



Jerusalem and Judea

Devotional | Here & There | January 15, 2023

GRACE
FELLOWSHIP

Discuss: Tell about how you came to know Christ: Who told you about Christ? What events led to you receiving Christ? What difference has Christ made in your life?

Key Text: *“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.” (Acts 1:8)*

Today we are starting a 2-part series called “Here and There” to emphasize the Lord’s call upon us to share the Gospel locally and globally—here, there, and everywhere. For two Sundays, we’ll study Acts 1:8—the first message focuses on Jerusalem and Judea, and the second message focuses on Samaria and the end of the earth. Acts 1:1–11 records the fulfillment of Jesus’ announcement in Luke 24:49–53 and Acts 1:4 that He would return to heaven and send the Holy Spirit to indwell believers. The Holy Spirit would then empower the believers to spread the Gospel around the world, beginning first at home in Jerusalem. Let’s begin by considering the divine personhood of the Holy Spirit.

1. Who is the Holy Spirit and what does He do?

The Holy Spirit is not merely an impersonal “force;” rather He is a divine Person, the third member of the Trinity. Jesus assured His followers that even though He would leave, they would not be left alone. There would be another divine Person who would take His place in their lives and be with them just as Jesus had been with them for comfort, strength, and guidance. But this Person would also be in them. Jesus wanted His disciples to know that He was sending them a “Somebody” not a “something.” The Holy Spirit is God—He possesses attributes that indicate divine personhood.

Discuss: What key words and phrases in Romans 8:27 indicate that the Holy Spirit has a mind (He is able to think and reason)? What key words and phrases in 1 Corinthians 12:11 indicate that the Holy Spirit has a will (He is able to make choices)? Considering God’s relational nature (Jn.17:3), why is it important that the Holy Spirit be a Person (a “somebody”) and not an impersonal force (a “something”)?

Discuss: What key words and phrases in 1 Corinthians 2:10–11 indicate that the Holy Spirit possesses the divine attribute of omniscience (all knowing)? What key words and phrases in Psalm 139:7 indicate that the Holy Spirit has the divine attribute of omnipresence (all present)? What key words and phrases in Job 33:4 indicate that the Holy Spirit has the divine attribute of omnipotence (all powerful)?

2. The Holy Spirit plays a vital role in the life of every believer.

The Holy Spirit’s work in and through a believer’s life is essential. For example, He gives us spiritual life at salvation (Titus 3:5), He indwells us and guarantees our salvation (Eph.1:13; 4:30), and He assists us in prayer (Jude 1:20).

Discuss: What other ministries of the Holy Spirit in the life of believers are mentioned in these verses: John 14:16; Romans 8:26–27; Acts 1:8?

3. What did Jesus mean in Acts 1:8 when He said we would be His witnesses?

A “witness” is someone who attests to a fact, so in order to be an effective witness for Christ, one must have firsthand knowledge of Him. Peter encourages us to “*grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ*” (1 Pet.3:18). To be effective witnesses for Jesus, we should remember three truths:

- **The focus of our witness is Jesus.** The Apostle Paul defined the gospel as the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ (1 Cor.15:1-4). Sharing the Gospel involves sharing about the sacrifice of Christ.
- **The power of our witness is the Holy Spirit.** It is the Spirit who transforms a life (Titus 3:5), and a transformed life is evident to all.
- **The evidence of our witness is our Christ-like lifestyle.** Philippians 2:15 sets this goal for us: “*That you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world.*”

Discuss: How would you encourage a new Christian to rely on the Holy Spirit when they are witnessing for Christ?

4. The disciples were to spread the Gospel locally and globally.

In Acts 1:8, Jesus told the disciples (and us!) to be His witnesses in their own community and country (Jerusalem and Judea), then to other cultures (Samaria), and finally to the rest of the world. The rest of the Book of Acts shows how the apostles fulfilled this Great Commission from Jesus: Acts 1-7 records the Gospel going locally to Jerusalem, Acts 8-12 records the Gospel going to outlying places like Judea and crossing over into cultures such as in Samaria, and then Acts 9-23 records the Gospel spreading “to the end of the earth.”

Discuss: Today’s lesson focuses on what it means to be Jesus’ witnesses in Jerusalem and Judea—that is, in our community and country (in the next lesson we’ll focus on what it means to be Jesus’ witnesses in Samaria and to the end of the earth). Why do you think our family members, closest friends, and coworkers are often the most difficult people to share the Gospel with?

Discuss: How can we apply 1 Peter 3:15 to witnessing to our family members, close friends, and coworkers?

Discuss: What can we learn about how to witness effectively by observing Jesus’ gospel conversation with the Samaritan woman at the water well in John 4:1-42?

For Further Study:

Free online commentary of the Bible at www.enduringword.com

“How Can I Evangelize My Family?” at www.gotquestions.org

Contagious Faith by Mark Mittelberg and Lee Strobel