

When? That seems to be the question everyone is asking. When are they going to develop a vaccine? When am I going to be able to stop wearing this mask? When will I get to return to work? When will sports be back on? Honestly, I'll take any sport! When will I get to hug pastor?

This has been a time of anxiety for many people. And the anxious person is always asking, "When?" That's the definition of anxiety. When are we going to defeat this virus once and for all? When am I going to get to see my family? When will my future be certain again?

3. The flesh asks, "When are you going to restore the Kingdom?" This is the predicament that the disciples find themselves in. You would think that it would have been enough to see resurrected Jesus. It would have been enough for their sins to be forgiven and their savior come alive again. Yet they ask Jesus, "**Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?**" They still were waiting for Jesus to pull out a sword and, taking a line from a comic book, proclaim, "It's clobbering time!" They were still looking for an earthly kingdom.

There was still big trouble in little Israel. Rome was still their overlords and the good Jewish boys were less than thrilled with a pagan power ruling over them. The Jewish leaders were still upset with the disciples, and the disciples knew that there would be trouble if they showed their faces again.

"**Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?**" We want a Jesus who does the same things. We want quick fixes to big problems. We want Jesus to send a meteor down from heaven that contains a cookbook with the Coronavirus cure. We want Jesus to commence clobbering time upon all our enemies: the terrorists, the abortionists, and criminals. And those clowns running things in Madison and D.C.? Maybe not clobber them, but knock some sense into their heads. When is Jesus going to do all of that?

We want a God that's an open book with plenty of action, quick results, and no questions asked. But that's not the God we get. That's not what Jesus does. He instead ascends into heaven. It would appear that Jesus is running away as opposed to fulfilling promises. Instead of restoring the kingdom to Israel, He's taking a leave of absence.

However, we know Jesus is still here. Jesus answers the disciples question saying, "**It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. 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.**" It would appear that Jesus didn't answer their question. Or even answered the question with a "no." But He answers with a "not yet" and a "now."

Let's address the "now" first. 2. The spirit looks at the Heavenly Kingdom all around. "**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.” When will you restore the kingdom to Israel? It’s already happening now!

Ascension means that we are to look for Jesus not as a guy walking around like He did back in the days of His ministry, but we are to look for Jesus in the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Now by ministry of the Holy Spirit I don’t mean some kind of spectacular rolling on the floor in spiritual ecstasy. I don’t mean through mass healings and prophetic voices from heaven. We see the Holy Spirit in the work of the Church.

Jesus comes to us through the Holy Spirit who works through the means of grace. Jesus comes to us in the word preached. He comes to us in the waters of baptism. He comes to us in His body and blood through the bread and wine of communion.

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you.” And there is power. This word in the Greek comes from the same root from which we get the word dynamite. This Holy Spirit dynamite delivers to us Jesus’ forgiving and atoning death on the cross, and the Holy Spirit dynamite delivers to us Jesus’ enlivening and vindicating resurrection from the tomb. Because of the ministry of the Holy Spirit, you have the dynamite of complete forgiveness, and you have the dynamite of Christ’s own righteousness.

Yet it’s not always easy to see. It isn’t a spectacular firework display or a magic show. But the Holy Spirit delivers us Jesus through these normal means to give us comfort, peace, and hope right now, even as we ask amongst ourselves, “When?”

We don’t need to be anxious. We don’t need to be insecure. Jesus is here with us right now, He’s still in charge. He sits at the right hand of God and that means He is behind the scenes ruling over both the Church and the worldly powers. He has the power to forgive our sins so that we can have a clean conscience with God. He has the power to raise us up so that we need not even fear death. He has the power to enliven and embolden us so that we can indeed be witnesses in La Crosse, in all the Coulee Region and the Tri-State Area, and to the end of the earth.

Yet we still ask “when,” don’t we? **“Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?”** 1. We yearn for the restoration of two into one. Now, when we ask for the restoration of the kingdom to Israel, we’re not asking for a restoration of the current nation of Israel. We as Christians don’t concern ourselves with the rebuilding of a temple in Jerusalem, or the victory of the Israelis over the Palestinians. What’s going on in the Middle East is a red herring for the restoration of the kingdom.

When we think of the restoration of the kingdom to Israel. God has in mind the restoration of the kingdom to His true Israel. The New Testament tells us that the Church is the new Israel. And indeed, Jesus will restore the kingdom to the Church.

Remember that Jesus gave two answers? “Not yet” and “now.” Jesus replies, **“It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority.”** Jesus answer to the restoration of the kingdom is not “no,” but His answer is “not yet.”

“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. And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, 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.”

Ascension Day reminds us that Jesus is coming back. On that day, Jesus will merge the physical kingdom with the spiritual kingdom. That is when the two will be restored to one. Jesus will reign as visible king over all creation. On that day that the Father has fixed by His own authority, Jesus will come back to judge condemning evil and commending us as righteous, not by our own power or strength, but by grace alone through faith alone.

On that day, Jesus will restore all things. He will defeat evil and return everything to the way it should be. He will restore the kingdom to Israel, that is, He will restore the kingdom to the Church, and we will reign in peace and security forever.

But that day is not yet. “When?” We don’t know. Until then, we can look forward to that day while also appreciating the “now.” Even now we have every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places. Even now, we are loved by God, and if God is for us, who can be against us. Even now, the Holy Spirit dwells in us, comforting us through His Word and through the promise that our prayers are heard. **THE CHRISTIAN ENJOYS THE HEAVENLY KINGDOM AS THEY LONG FOR THE RESTORATION.**

We live in the “now” and the “not yet.” We always are living in this tension as we know Jesus is with us now, and He is also promising to come back just as He ascended. Knowing the glory and the fullness of God’s promises through the ministry of the Holy Spirit means that the comforts and peace we have “now,” is able to overcome any anxiety and uncertainty about us not knowing “when?” Because in Christ Jesus, every “when” is a “not yet.” Amen!