

## Is It At This Time?

Acts 1:6

### Introduction:

1. Jesus had gone throughout Israel announcing that now, at last, God's kingdom was arriving.
2. The message went out as much by what He did as what He said. It was evident that what the ancient prophecies said was coming true, that Israel's story was reaching its culmination at last, that God Himself was on the move and would rescue His people and put the world right.
3. So when Jesus said, "The Son of Man must suffer many things, and be killed, and on the third day rise again," (Mk. 8:31) we wonder what the disciples thought. Was it just another one of the "riddles" like those they had heard before? A parabolic reference?
4. While believing that He was the Messiah, what meaning should they give to this prediction of death and resurrection?
5. After all, the Messiah was expected to fight the battle against Israel's enemies, the Romans. He would rebuild, or at least cleanse and restore, the Temple. He would bring Israel's history to its climax, reestablish the monarchy of king David. He would be God's representative to Israel, and Israel's representative to God.
6. Their question in Acts 1:6 occurs after the cross, after the resurrection. Surely now they understand more clearly about His suffering, death and resurrection, but what about the kingdom? Will He now defeat Israel's enemies? Reestablish the Temple and the monarchy of king David?
7. Some today, who are looking for the coming of the Messiah, are asking the same questions. "Is it at this time you are restoring the kingdom to Israel?"
8. The disciples came to understand that the kingdom was not as they had expected. In this lesson we will note some of those differences and give particular attention to the effect that they have on us as citizens in the kingdom.

### Discussion:

- I. The kingdom of God establishes a new and different use of power.
  - A. The typical use of power may be seen in Herod's attempt to destroy Jesus (Matt. 2:16ff).
  - B. It is seen in the Jewish authorities as they moved to destroy Jesus (Matt. 26:3, 59-67).
  - C. It is seen in those who came to take Him captive and in Peter in the Garden (Lk. 22:49-53; Jn. 18:36-37).
  - D. It is seen in Pilate and the people who appealed for His crucifixion (Matt. 27:11-26; Jn. 19:10-11).
  - E. It is seen in the mockery of the crown of thorns (Jn. 19:1-3).
  - F. Jesus spoke of a new and different use of power (Mk. 10:32-45; cf. Matt. 20:20ff).

G. Peter, the one who had used the sword, came to recognize a new use of power (1 Pet. 2:21-25).

II. The kingdom of God is ruled by a king who **gives** His life. This stands in contrast to a king who **takes** life (1 Sam. 8:10ff).

- A. As we have already seen in the previous point the world's use of power dominates, takes control and destroys life. Ex. Herod, the Jewish authorities, even Peter in the Garden of Gethsemane sought to take life. Such was typical of worldly kings (ex. Romans, Greeks, Medo-Persians, Babylonians, Assyrians).
- B. Israel's request to be like the nations borrowed from this same perspective (cf. 1 Sam. 8:10ff).
- C. Such is not the way of God's king. His victory is achieved through a totally different way. He gives His life for the many. Do you see the significance of the resurrection? Giving up life seems to be a defeat, but resurrection is a manifestation of power over death.
  - 1. "He gave Himself up for her" (Eph. 5:25).
  - 2. This is the way of God who so loved the world that He gave (Jn. 3:16).
  - 3. Christ died for the ungodly (Rom. 5:6).
  - 4. It is not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins (1 Jn. 4:10).
- D. It is in this unexpected way that this king (kingdom) destroys all other kingdoms (cf. Dan. 2:44ff). This stone that was rejected by the builders became the chief corner stone (Lk. 20:17-16; 1 Pet. 2:4ff).

III. This king reflects the heart of God. Thus he is a man after God's own heart and one who accepts the penitent.

- A. The Father, as represented in the Parable of the Prodigal (Lk. 15) accepts the penitent.
  - 1. The penitent is the one who is powerless; he has no status; he has nothing; he is nothing; he recognizes it and is accepted. So it is with sinners and tax collectors, though rejected by Pharisees and scribes.
  - 2. It is the king who tells the story who understands the nature of the Father.
  - 3. It is not the rich and powerful that have a place in this kingdom, but the poor and those without status.
  - 4. Of these Jesus said, "Blessed are those who are poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of God" (Matt. 5:3).
- B. It is those who come beating their breast saying, "God be merciful to me the sinner," who go down to their house justified and not those who trust in themselves that they are righteous (Lk. 17:9ff). The one who told the story understood the Father's heart.

IV. What does all this mean for us?

- A. We need to live lives transformed by the king.

- B. We need to use power the way He used it—to give life rather than take it; to reflect the heart of God in accepting the penitent; to build up rather than destroy.
- C. We need to put up our swords recognizing that His kingdom is not of this world. We have no need to fight in such a way. Instead of “lording over,” we need to serve as He served and gave His life. We need to give up threatening (Eph. 6:9). We need to share the suffering of Christ, arm ourselves for suffering, be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, humble in spirit, not returning evil for evil or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead for we were called for this very purpose (1 Pet. 2:21ff; 3:8ff; 4:1ff).
- D. “Lead On, O King Eternal” (Ernest W. Shurtleff)—“Not with swords loud clashing, nor roll of stirring drums: with deeds of love and mercy, the heavenly kingdom comes” (Hymns for Worship, 494).

Conclusion:

1. The disciples came to understand the nature of the kingdom.
2. It was what they preached.
3. But it was not what they had expected.