

Notes for the Ones Called-Out to Meet

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Prophecy About Jesus' Return In The Book Of Acts

by Dan Trygg

“So when they had come together, they were asking Him, saying, ‘Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?’⁷ He said to them, ‘It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority;⁸ but you will take power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you; and you shall be My witnesses... even to the remotest part of the earth.’⁹ And after He had said these things, while they were looking on He was lifted up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight.¹⁰ And as they were gazing intently into the sky while He was going, behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them.¹¹ They also said, ‘Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven.’¹² Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey away.”

Acts 1:6-12

“But the things which God announced beforehand by the mouth of all the prophets, that His Christ would suffer, He has thus fulfilled.¹⁹ Therefore repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord;²⁰ and that He may send Jesus, the Christ appointed for you,²¹ whom heaven must receive until times of restoration of all things, as God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from ancient time...²³ And it will be that every soul that does not give heed [to Him] shall be utterly destroyed from among the people.”

Acts 3:18-21,23

“God raised Him up on the third day and granted that He become visible,⁴¹ ... to us who ate and drank with Him after He arose from the dead.⁴² And He ordered us to preach to the people, and solemnly to testify that this is the One who has been appointed by God as Judge of the living and the dead.”

Acts 10:40-42

“Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to people that all everywhere should repent,³¹ because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all people by raising Him from the dead.”

Acts 17:30-31

“But as he was discussing righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come, Felix became frightened and said, “Go away for the present...”

Acts 24:25

There is not a whole lot of extra information given in the book of Acts, regarding Jesus' return. What we do have, however, is consistent with both the prophecies of the OT and the teachings of Jesus.

Right from the beginning of the book, we see the subject of future events come up. Jesus had spent time with His disciples, over a forty-day period, appearing to them on numerous occasions in ways that were “convincing proofs”, and teaching them about the kingdom of God. Assembling them together, He instructed them to stay in Jerusalem until they received the “promise of the Father”, the Holy Spirit. Jesus had spoken much about the Holy Spirit, especially on that last evening before He had been arrested (Jn. 14-16). **He had made it clear that He Himself would be leaving, but that the Holy Spirit would come to dwell within them.** It would actually be advantageous to them, because the Spirit could be with each one of them, whereas Jesus could only be in one location at a time.

When the text says that He “was teaching them about the kingdom of God”, we might suppose that He was filling them in on their questions about the end, ...about how things would unfold..., as He had instructed them before. But, no. In fact, they *did not*, as yet, have a clear understanding about *when* and *how* He would be coming, ...nor an accurate grasp regarding their purpose in the kingdom of God, or how that was meant to work out. Remember, He *had* told them, on at least one occasion, that they would some day be sitting on twelve thrones with Him, judging the twelve tribes of Israel (Matt. 19:28; Lk. 22:28-30). That gives us a little context for their question, here. **“Lord, is it at *this time* that you are restoring the kingdom to Israel?”**

Of course, **if we were to revisit Jesus' teachings in the gospels, it is quite evident that the things He had just taught them recently** (e.g., Matthew 24,25) **had not had time to transpire.** Besides, in Matthew 19:28, **Jesus had said that they would be seated with Him on twelve thrones “in the regeneration** (‘rebirth, re-beginning’), **when the Son of Man will sit on His glorious throne.”** In Acts 1, Jesus is trying to prepare them for *His departure*, and they are jumping ahead to *His return in glory*. **They forgot all He had said about wars, famines, earthquakes, persecutions, proclaiming the gospel to all nations, the great tribulation, the abomination of desolation, the destruction of the temple, etc.** Obviously, they were confused, grasping at hopeful straws, trying to understand.

Jesus immediately shut down their inquiry and directed their thoughts to the task at hand. They had kingdom responsibilities, yes, but it was not to reign over or judge others. Jesus said, **“It is not for you to know times or seasons** which the Father has placed in His own authority, rather you will (for yourselves) take power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and **you will be testifiers/witnesses of Me in Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria, and unto the end of the earth.”** **Jesus focused their attention on their *current* kingdom responsibilities,** ...to wait for the coming of the Holy Spirit, to take hold of the power which He brings, and to testify of Jesus far and wide. Jesus brought their minds back to “this gospel of the kingdom must be preached as a sign to all the nations, and then the end will come.”

