



grow. pray. study.

**April 16, 2023, *You Will Be My Witnesses***

Scripture: Acts 1:6-11, NRSV

### **The first written record of Jesus making Passover into the Lord's Supper**

#### **MONDAY 4.17.23 1 Corinthians 11:23-26**

Christians treasured Jesus' words before anyone wrote a "gospel." 1 Corinthians 11 was the earliest written account of the Lord's Supper. (Yes—Paul wrote that letter 15-20 years before any of the four gospels.) \* Some Christians in Corinth held to Greek feasting customs, which stressed social rank (cf. [1 Corinthians 11:20-22](#)). Paul said they did not correctly "understand the body" ([1 Corinthians 11:29](#)). No matter their social rank they were equal in Christ's church family, all forgiven by His grace.

- We hear Jesus' words at communion services, just as the early Christians in Corinth did: "Do this to remember me" and "This cup is the new covenant in my blood." Jesus pointed to Jeremiah's promise (cf. [Jeremiah 31:31-34](#)). As scholar William Barclay translated it, he said, "This cup is the new covenant and it cost my blood." \*\* How can you join the earliest Christians in worshipping Jesus, recalling and honoring the price he paid to offer you grace and forgiveness?
- Sometimes people misunderstand [1 Corinthians 11:27-29](#) and make the Eucharist a hurtful time of guilt and fear. (Have you ever heard something like, "YOUR sins put Jesus on the cross"?) Paul wanted the Corinthian converts to see that the communion table was (and is) a place where all of us, as sinners, can rejoice in God's forgiveness and acceptance. In what ways can you prepare yourself to approach communion with a spirit of joy and gratitude, not guilt?

**Prayer:** Living Lord, thank you for the Lord's Supper when I can act out you being an integral part of my spiritual life, just as the juice-soaked bread becomes part of my physical life. Thank you for welcoming me to your family table. Amen.

\* "Paul received at least two sets of visitors from Corinth before writing 1 Corinthians from Ephesus sometime before Pentecost (see 1 Cor 16:8), probably in either 54 or 55 CE." (Charles A. Wanamaker, Introduction to 1 Corinthians in *The CEB Study Bible*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2013, p. 304 NT.)

\*\* William Barclay, *Daily Study Bible Series: The Letters to the Corinthians* (Revised Edition). Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1975, p. 103.

## “The Acts of Jesus (II)” begins

### TUESDAY 4.18.23 Acts 1:1-5

The gospel of Luke and the book of Acts were, in effect, a 2-volume set. Acts “is all about what Jesus is continuing to do and to teach.... [Jesus] is announced as King and Lord, not as an increasingly distant memory but as a living and powerful reality, a person who can be known and loved, obeyed and followed, a person who continues to act within the real world.... We call it ‘The Acts of the Apostles,’ but in truth, we should think of it as ‘The Acts of Jesus (II)’.” \*

- Luke said Jesus, after his resurrection, was “speaking to them about God’s kingdom.” That was no surprise—that had been the core of Jesus’ preaching and teaching throughout his ministry (cf. [Luke 4:43, 8:1](#)). It was a big idea: “*God’s kingdom*: the experience of God’s rule of peace and justice in Israel (cf. Acts 1:6), the world, and the entire universe.” \*\* How does Jesus’ teaching help you see yourself, not as just a “church member,” but as a citizen of God’s eternal kingdom?
- Jesus told his disciples “not to leave Jerusalem but to wait for what the Father had promised.” We Americans are often impatient and driven—we don’t like the word “wait.” Has it ever been hard for you to remember that Jesus told you, too, not to try to do his work on your own, without God’s power? How could “going it alone” hinder, not advance, God’s mission? Hinder your spiritual growth?

**Prayer:** Loving Lord, as you called your first followers to an urgent, world-changing mission, you first said, “Wait.” Help me to work with you, not ahead of you, in building your eternal kingdom on earth. Amen.

\* Wright, N.T., *Acts for Everyone, Part One: Chapters 1-12* (The New Testament for Everyone) (p. 2). Westminster John Knox Press. Kindle Edition.

