

Wait for the Promise

Acts 1:12-26

The perfect timing of God!

Like *our farmers* who often must play the waiting game—wait for the rain, wait for the dry—it’s “hurry up and _____.” That’s what James says: “**Be patient**, therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient about it, until it receives the early and the late rains.⁸ You also, be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.⁹ Do not grumble against one another, brothers” (5:7-8).

Have you learned the incredibly valuable discipline of waiting on the Lord, being patient until it’s His time to act? If not, you probably grumble a lot. But if you’ve learned that discipline, then you’ve learned the timeless truth that God’s time is always the _____ time, even the perfect time. Have you learned that? **The perfect timing of God!**

When you read in the Old Testament about Israel, it seems like they waited forever for the coming of their promised Messiah, hundreds, even thousands of years. And when He finally came, they didn’t recognize Him, and even rejected Him as their Messiah. And the few who did recognize and accept Him, kept bugging Him, “Lord, is it at this time You will establish Your Millennial Kingdom, restoring the kingdom of Israel?” The truth is, they’re still waiting on that, because God had a mystery in mind, the Church, His chosen people made up of Jews and Gentiles. But before the Church could begin, the promised Holy Spirit had to come. So Jesus’ apostles were told once again to wait (**Acts 1:4-5**).

The Holy Spirit’s coming is near, but not just yet. Let’s pick up where we left off last week. In verse 11, Jesus *had to physically (bodily) ascend* so He could send His Spirit to empower *His spiritual body*, the Church, to carry on His life and ministry on the earth as His faithful witnesses.

Acts 1:12: In the final verses of Luke’s Gospel, Luke testified that when “Jesus parted from them and was carried to heaven, they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy!” (24:51-52).

While they were waiting:

1. They were _____ to prayer (12-14).

Verse 13 lists the eleven apostles, minus Judas, of course, which means the list of twelve is incomplete. In **verse 14**, this is the last time the Lord's mother is mentioned. And the lasting image we have of her is in serious _____ to her divine Son! And the Lord's siblings are there, His brothers, James, Joseph, Jude, and Simon (Mark 6:4). Before his death and resurrection, they were strong unbelievers in their half-brother. In fact, during Jesus' ministry, His brothers tried to rescue Him from Himself, declaring, "He is out of His mind!" (Mark 3:21). After His ascension, *He changed their minds!* Now convinced that He's their Messiah and Lord, *they are* among those in the upper room, and together these folks make up the core of the early Church in Jerusalem.

Take note of their unity. Here's why: One, the Lord's appearances to them over 40-days has eliminated all disunity. And two, during His first appearance after His resurrection, in John 20:22, "He breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit.'" They already, in some way, have the Spirit of God. So, back to **verse 14**, the key word is "with one accord." They have unifying faith in Jesus Christ and, by now they have unifying faith in each other. "All these **with one accord** were **devoting themselves** to prayer." The Spirit was coming! And they are so focused, and so *one* in their devotion to pray. "Lord, we are so ready! And we will be your witnesses, first in Jerusalem! So, come, Holy Spirit!"

2. They were _____ of the need (15-20).

Verse 16: Two truths: First, "Scripture *had to* be fulfilled" speaks of *the necessity* of Judas' defection in order to fulfill biblical prophecy. Second, Peter affirmed that the Scriptures were inspired by God when he said, "The Holy Spirit spoke" through David concerning Judas. Christianity affirms both truths: Scripture *must be* fulfilled, even if it takes seemingly forever before it's fulfilled, and God's Word *is* _____ Word, inspired by the Holy Spirit of God through inspired human instruments.

Verses 17-19: Didn't the priests purchase the field, not Judas? The priests regarded it as blood money, so they didn't receive it for themselves, but purchased the field with Judas' money in his _____.

So indirectly, he purchased it. But didn't Judas hang himself? Then why the gory description of his death? I think it is a stark warning to *Judas-types* throughout church history. This is how you will be remembered!

Verse 20: Peter quotes a Psalm of David, a prophecy about David's enemies that also applies to Jesus' enemy, Judas and the tragic outcome of betrayal: "His camp will become desolate" (69:25). And, then a Psalm that speaks of *the necessity* to find someone to replace him so that the 11 apostles will become 12 again: "Let another take his office" (109:8).

3. They were _____ to the Lord (21-26).

Verses 21-22: The **qualification** necessary in order to be numbered among the twelve apostles: he had to be a man who accompanied Jesus and the apostles throughout Jesus' earthly ministry, from the beginning to the end, including His resurrection and ascension. That was a necessity, because here's **the foundational function** of the twelve: "one of these men must become with us a witness to his resurrection." The foundation of the Church, laid by the twelve apostles, was Jesus is worthy to be our Savior and Lord because He died but now is alive!

Verses 23-25: They put forward two names, then they looked to Jesus. He chose the original twelve, and so out of necessity, He must choose Judas' replacement. So they prayed: "Lord Jesus, show us which _____ You have chosen!" There was a holy dependence upon Jesus.

It's important to note that throughout the book of Acts, we will find God's people praying, and when God's people pray, God makes things happen! The late Warren Wiersbe—who died earlier this month, on May 2, 2019, at 89—wrote, "Prayer is both the thermometer and the thermostat of the local church; for the spiritual temperature either goes up or down, depending on _____ God's people pray." And whether we pray in full dependence on God and pray much, always looking to Him in order to accomplish His will, or not.

Verse 26: Then they did a very Old Testament thing—they cast lots to determine the Lord's choice. After the Spirit came in chapter 2, we don't see this method used again in the New Testament. No need to cast lots. We now have the Holy Spirit to guide us.

So, with the apostleship restored to its full number, the 120 were ready for the coming of the Holy Spirit and the beginning of their ministry to be the Lord's witnesses. The stage is set. Jesus is about to do a great new, supernatural work in and through them. Only one element was missing—the _____ of the Holy Spirit!

All is ready!

The wait is over! Not only has the Messiah come and gone, in fulfillment of Scripture, but Jesus is ready to build His Church, beginning in Jerusalem, first among His own, the Jews. But He won't stop at that. We are gathered together today as a local church family because Jesus, through the Spirit, by human witnesses, didn't stop at that. This is 21st-century Church! And we are His witnesses! Witnesses, not only of what we know about Jesus. *We do know much about Him*—all Jesus followers who are in His Word in prayer know about Jesus. But more than that, we personally, intimately, powerfully know Him.

Corporately, we are meeting with Him together right now. In fact, if you don't personally know Jesus, this entire worship service is us witnessing to you that He is real, that He died for our sins, that He was raised, and that we want you to know what we know: Him!

Jesus said in Revelation 3:20, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with Me." All is ready. The wait is over. Just hear Him today, open the door of your heart, and let Him in. All is ready. But the question of the day is, *are you ready to let Him in?*