**A New Beginning**

 *In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach,****2****until the day when he was taken up, after he had given commands through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen.****3****He presented himself alive to them after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God.*

***4****And while staying with them he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, “you heard from me;****5****for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.”*

***6****So when they had come together, they asked him, “Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?”****7****He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority.****8****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.”****9****And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight.****10****And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes,****11****and said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.” (Acts 1:1-11, ESV)*

 The beginning of a new life in Jesus entails a new faith-purpose. Greetings to you dear brothers and sisters in Christ as we note today the new atmosphere that comes with the Resurrection season of the church calendar. When Jesus rose from the dead, the apostles’ lives changed; they would no longer have the same understanding of what their lives would be. They would have a different goal than before. Thus, today’s passage speaks about that new purpose or goal, which is ours also as followers of Jesus. Therefore, today we can consider that this message is about the new beginning of our faith, which is tied to a new goal. So, let us take a few minutes to examine this reality…

 Jesus’ Resurrection opens up a new horizon for His followers. According to God’s people who lived in Old Testament times, God’s kingdom was the united Kingdom of Israel, the apex of which was experienced under the rules of David and Solomon. In addition, according to Old Testament thinking, the idea of salvation was generally thought of in a military context, a military longing, or a direct war-situation. Salvation was more a rescue from the immediate troubles of this world, and not from the sentence of (spiritual) death. Yes, there was going to be a general resurrection at the end of time or all people who had ever lived, but only to receive the judgment of God. There was no hope or assured “good” result from that experience promised. So, when the Kingdom of Israel was split into two and then became weak and eventually annexed by neighboring empires, the salvation of the people’s dreams started to connect back to the historic days of King David and Solomon. For those reasons, when the disciples were with Jesus, the Lord prepared them for a new purpose (as opposed to the dream mentioned above). Their hearts were set on the restoration of the physical Kingdom of Israel. What Jesus said, however, was that their hope and work was no longer that, but it was to be witnesses to Him, even to the edges of their known world.

 Sometimes, peoples’ vision is too short-sighted. They think in this way: “If I can just take care of my family, then what other headaches do I need to be involved in?” However, he who thinks about matters beyond himself without ignoring his immediate needs does what is best. He whose vision is greater and wider serves that vision and its goal.

Thus, dearly beloved, we as believers have been given the great vision of the Kingdom of God[[1]](#footnote-1). That vision is not of the physical political Kingdom of Israel, but that of being Jesus’ witnesses, wherever we find ourselves or go in this world. Yes, it is true that the Lord has ascended to heaven and remains there at the side of the Father, but His Spirit is with us, within us, and even among us if we love each other.

Therefore, as believers in Jesus Christ, we are called to be witnesses to Jesus, in the power of the Holy Spirit, who needs to rest on us and continue to do so every day. Our vision is not focused on ourselves or our own personal programs and goals but are the purpose that our Lord has established. As I said before, the beginning of a new life in Jesus entails a new faith-purpose.

May God adjust our life-purposes and plans, so that with our words and deeds, we are always witnesses for Christ. The Lord bless you all. Amen.

1. As defined by Jesus in Scripture. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)