning comes from the east and flashes as far as the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. (Mt 24:23-27)

I remember when I was teaching this and Sameach heard it. Then he left and went up into the Teton Mountains in Wyoming, near where I met ha-êmeq. He was out there, smoking dope, and he saw lightning and remembered what I said. He saw

lightning go all the way across the sky! He quickly came down and hitch-hiked back to Chattanooga. He didn't know what it meant, so much, but he responded...

Sameach — I said, "I'm going back to Chattanooga. Jesus is coming back right now and I'm high on drugs." The right fear came to me. It was the first time I ever had the fear of God. All I knew is I heard it, then I saw it, and then I believed it.

ha-êmeq — Yes, it's amazing to be able to see something. We're working on this cookbook. On one side of the page, you have all these words, and on the other, a picture. And it takes faith to believe that these words are going to make that picture. You take all the ingredients and you doubt you'll be able to do it. But you have that picture, and you've got the recipe, so you wonder, "How much faith do I have?" Do you have enough to even start putting the ingredients in the bowl, or to turn on the oven? You really have to *believe* that it is going to come out that way. Similarly, what you *read* and *hear* requires faith to believe it will actually produce that fruit.

Our Master said, "Therefore, I will take the Kingdom away from you [*those who don't produce the fruit*] and give it to a nation who will actually produce the fruit." They had the same words we do, but what they made turned out to be a flop. So people said, "Don't pay any attention to what you see; just go by what it says in the Bible. I know you don't see that, but just look at the words, because they are beautiful."

But there's actually a picture, and the picture is even right there in the Bible — the picture of what the first disciples did. The Word paints this incredible, clear picture of how the first believers actually believed. Those who really believed Yahshua in Acts 2:44 actually did live like it says. So you've "got the picture" there, and you have the Word that goes along with the picture.

It is so puzzling to a lot of people because that picture is in there. People try to keep that page closed so you can't see the picture. But every once in awhile, someone will be just sitting in the pew reading around, bored, longing for something. Then he sees this "picture" and he runs up to the preacher and says, "Why doesn't our church match this picture?" And, of course, the preacher will say, "Ahhh, just turn the page! That was just the way it was back then. But God split it up. He cut up that pizza they made and threw it in the trash. He did not want that!"

But the picture still sits there, right in the Word — Peter, James, John, Paul, all the Apostles, and the Virgin Mary... They did that! They weren't just a bunch of crazy hippies who moved in together! The picture

was so clear: They took their meals together; they shared everything in common; nobody had his own possessions. This makes people wonder, “What? Do you mean the Virgin Mary didn’t have her own possessions? Do you mean Peter and the apostles didn’t have their own checkbooks? They couldn’t have their own cash jingling in their pockets?” The Word says, “They shared *all* things in common.” They had a common pot. So you can just surrender and say, “Ok, that must be what love made them want to do. That’s why it’s in there.” And, somehow, love makes us want to do the same.

It doesn’t say that it will be easy all the time, but the picture is in there with the recipe. Our Master said, “*Therefore, I am going to take the Kingdom away from the others, and give it to a nation that will produce the fruit*” of the recipe, you know, the pizza. The pizza is going to come out just as it says. We’re not going to ignore it; we’re going to go ahead and put the ingredients together and work really hard to make that perfect pizza.

I’m so thankful that Sameach had eyes to see that when he came. I could imagine he was looking at this little, rag-tag bunch of happy disciples. There were hardly any of us then. We were just a handful. But somehow he could see the love of our Father. He had eyes to see, and that is such a miracle.

I love it that it’s the same way now. Even though someone can’t exactly figure out everything, they know that they love what we love. It must be God, because God is love. It is such a simple story. Ishah Ruth’s imma used to sing her a song about pudding...

Ishah Ruth — “Some may say, ‘This’ll make a good’un, or that will make a good’un,’ but here in this house, where the recipe is tried, true, and tested, the proof is in the puddin’.”

ha-êmeq — “The proof is in the puddin’.” We’ve had that saying since the very beginning. We’ve got all the ingredients: old, dry this and that, and something else, and then when we’re finished, it is something beautiful. You just have to stick to the recipe.

Zimrah — When you said about being a witness, I was thinking how you can look to the bees as an example. All the bees go back home to the hive, where all the other bees are. The worker bee doesn’t say, “I worked so hard for this pollen; this is *my* pollen.” All the bees put all they have together, and then they make honey all together. Also the ants take all they have back to the ant hill, and it serves the whole colony.

Acts 2:44; 4:32 — “All who believed were of one heart and soul; and not one of them claimed that anything he had was his own, but they had all things in common.” Everything they owned, they shared in common. And that is exactly what our Master prayed, before He was crucified, that, “those who believe in Him would be one, as the Father and the Son are one” (Jn 17:23), and that is how the Father and the Son are one — in heart and soul, and that is how we have to be one. If we are truly *believers*, we won’t be separated or have any denominations.

1 Cor 1:13 — “Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Were you baptized into the name of Paul?” The answer is no. Paul was talking about denominations. There can’t be any denominations in Messiah, unless Christ is divided. The Word says, “*All who believed were together and were of one heart and soul.*”

We have to live up to what our Master prayed. Our Master has to have a people who will be “of one heart and soul,” or He prayed in vain. But I think that our Father heard His prayer. We can be that people who love as He loved. I want to be that people. “Loving one another as He loved us” means that everything we do, we do for one another. We don’t do anything just for ourselves; we live for Him by living for one another. That is the only way the church can be. “The only way the church can be is the way it was when it was called “The Way” — it was the Way of Yahweh (Gen 18:19).