

Tusculum Hills Baptist Church  
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## GOD'S TIMING

Acts 1

December 27, 2020

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My points for today are as follows:

- Jesus told his disciples to wait.
- Jesus clarified who was in charge of timing.
- The disciples were told to wait somewhere else.
- During the waiting time, the disciples took care of business.

**EXPLANATION:** We believe that Luke, the evangelist, wrote the Book of Acts. It reads similar to the Gospel of Luke, and it reads like a novel. If you have a hard time understanding the Bible, then I recommend that you read the book of Acts because the storyline is easy to follow. There is a lot of action in the book. It's full of travel stories, interesting plots, and most of all, it tells of the beginnings of the church age. We think of the church as something that has always been. There has not always been a church. It has not been around since the beginning of time. Yes, people worshipped God, but not in a church. People became close to God through the Law of Moses, which was God's Law given to Moses.

The Law of Moses, also known as The Law, pointed out God's righteous standards and people's inability to follow those standards. The difference between the Law and people's sin was made up through the sacrificing of animals and other rituals as prescribed by the Law.

In the month of December, we looked at how Jesus came. We looked at the prophets and how they told of the Messiah that would come someday to save people from their sins. We looked at the circumstances around the birth of Jesus. If you were tracking with all that then you may have realized how Jesus came in the fullness of time. He came at just the right time. He came at a crossroads of history

when the Roman Empire ruled much of the earth and the Jewish people wanted someone to rescue them. They wanted freedom once again.

But Jesus didn't come to set up an earthly kingdom. No, he came to set up a spiritual kingdom. It's through that kingdom that people found true freedom, and it's the same today. People find freedom in Jesus regardless of the circumstances.

**ILLUSTRATION:** I would be remiss if I did not mention the explosion in Nashville on Christmas Day. It was terrible. Clearly, there was criminal intent. Clearly, there was an effort by the perpetrators not to cause the deaths of innocent bystanders, but to destroy property. Eventually, we will find out what happened. Listen closely – I don't mean in any way to lightly disregard the tragedy on Christmas Day, but in Christ, we find freedom even in the middle of tragedy. The scripture tells us we will have troubling times. It's so important to have a huge reservoir of faith built up, so that when troubling times happen, we'll be able to tap into the reservoir.

My message from the book of Acts this morning is about God's timing. While we cannot know the mind of God and while we cannot predict what God will do next, we can be sensitive to his timing. We can educate ourselves about his timing.

## **1-JESUS TOLD HIS DISCIPLES TO WAIT**

**SCRIPTURE:** Acts 1:1-5

*In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach <sup>2</sup> until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen. <sup>3</sup> After his suffering, he presented himself to them and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God. <sup>4</sup> On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. <sup>5</sup> For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."*

**EXPLANATION:** I wonder why Jesus told his disciples to wait? It could have

been because he knew human nature. He knew that his disciples still had to be coached.

Last week, I preached about loving God and loving others – that was Jesus’ command which summed up the Law and the prophets. Now Jesus gives a new command. Consider the setting – Jesus died, arose from the grave, and made many appearances to prove that he was alive. And now here he was, having a meal with them and giving them a new command: Wait.

Oh, but as humans, they just had to know. They just had to know what they were waiting for. Jesus said, *“Wait for the gift my Father promised...”* But that wasn’t enough for them, they just had to know more. The anticipation was just too much.

**SCRIPTURE:** Acts 1:6

*Then they gathered around him and asked him, “Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?”*

If it had been the writing style of today, Luke might have very well typed the smiley face emoticon right there. After several years of training with Jesus, after seeing him work miracles, cast out demons, after seeing him suffer in prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane... the crucifixion, the burial, the resurrection... and so on, and now after having spent weeks with the resurrected Jesus, they were still focused on Jesus restoring the kingdom of Israel.

Jesus did not give them a yes or no answer.

## **2-JESUS CLARIFIED WHO WAS IN CHARGE OF TIMING**

**SCRIPTURE:** Acts 1:7

*He said to them: “It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority.”*

**EXPLANATION:** The times and dates that we do not know about are in God’s authority and he is not obligated in any way to share his calendar with anyone.

I'm watching right now as people who call themselves prophets are making certain predictions about January of 2021. I plan to speak out then about a certain topic, but for now, I am keeping my thoughts to myself. Listen to me: it is unwise to predict times and dates about things that are in God's hands.

