

PathLights

*"Your word is a lamp to my feet
and a light to my path"
Psalm 119:104*

May 6, 2018

The Apostles' Question

by Frank Himmel

The book of Acts is a sequel to the book of Luke. It begins where the gospel account ends: with Jesus' instruction to the apostles to be His witnesses, together with His promise of the Holy Spirit's power to aid them in that work.

Jesus' recent resurrection from the dead, a powerful evidence that He was the Messiah, plus His statement that He had been given all authority in heaven and earth (Matthew 28:18), and now a promise of a new wave of activity by the Holy Spirit—all this prompted the apostles to ask, "Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6).

In some ways the apostles' question is surprising. For three years, Jesus had tried to teach them about the kingdom. He pointed to its spiritual nature by emphasizing that entering it requires a new birth (John 3:3, 5). He said it is within us (Luke 17:20-21), a transforming influence in our lives, like leaven in a loaf of bread (Matthew 13:33). Our participation in it is not determined by nationality, it is governed by our response to "the word of the kingdom" (Matthew 13:3-9, 18-23). In fact, Jesus plainly said to Israel's leaders, "Therefore,

I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people, producing the fruit of it" (Matthew 21:43).

The apostles were slow to grasp these concepts. They evidently shared with their generation a hope that the Messiah would return Israel to earthly glory, throwing off the yoke of Roman rule. That explains why Peter, just moments after confessing Jesus to be the Messiah, then hearing Jesus say that He must suffer and be

killed, rebuked the Lord, saying, "God forbid it, Lord! This shall never happen to You"

(Matthew 16:22). Similarly, James and John's request for seats on Jesus' right and left hands in the kingdom (Matthew 20:21) reflects their misconception.

The apostles' question teaches all of us a vital lesson: *we must be careful to let God's word, not our own preconceived ideas or popular notions, dictate what we believe.* It is not always easy to take a fresh, objective look at Scripture, and it may be even more difficult to admit we have been wrong. Remember, though, that Jesus said, "The truth will make you free" (John 8:32).

The apostles' question illustrates why Jesus stressed that they were to wait for the Spirit's inspiration before going out to preach (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4-5). Just as surely, it stresses how important it is for us to listen carefully to that inspired preaching before forming our conclusions. ■



What Became of Joseph?

by Frank Himmel

The New Testament begins with a man named Joseph. Matthew traces his lineage back to Abraham.

Joseph was betrothed to Mary. When he discovered that his wife-to-be was pregnant, he assumed what any man in that situation would, and he planned to end his relationship with her. But an angel explained that her child was conceived of the Holy Spirit and would be the savior of the world. Joseph, therefore, did as he was instructed: he took Mary as his wife, kept her a virgin until the child was born, then named the child Jesus (Matthew 1:24-25).

Joseph moved his family to Egypt for a time to evade Herod's attempts to kill Jesus (Matthew 2:13-15). They then settled in Nazareth.

Joseph is next mentioned when Jesus was twelve years old. The family went to Jerusalem for the Passover. Unbeknownst to his parents, Jesus stayed there when the rest started home. He was in the temple talking with teachers (Luke 12:41-51).

That is the last mention of Joseph. What became of him? In view of Jesus' word from the cross entrusting Mary to John's keeping (John 19:26-27), most assume Joseph had died by this time.

There are several other Josephs in the New Testament.

One was Joseph of Arimathea, a member of the Sanhedrin who was also a disciple of Jesus. He buried Jesus' body in his own tomb (Matthew 27:57-60). Another was Joseph of Cyprus, better known as Barnabas (Acts 4:36). He was a valuable member of the Jerusalem church.

The other Joseph also had multiple names: Barsabbas and Justus. He was one of two men considered to become an apostle to replace Judas. The brethren identified Joseph and Matthias as having the necessary qualifications, then prayed the Lord to show which one He chose. They drew lots, and the lot fell to Matthias, who was added to the eleven (Acts 1:21-26).

What became of Joseph? Again, the Bible does not say. Did he pout because he was not chosen? Did he cut off his association with the Jerusalem disciples and go elsewhere? Did he eventually abandon the Lord? I have seen brethren shamefully react that way when they were passed over for some appointment. Since Joseph had accompanied Jesus beginning from the baptism of John (Acts 1:21-22), we would like to think he was more filled with Jesus' teaching; that he maintained a good disposition and faithfully used whatever opportunities he had in the Lord's work.

The real question is not, What became of Joseph; it is, What will become of us? ■



Service Leaders for the Week

	Sunday	Wednesday
GREETER	John Baucom	Josh Baucom
SONG LEADER	Sam Walters	Ian Brown
OPENING PRAYER	Mark Clifton	
LORD'S SUPPER		
BREAD	Brian Wilson	
CUP	Bruce Williams	
CONTRIBUTION PRAYER	Josh Baucom	
SERMON/INVITATION	Frank Himmel	Gary Hagler
CLOSING PRAYER	Justin Candella	Daven Daniel