

Acts 1:7: *'And he said unto them, 'It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power...'*

Jesus did not say, '... it is not for you to know the times or the seasons,' period! ...but He carefully added: *'which the Father hath put in His own power.'*

Some of those things which the Father has put in His own power are: the day and hour of the Rapture, the day and hour of the rise of the Antichrist and his confirmation of a 7-year peace deal, the day and hour of the Russian-led muslim coalition invasion of Israel as documented in Ezekiel 38/39, etc...

However, we very well have been given wisdom from the Holy Spirit as to the times and seasons in which we live and the stark reminders, day after day, of the nearness of our removal in the Rapture and the beginning of the Tribulation. Paul wrote of such:

'But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. ² For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. ³ For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.

*⁴ But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. ⁵ Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. ⁶ Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but **let us watch and be sober.**' 1Thes 5:1*

God expects us to be aware and to carefully watch the signs of the time in which we live. Everything Jesus predicted in Matthew 24 is now engulfing the entire World. When Jesus said that the time of His coming, in the Rapture, will be like the times of Noah and Lot, He meant, first, that everything will be going along normally so as to be unexpected but He meant, also, that darkness and evil would permeate all the World's systems, as it did in the times of Noah and Lot which is exactly what we are currently watching all around us.

Acts 1:8: *'But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.'*

This is called 'The Great Commission;' but if we look carefully, it is not a commission, but, rather, a prediction. Here, He didn't command, 'You, go and be witnesses!; He simply said, 'You will be; like it or not.' As they were faithful to witness to the Truth of the Lord Jesus Christ, He was faithful to build His Church and to guard it. It would begin in Jerusalem and then spread out, naturally, into Judea, Samaria, and throughout the World before He returns to remove His Church prior to the 7-year Tribulation.

Jesus said: *'... **I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.**'* Matt 16:18

Why did He say, '... the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.?' This doesn't refer to Satan and demons attacking the Church... gates are not for attacking... gates and walls are for withstanding; an attacking army doesn't carry their city's gates along with them. The World lies in the kingdom of darkness; there are dark, spiritual walls around every nation, every city, every family and every individual. Jesus was saying that the light of the Gospel is capable of overcoming any and every wall or gate of the kingdom of darkness. When the Gospel is taken to a person whom God is drawing to Himself, He is the One Who does the work of opening a heart and mind to Truth; He is the One Who then gives His gifts of Repentance and Faith to believe. The Church's commission, every individual believer's commission, is to simply be a faithful witness to the Truth, always.

The True Church is never on defense; the light of the True Gospel is always moving inexorably forward, shining into darkness. The kingdom of darkness is always on defense; its gates and walls are continually being broken asunder. The darkness's only defense is lies, deception and murder but the Lord Jesus Christ will continue to multiply and protect His Body and Bride until the moment He removes us in the Rapture, our Blessed Hope, our comfort, our strength and power; we know He is coming and we can be strong and courageous, not trembling or dismayed, knowing that the Lord our God is with us wherever we go.

His Great Commission is to every believer: we are all commanded to be His witnesses to all the World. His

promise of Salvation and the Holy Spirit is to everyone whom the Lord our God shall call to Himself.

However, lest we miss His full meaning: in Mark, He did, in fact, command His Disciples to go!

¹⁵ And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. ¹⁶ He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. ¹⁷ And these signs shall follow them that believe; in my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; ¹⁸ They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover. ¹⁹ So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God. ²⁰ And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and **confirming the word with signs following.** Amen.' Mark 16:15

Realize, Jesus is speaking to His Disciples, His Apostles. They are to go out and preach. They, and those who believe, and are saved, from their witness, are the ones who will cast out devils, speak in new tongues, take up serpents, drink poison, heal the sick. We saw the protection from snakes with Paul, on his way to Rome, he was unharmed and, so, the Gospel was confirmed to that group of people. All of these miraculous 'happenings' were in the first and second generation of the Church; their purpose was to confirm the Truth of this new and heretofore unheard, and outlandish Gospel of God's Grace and Mercy unto Eternal Life.

We have only to open our eyes to understand that those miraculous happenings are not in operation today; certainly God is able and does give certain gifts for His purposes but they are not 'normal' today. Then, as they ceased, the 'church' began to worship relics and statues, graves and bones in the attempt to force those miracles back into 'action.'

Paul said *'I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise. ¹⁵ So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also. ¹⁶ For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. ¹⁷ For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.'* Rom 1:14

Notice that here, Paul does not say he is a debtor to the Jews; in fact, of all his previous learning and advancement in Judaism, he says: *'Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: ⁵ Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an **Hebrew of the Hebrews**; as touching the law, Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: ⁵ Circumcised the eighth day, **of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews**; as touching the law, a Pharisee; Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the **righteousness which is in the law, blameless. ⁷ But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. ⁸ Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, **and do count them but dung**, that I may win Christ,'*** Philippians 3:4

Why? Because all his vast training and knowledge in Judaism was based upon the wrong understandings of salvation by works; the Judaism of the 1st Century, to the present, has very little to do with the Law handed down to, and through, Moses.

