**Graduating Disciples**

 *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)*

 As Jesus’ disciples, we have all graduated and are living a new life with the Lord.

 Greetings dearly beloved as we rejoice in our graduates today and their successes. Today we’re going to talk about graduating, but specifically from a spiritual perspective. As Christians, we are going to talk about what our life needs to look like as graduates unto a life with Jesus. My hope is that with this message, the difference between the life of an unbeliever and a Christian will be much clearer to us. Let’s go a little deeper into this last statement…

 After Jesus’ Resurrection, all of His followers, we included, have graduated out of the old life and into a new life which we must learn to live in and for Him. In the Scripture passage, Jesus was getting ready to leave His disciples for good – and he was giving them some important final instructions before doing so. Beyond just speech, however, the Lord appeared to them several times to further solidify the new life that they were supposed to be living (now that He had risen). The Lord was now finally victorious for them and us today. His enemy the devil and evil people were unable to (permanently) kill Him. Most importantly, however, His disciples needed not just to know the above, but to wait in Jerusalem until they received God’s Promise from heaven. In other words, they needed to obey His words and be full of the Holy Spirit. In addition, they were called to be witnesses to Him and not busy themselves with calendars and such discussions of Christ’s Return, much like some do today. Therefore, in that new season that God had given (which continues today), Jesus was and is not limited by human limitations anymore. The disciples needed to wait patiently and obediently and become His Spirit-filled witnesses. The old days of fear and being afraid of persecution had ended – they were entering the era of the Spirit-filled church. They had graduated. They now followed the victorious Savior and served Him by the power of the Holy Spirit.

 This is like graduating high school and starting college or going into the work force. In the case of the first, you find a completely new level of freedom, knowing that you have to choose the subjects to study, and that only God will be watching over you, helping, along with whatever knowledge or skills you have gained from your high school years. In the case of beginning work, you will not have the structure of classes anymore, since your company, boss, society or you yourself will decide what you’re going to be doing during the 8 hours of work that you put in. Again, however, your true and greatest boss will be God.

 Coming to faith in Christ is not much different. Everyone has a time in their life when they decide to get serious about Jesus Christ. Some call that a “new birth” – others a “rededication.” What is important is to realize that before that point, Christian life is one full of customs, traditions and other activities that are anything but reflecting a life that follows Jesus Christ. When we graduate out of that stage, however, and learn our lesson and get serious about the Lord and dedicate ourselves to prayer and being strengthened by the Holy Spirit, thus being true God-fearing Christians, then bearing witness to Him becomes a joyful obedient act, rather than a duty or burden to carry.

 After Jesus’ Resurrection, all of His followers, we included, have graduated out of the old life and into a new life which we must learn to live in and for Him. As Jesus’ disciples, we have all graduated and are living a new life with the Lord.

 May the Lord bless us and our graduates, so that they remain holding tightly to our Lord in their new freedom, and that they would have a God-pleasing journey ahead of them.

 The Lord bless you all. Amen.