So there they were: These men, having a fish and chips with Jesus and he gives them the most unexciting news: "Wait. It's not for you to know God's calendar."

Jesus, however, was great at giving strong hints.

**SCRIPTURE:** Acts 1:8-9

*But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."*<sup>9</sup> *After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight.*

So - "Wait. It's not for you to know God's calendar, but a great thing is coming, and you'll be a part of it." With this statement, Jesus concluded his earthly ministry.

There was so much the disciples didn't know. There were so many topics that he could have taught them. There were so many questions to be answered. But that was it. Jesus was gone.

### **3-THE DISCIPLES WERE TOLD TO WAIT SOMEWHERE ELSE**

**SCRIPTURE:** Acts 1:10-11

*They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them.*<sup>11</sup> *"Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven."*

This is interesting! Jesus gave them clear instructions when he ascended into heaven. Apparently, they were indeed waiting. They stood there. Waiting. What would happen next? Would Jesus come back down from heaven with warriors to liberate Israel from the Romans? What would he do? They were merely waiting,

following Jesus' commands. And then two men show up in white and ask them why they are waiting. It didn't seem to make sense.

**APPLICATION:** If you find yourself waiting on the Lord, let me ask you: are you waiting in the right place? Think of a server waiting on tables. Does the server wait in the breakroom? Does the server wait in his or her car? Or is a good server aware of what's going on and positioning himself or herself in the right waiting place?

**ILLUSTRATION:** I had an unusual and unexpected waiting time during my ministry. Over ten years ago, I left one church to become an active-duty military chaplain. There was quite a bit of uncertainty about what would happen after my four-year tour. During our waiting time, we joined a wonderful church. For the first time in Susan's and my marriage and for the first time in my kids' lives, I was not on a church staff. Over the holidays, our kids talked about all the wonderful memories at both churches...the one they knew very well and the one where we went during the long waiting time.

#### **4-DURING THE WAITING TIME, THEY TOOK CARE OF BUSINESS**

The first thing the apostles did while waiting: They gathered with other believers.

**SCRIPTURE:** Acts 1:12-13

*Then the apostles returned to Jerusalem from the hill called the Mount of Olives, a Sabbath day's walk from the city. <sup>13</sup> When they arrived, they went upstairs to the room where they were staying. Those present were Peter, John, James and Andrew; Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew; James son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James.*

The next thing they did while waiting: They prayed.

**SCRIPTURE:** Acts 1:14

*They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers.*

The next thing they did while waiting: They remembered the scriptures.

**SCRIPTURE:** Acts 1:15-20

*In those days Peter stood up among the believers (a group numbering about a hundred and twenty) <sup>16</sup> and said, “Brothers and sisters, the Scripture had to be fulfilled in which the Holy Spirit spoke long ago through David concerning Judas, who served as guide for those who arrested Jesus. <sup>17</sup> He was one of our number and shared in our ministry.”*

*<sup>18</sup> (With the payment he received for his wickedness, Judas bought a field; there he fell headlong, his body burst open and all his intestines spilled out. <sup>19</sup> Everyone in Jerusalem heard about this, so they called that field in their language Akeldama, that is, Field of Blood.)*

*<sup>20</sup> “For,” said Peter, “it is written in the Book of Psalms: “‘May his place be deserted; let there be no one to dwell in it,’ and, “‘May another take his place of leadership.’”*

The next thing they did while waiting: They took action on what they already knew to be true.

**SCRIPTURE:** Acts 1:21-26

*Therefore it is necessary to choose one of the men who have been with us the whole time the Lord Jesus was living among us, <sup>22</sup> beginning from John’s baptism to the time when Jesus was taken up from us. For one of these must become a witness with us of his resurrection.”*

*<sup>23</sup> So they nominated two men: Joseph called Barsabbas (also known as Justus) and Matthias. <sup>24</sup> Then they prayed, “Lord, you know everyone’s heart. Show us which of these two you have chosen <sup>25</sup> to take over this apostolic ministry, which Judas left to go where he belongs.” <sup>26</sup> Then they cast lots, and the lot fell to Matthias; so he was added to the eleven apostles.*

**REVIEW:** During our times of waiting, we have a clear path to follow from Acts:

- Wait on God’s timing.
- Clarify who’s in charge of timing.
- Wait in the right place.
- While waiting, take care of business: fellowship with other believers, pray, remind yourself of what the scriptures say, and do what you know to be true.

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