\*\* F. Scott Spencer, study note on Acts 1:3 in *The CEB Study Bible*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2013, p. 218 NT.

## Jesus is already king—tell others!

### WEDNESDAY 4.19.23 Acts 1:6-11

The apostles asked, “Lord, are you going to restore the kingdom to Israel NOW?” They still didn’t see that he already had. “In the resurrection (and the ascension), Jesus is indeed being enthroned as Israel’s Messiah and therefore the king of the whole world.... The apostles are to go out as heralds, not of someone who may become king at some point in the future, but of the one already appointed and enthroned.... One day that kingdom will come, fully and finally. In the meantime, we have a job to do.”

- In verse 7, Jesus was clear that God’s authority (which Jesus shared—cf. e.g. [Mark 1:22, Luke 5:24](#)), and not us, sets the “times or seasons” (the “when” we are so curious about). God was going to give them power (Greek *dunamis*, the root of “dynamite”) by being present as the Holy Spirit (hence the “wait” we studied yesterday—cf. [Acts 1:4](#)). What helps you remember that God’s authority and power must be the ultimate reason for everything we undertake as a church?
- Jesus said God’s power activated God’s people. In God’s authority, Jesus sent them (and us) to “the end of the earth” as delegated witnesses to his kingship. “The Greek term... is found thirteen times in Acts, and the basic meaning is ‘one who testifies’.... The focus in ‘witness’ is speaking from personal experience.” \*\* In Emil Brunner’s words, “The church exists by mission as fire exists by burning.” \*\*\* In what ways are you gifted to join in the church’s God-given mission?

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, empower me to be more effective as a witness to Jesus who loves me, and who has saved me. Let my peace, purpose and passion draw others to Jesus. Amen.

\* Wright, N.T., *Acts for Everyone, Part One: Chapters 1-12* (The New Testament for Everyone) (p. 8-10). Westminster John Knox Press. Kindle Edition.

\*\* Barclay M. Newman and Eugene A. Nida, *A Handbook on The Acts of the Apostles*. New York: United Bible Societies, 1972, p. 19.

\*\*\* Emil Brunner (1889-1966), *The Word and the World*, London: SCM Press, 1931, p. 11.

## **Jesus' encouraged Paul's work in Corinth**

### **THURSDAY 4.20.23 Acts 18:1-11**

On the apostle Paul's second missionary journey, he went to Corinth, a large Greek seaport known for all the vices historically typical of idle sailors. As he preached in Corinth, some synagogue members (by then inevitably) "opposed and slandered him." But Paul heard Jesus' voice in a night vision telling him that he had "many people" in Corinth. Paul met Aquila and Priscilla, who became dear friends and co-workers (cf. [Romans 16:3-4](#)). He ended up staying in Corinth for 18 months.

- After people opposed and slandered Paul, he "left the synagogue." Jesus told Paul in that night vision, "Don't be afraid.... I'm with you." Remarkably, "Crispus, the synagogue leader, and his entire household came to believe in the Lord." How does it change your outlook in difficult, scary situations to have a sense that you're not all alone, that Jesus is with you? Is there some part of life in which you need God's comfort and courage right now?
- When Paul met Priscilla and Aquila, they were all far from home. He was traveling from one unfamiliar city to another. Emperor Claudius' orders had exiled Priscilla and Aquila from their home in Rome. \* Most often God works through people. How did God work through their close friendship to strengthen all three people to serve Jesus more effectively?

**Prayer:** Loving Lord, keep building my ability to trust that you are always with me. And make me the kind of friend who can help and support other people in serving you more faithfully. Amen.

\* "The Roman historian Suetonius reports that Emperor Claudius expelled all Jews from Rome in 49 CE because of conflicts over Chrestus, perhaps referring to Christus or Christ." (F. Scott Spencer, study note on Acts 18:2 in *The CEB Study Bible*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2013, p. 254 NT.)

## **Paul quoted a teaching that Jesus lived**

### **FRIDAY 4.21.23 Acts 20:17-36**

At the end of his third missionary journey, Paul was on his way to Jerusalem, carrying an offering from Gentile Christians who were eager to help their needy fellow Christians in Jerusalem. He knew it was likely that arrest and prison awaited him in Jerusalem. In an emotional farewell to the elders in Ephesus, he reviewed his legacy of ministry among them, connected it to Jesus' self-giving legacy and sketched the tasks he trusted them to carry on when he was gone.