Now, he is debtor to Greeks and Barbarians; those are the ones to whom he was sent: the Gentiles. To them, Judaism meant nothing. The writer to the Hebrews needed to appeal to the Law and the Prophets in order to reach Hebrews but all that means nothing to Gentiles.

Acts 1:9: *'And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. ¹⁰ And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.'*

This sounds like He was taken up, not fast in a flash, but, rather, up relatively slowly so that all those with Him could watch and follow Him as He rose up and finally disappeared into a cloud. *Into a cloud...*

As they continued looking up, two angels said that when He returns, He will come back the same way... gently, and out of a cloud. This absolutely refers to the first part of His Second Coming when He comes down into the clouds and calls us up to Himself in the Rapture.

This has nothing, whatsoever, to do with the second part of His Second Coming, His return in Power and Glory with millions of mighty angels and saints, all riding upon white horses, all ready to watch Him destroy all His millions of enemies, with the Sword which will proceed from His Mouth.

When He comes, 7 years before, for us, in the Rapture, He will come in like manner as they had seen Him go into Heaven.

Acts 1:12: *'Then returned they unto Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a sabbath day's journey.'*

The Mount of Olives is east of Jerusalem, across the Kidron Valley, about 1 km or, 2/3 mile; that is a Sabbath day's journey. It isn't the distance someone can cover walking for a day, but, rather, it's the distance the Jewish leaders '*invented*,' which they determined was necessary to: 'Honor the Sabbath, to do no work.' They decided, surely for their own comfort in allowing some walking, that any longer distance, walking, constituted 'work.' That's the kind of thing Jesus railed against as He castigated the Pharisees in Matt 23.

Acts 1:13: *'Then returned they unto Jerusalem... And when they were come in, they went up into an upper room, where abode both Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, Philip, and Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon Zelotes, and Judas the brother of James.'*

Here, then, were all of them; the whole group, the whole body of the infant Church; now, they all believed; they had seen Him, with their own eyes as He rose from the Earth to be swallowed by a cloud. They had seen and heard the 2 angels' promise that He would return in like manner as He had just left. They expected His return to be soon; as far as they knew, they were it; all they knew, for certain, was that Jesus had promised something special, from His Holy Spirit, which would somehow make them more powerful but, as to specifics, they really had no idea what to expect.

Acts 1:14: *'These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren.'*

All together in one accord; probably the only time the whole Church was ever in complete unity but '*Unity!*' is the cry today; '*Unity above all!*' So many are more than willing to throw out Doctrine for unity but for that to be the case, the Church would, of necessity, devolve deeper and deeper into apostasy which is exactly what we've watched happen over the past years; it began with the lies of the Judaizers whom Paul warned the Galatians against, became far worse with the deceptions of catholicism until finally, today, we see so much of the Church, which, in years past, stood for Truth and Doctrine, now embracing and celebrating what God's Word refers to as the abomination of homosexuality and the despising of God's natural order in transsexualism.

Notice who is listed here: these all, the 11 Apostles, the women, Mary Magdalene, Martha and others, Mary, the Earthly mother of Jesus and... .. **His brothers!** But wait! Catholicism teaches that Mary was a virgin, that she remained a virgin throughout her Earthly life, was born without a sin nature, was taken up to Heaven without dying and, finally, that she never had any children after Jesus because she remained a holy virgin but God, and Joseph, had other ideas!

Here, after carefully listing the names of the Apostles, Luke then lists the women, Mary and, finally, the rest of Mary and Joseph's younger children. We see them actually named in Matthew:

*'And when he was come into his own country, he taught them in their synagogue, insomuch that they were astonished, and said, Whence hath this man this wisdom, and these mighty works? ⁵⁵Is not this the carpenter's son? is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas? **And his sisters,** are they not all with us? Whence then hath this man all these things? ⁵⁷And they were offended in him.'* Matt 13:54

Ah well... you can always trust the Catholic magisterium, as well as so many others, to never let a little thing like Biblical Truth stand in the way of their most cherished 'traditions.'

Verse 15: *'And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples, and said...
(the number of names together were about an hundred and twenty,)'*

So, lest any of us, the True Church around the World, become discouraged with seemingly small numbers, lest we become jealous of stadiums filled with weak minded sort-of believers listening to highly charismatic false teachers... we should remind ourselves, numbers are not important to God; He cares about Truth and Faithfulness. Here we see, after 3 1/2 years of traveling with the greatest Evangelist of all time, the entire group, when He finished His Ministry, numbered only 120... only four times the number of the Sunday school class I teach. In fact, a better way to see it... the numbers in our little group, is a full 25% of the entire infant Church... just before it was fully born on Pentecost.

Of course, there was no failure in Jesus' Earthly ministry; He accomplished absolutely everything which He and His Father had intended; since Jesus had come only to Israel, that seemingly small number, 120, fully highlighted the fact that Israel, as a whole, rejected Him, and all that He offered; that rejection has resulted in 2000 years of discipline from God as He, during the same time, has been creating the Body and Bride for His Faithful Beloved Son, which will be comprised mostly of Gentiles.

Next time, we'll see what Peter had to say...