And then He LEFT...!! He was taken up into the clouds right before their eyes! They were in shock! They stood there gazing speechless into the clouds, where they had seen Him depart. Suddenly, they realized that there were two other men standing with them, ...men with white clothing. How or when they came, no one had noticed, but they spoke up, and said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand here looking up into the sky? **This Jesus, who was taken up from you, will come in the same way you saw Him proceeding into heaven.**” In other words, **He will come from the clouds. And where were they standing? On the Mount of Olives, ...the exact place that the prophet Zechariah said that Yahweh would come,** “In that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, ...and the Mount will be split in two...” (Zech. 14:4). **When will this happen, according to Zechariah? When armies gather around Jerusalem, and begin sacking the city.** Then Yahweh will come and fight against the nations. **This is the last battle of the age,** and “you will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds with power and great glory” (Matt. 24:30; cf. Dan. 7:8-14). **The angels made it quite clear, ...the next time Jesus comes, He will be coming visibly on the clouds.** Do you think it was coincidence that Jesus chose to leave from the very spot that it was said that Yahweh would come at the end? I don't.

In Acts 3, Peter and John healed a lame man by the Beautiful Gate of the Temple. In the excitement that ensued, Peter took the opportunity to testify about Jesus. He declared that God had healed this lame man to glorify His servant, Jesus, ...the very Man they had delivered up, disowned, and put to death, the One whom God had also risen from the dead, a fact to which he and the other apostles were witness to. Peter boldly declared that “On the basis of faith in His name, it is the name of Jesus which has strengthened this man, ...and the faith which comes through Him has given him this perfect health in the presence of you all.” Peter went on to say that he knew that they did not understand what they were doing, but in fact they had fulfilled what the prophets had spoken of, namely that the Messiah would suffer (cf. Isa. 53). **Peter called them to “repent and turn around, in order that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, and that He may send Jesus, the Messiah appointed for you, who it is necessary that heaven receive until the period of the restoration of all things,** about which God had spoken through His prophets” (vss. 19-21). **Peter went on to refer to a prophecy of Moses, ...that God would raise up another prophet like him, and they were to give heed to what He says.** Those who do not give heed will be utterly destroyed from among the people. **That prophet is Jesus!**

There are two significant statements made here that help us to understand what Peter understood of Jesus' future coming. First, it was necessary for Him to stay in heaven “until the time of the restoration of all things, concerning which God spoke through the mouth of His holy prophets from ancient times.” The word for “restoration” refers to the return to a previous, more perfect state. It is not just referring to the nation, it is referring to all creation. In other words, **Jesus is going to remain in heaven until it is time to end this age, and restore nature to a state like it was before the fall.** This would seem to accord with prophecies such as Isa. 11:1-9; 65:11-25; Ezk. 47:1-12 and Zech. 14.

The other significant statement from this passage in Acts 3 is the reference to the prophet like Moses (a Messianic claim). God's people will give heed to Him, but those who do not will be “utterly destroyed from among the people”. While this word only occurs here in the NT, it occurs some 204 times in the Septuagint Greek translation of the OT, the version most Jews would have been familiar with outside of Judea. It is used to translate the phrase, “he will be cut off from his people”, which can include a punishment from exclusion or banishment, up to death. **So not only will the restoration of all things happen when Jesus returns, but also the “cutting off” of all who refuse to obey Him.** That sounds like the return of Yahweh in Zechariah 14, the destruction of His enemies and the transformation of the earth. It also sounds like Jesus' teaching. He will gather His elect, and destroy those in opposition to Him (Matt. 24).

The last three passages from the book of Acts all clearly declare that Jesus will come to judge the entire world, both the living and the dead. God has fixed a day for that judgment, but He has given that judgment to His Son. **Jesus Himself taught the same thing, in John 5:22-29.** He said that the Father had given all judgment to the Son *in order that* all people would honor the Son *even as* they honor the Father. **Jesus said that a day would come when all who are in the tombs will hear His voice. They will come to life and come forth, some to a resurrection of life, for those who had done well and honored Him, but to others a resurrection of judgment, to those who have done evil.** This sounds very much like the resurrection described in Daniel 12:2,3, “And many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace and everlasting contempt.”³ And those who have insight will shine brightly like the brightness of the expanse of heaven, and those who lead the many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.” **This resurrection and judgment will be at the command and oversight of Jesus.**

When we examine the testimony of the book of Acts regarding Jesus' return, it is consistent with the teachings of the OT, and it also agrees with what Jesus Himself taught in the gospels. He will return at the end of the age. He will come visibly, in power and glory, upon the clouds. When He comes, He will restore the created order, and transform the face of the land, and even the dynamics of nature. He will “cut off” the wicked from among His people. And ultimately, He will judge the living and the dead. **There is no mention of any other return of Christ in the gospels or the book of Acts. Heaven must receive Him until the time for the restoration of all things.**