- Verse 35 in today's passage was the only direct quote from Jesus that none of the four gospels later included. It's another intriguing sign that the early Christians prized and shared Jesus's words before they had the written gospels. What habits have you formed (maybe the daily GPS, since you are reading this?) that help you to remember Jesus' words? What value do you see in remembering at least some keywords without always needing a way to look them up?
- Do you know your life mission and purpose? Paul's words in verse 24 can help you begin to identify that purpose (even if you haven't consciously chosen it). What in your life would move you to say, "Nothing, not even my life, is more important than \_\_\_\_\_"? As that answer comes into focus, pray about whether it fits better into God's definition of a good life legacy or the society around you. Ask God to help you make any needed course corrections.

**Prayer:** Loving Lord, you taught us that "it is more blessed to give than to receive." Keep growing a heart within me that rejoices in the freedom and satisfaction of your kind of giving. Amen.

## **Trouble for reaching people Jesus wanted to reach**

### **SATURDAY 4.22.23 Acts 22:5-22**

The apostle Paul had preached Christ all over the Roman Empire—and made some obsessive foes. When they saw Paul in the Temple in Jerusalem, they stirred up a mob so violent that Roman soldiers had to rescue him (cf. [Acts 21:27-36](#)). Not intimidated, Paul saw this as a chance to tell the mob about his lifelong passionate loyalty to God, and the way Jesus had redirected that loyalty. Scholar N. T. Wright sketched the historical roots of this tragic scene: "Take a sense of lasting horror at 'the other side,' in this case the entire world of paganism, that has been branded into the very soul of an entire people over not a few decades, not even a few centuries, but one or two millennia.... that horror of everything that dishonors this God, everything that lives outside the doors of the synagogue, outside the borders of the holy land; only then will you even begin to understand why Paul had to try to explain what had happened, and why the crowd had to reject it... with a furious passion." \*

- This chaotic scene didn't "come out of the blue." Jesus mourned over Jerusalem's people's violent hatred of Rome rather than accepting his "love your enemies" message (cf. [Luke 19:41-44](#)). A common rabbinic prayer, one Paul likely prayed when younger, said, "Lord, I thank you that I was not born a Gentile." The mob in Jerusalem was angry that Paul preached God's grace to Gentiles. But Jesus gave him that mission (cf. [Acts 9:15, 15:13-19](#)) and repeated it that day in the Temple (verse 21). "Given the rise in Judean nationalism over the previous decade, Paul's mention of ministry to Gentiles rekindles the riot (v. 22), which started over the charge that he had brought a Gentile into the temple (21:27-29)." \*\* Are there people in this world you're thankful you AREN'T? Can you apply the principle of Paul's mission and seek to help God reach even those people?

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, Paul tried for peace and understanding with his enemies—but not by discarding the mission you gave him. Give me a heart that seeks peace even when I must firmly stand for truth. Amen.

\* N. T. Wright, *Acts for Everyone, Part 2: Chapters 13–28*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008, p. 159.

\*\* NIV, *Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible* (p. 9685). Zondervan. Kindle Edition.

**Prayer Requests** – [cor.org/prayer](https://www.cor.org/prayer) *Prayers of peace and comfort for:*

To **Connie Cowdrey** and family following the death of **Gary Cowdrey** (Husband) who died 3/6/2023.

To **Michelle Funk** and family following the death of **Dalton Funk** (Son) who died 4/6/2023.

To **Lissa Melber** and family following the death of **Carolyn Carlton** (Mother) who died 4/12/2023.

To **Janet O'Dell** and family following the death of **Douglas Lanford** (Brother) who died 3/30/2023.

To **Michael Summers** and family following the death of **Martha Babbitt** (Mother) who died 4/5/2023.

To **Mary Waye** and family following the death of **Larry Waye** (Husband) who died 4/10/2023.

To **Betty Welch** and family following the death of **Mike Welch** (Husband) who died 4/9/2023.