

Now What?

Acts 1:1-11

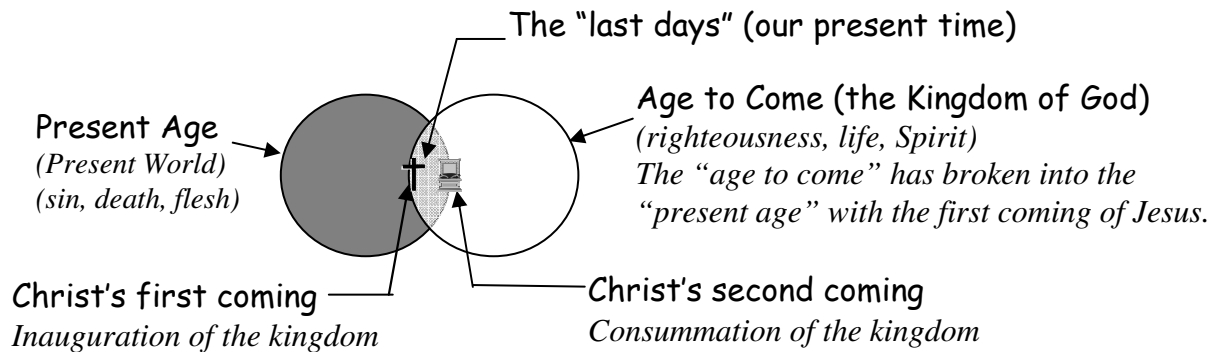


Jesus' Instructions

- ❑ In Luke's first book (*Gospel of Luke*), he wrote "about everything Jesus began to do and teach until the day he was taken up to heaven" (*Acts 1:1-2a*). In his second book (*Acts*), we might say Luke wrote about everything Jesus *continued* to do and teach, through his followers. Before Jesus was "taken up to heaven," he gave instructions to his disciples. Read Acts 1:1-11.

Jesus' Kingdom

- ❑ During the time between his resurrection and ascension,¹ Jesus "gave many convincing proofs that he was alive," and he "spoke about the kingdom of God" (*1:3*). The "kingdom of God" is characterized by God's rule, righteousness, peace, love, blessing, and everlasting life. Since Jesus Christ had risen, the disciples thought he might immediately establish the kingdom (*1:6*).
- ❑ However, the kingdom of God would not be fully established until Christ's second coming.²



- ❑ Though the full establishment of the kingdom must wait until Christ returns, believers are to live out and promote the values of the kingdom during this present time.³

Jesus' Witnesses

- ❑ After Jesus told his disciples to wait for the Holy Spirit,⁴ he said, "you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (*1:8*).

1. What do you think Jesus meant by telling his disciples "you will be my witnesses?" (What is a "witness"?)

¹ "resurrection" – raised from the dead (Luke 24:1-49); "ascension" – "taken up to heaven" (Acts 1:2, 9)

² In one sense, the kingdom of God has come because the King has come (Luke 11:20; 17:20-21). The kingdom, as "the dynamic reign of God," is not yet visible, but can be realized in the hearts of those who submit their lives to the King. Those who have entered into God's kingdom (through faith) experience many of its blessings – forgiveness, salvation, joy, peace, and the presence of God in the Holy Spirit. In another sense, the kingdom is future (22:17-18), because the kingdom has not yet been consummated (completed). When Christ returns, he will establish his kingdom, and his reign will become visible to all. Those who have entered the kingdom (through faith in Christ) will experience it in full!

³ This involves loving God with all our being, living holy lives, loving and serving others, helping the needy, promoting righteousness, pointing people to Jesus, sharing the gospel, etc. Consider *Lessons from Luke*, Lessons 3, 4, 8, 13 and 15.

⁴ The Spirit would be sent to indwell, guide, and empower the disciples for their assigned mission (Acts 1:8; 2:1-4).

- ❑ In verse 8, “witness” refers to those who would declare as fact the things they knew about Jesus. These first disciples were “eyewitnesses.” They had been with Jesus and seen his life, ministry, suffering, and resurrection appearances. They were uniquely qualified to be his witnesses.⁵
2. Can the phrase “you will be my witnesses” apply to Christians today? Explain.⁶
 3. Believers today should be telling others what they *know to be true* about Jesus. But how can we be certain about these things? (*Luke 1:1-4, John 20:30-31*)?⁷
 4. While being a “witness” certainly involves telling others, what else is important? What is needed for a person to be an effective witness for Christ?⁸
- ❑ Jesus told his disciples that their witness would extend to “the ends of the earth” (*Acts 1:8b*). Earlier, he said that “repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations” (*Luke 24:46-47*). He also said, “Go and make disciples of all nations” (*Matt. 28:19*).
- ❑ Likewise, today’s disciples are to be witnesses at home and throughout the world. We are to share the love of Christ, and the good news of Christ, across cultural and national boundaries.
5. Why do many Christians fall short in their role as Christ’s witnesses?⁹



Reflection & Application

- If you are *not* a believer, identify the reasons why you have not accepted the Christian message. What can be done to address your concerns? If you have questions, seek answers.
- Do you know the basic content of “the gospel”? See *The Gospel* handout for an example.
- If you would like to talk about becoming a Christian, talk to Jay or another mature believer.
- If you are a believer, are you being a “witness”? Is your life consistent with the Christian message? Make specific commitments to prepare for and communicate the good news.

⁵ A “witness” (*martus*) is a person who has personal knowledge of something, and can attest to the truth concerning that something. Jesus’ disciples knew the truth about Jesus, and the book of Acts is full of their testimony. They personally knew the facts concerning Jesus’ life, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension. The words “we are witnesses of these things” (or something similar) are repeated throughout Acts (2:32, 3:15, 5:32, 10:39, 10:41, 13:31).

⁶ We might not be witnesses in a physical sense. But we do not have to *physically* see to “know the certainty of the things we have been taught” (Luke 1:1-4). Otherwise Luke’s purpose in writing Luke and Acts would be doomed for failure. Jesus himself said to Thomas, who doubted his resurrection, “Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed” (John 20:29). Thus we too can attest to truths about Jesus.

⁷ Certainty involves both objective and subjective factors. Luke provided an orderly account of Jesus’ life “so that” we could be certain (Luke 1:1-4; see Lesson 1 of this series). Likewise, John wrote his gospel “so that” “you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name” (John 20:30-31). The Bible provides a trustworthy written record of the life of Christ. Subjectively, God reveals the truth to us by his Spirit, who enables us to accept and understand the Bible, and apply it to our lives (see 1 Corinthians 2:6-14). Also, the Spirit convicts the world of sin (John 16:8); and “testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children” (Romans 8:16).

⁸ It should be emphasized that “effectiveness” comes from God. God is the one who convinces people of the truth. But certain characteristics are important, like credibility (believability). A witness of Christ proclaims a life-changing message, and his/her life should not contradict that message. Actions can speak louder than words. Characteristics also include love, sincerity, understanding, dependence on God (John 15:5), and readiness to give reason (see 1 Peter 3:15).

⁹ It should be noted that many “Christians” are not genuine believers. So we would not expect them to be “witnesses.” But many believers also fall short. Reasons vary, but may include: doubts about the actual necessity of others believing and receiving Jesus as Lord; fear of failure, rejection, or persecution; assumptions of disinterest; laziness; lack of love.