



## BIBLE STUDIES THAT WORK

**Easter 7 (A)**  
**May 21, 2023**

**[RCL] Acts 1:6-14; Psalm 68:1-10, 33-36; 1 Peter 4:12-14; 5:6-11; John 17:1-11**

### **Acts 1:6-14**

*“Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?”*

It is difficult to remember that Jesus defied the Messianic expectation. Jesus was not a mighty warrior king; he was a humble itinerant preacher. Rather than cast out the empire of Rome, he was killed by it. Despite everything the disciples had seen and heard, despite all the time they spent with Jesus after the resurrection, they still hoped that he might be that mighty warrior king—that he would “restore the Kingdom to Israel.”

Jesus does not answer the disciples’ question. Instead, he reminds them of their discipleship. He promises them the gift and presence of the Holy Spirit, whose power will enable them to continue in Jesus’ way as witnesses to his life, death, and resurrection—his teaching, his healing, his example.

Seeing their Lord ascend into heaven, into the full presence of God in a dramatic parallel with his Transfiguration, the disciples—those eleven remaining apostles, some women, and even Jesus’ family—withdraw to the upper room where they devote themselves to discipleship and await the coming of the Holy Spirit in constant prayer.

- How has Jesus surprised and challenged your expectations?
- The disciples withdrew to await and prepare for the Holy Spirit’s arrival; it was also practice for how they would meet the Spirit again and again. What are some ways by which you meet the Holy Spirit?

### **Psalm 68:1-10, 33-36**

The Psalmist shares a song of victory. And like many ancient songs, this one presents a list of accolades by which the story of God’s victory is told. Here at the end of the Easter season, we also understand who God’s enemies are: death and sin. Death and sin perish at the presence of God. Because of the Lord, they have no dominion. The final verse cries out, “How wonderful is God in his holy places!” Where are those holy places if not the whole earth, the whole of creation? If God is there, everywhere, then truly death and sin will be scattered before the Lord. They will be blown away like smoke, melted like wax, at the presence of God.

- There are some places where it is easier to perceive God’s presence. Those are places where we can practice perceiving God so that we might better perceive the presence of God in more challenging circumstances. Where do you most easily perceive God’s presence?
- Verse 5 reminds us that God’s habitation, those holy places, is also found in people. How do we help one another perceive God?

### **1 Peter 4:12-14; 5:6-11**

“The Spirit of God is resting on you,” Peter reminds the disciples, reminds us. Today he refers to Jesus’ own words to him at the Ascension: “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you.”

Peter reminds us that this power does not let us escape the realities of life. After all, Jesus—to whom belongs all power, all glory—did not escape the realities of life; he dove right into the midst of life and did not shy away from any of it, not even death on a cross. Instead, the power, Peter reminds us, allows us to resist temptation, to remain steadfast in our faith, and to keep to the hope we have in Christ Jesus.

“Discipline yourselves, keep alert,” Peter instructs us, as “the devil prowls around.” If we remember who our Christ is, then we know, with Peter and all the saints, that we have inherited Christ’s victory over the devil by his actions and love. It is into that eternal glory of Easter victory that we are called; it is by that glory, no matter the difficulties we face, that we are restored, supported, strengthened, and established.

- Where do you perceive Easter victory in your life?
- What are some ways that Jesus restores, supports, and strengthens you?

### **John 17:1-11**

The Ascension is the fulfillment of Jesus’ conversation with the Father found here in the Gospel according to John. It is not just that he ascends into heaven somewhere beyond the clouds; Jesus re-enters into the full presence of God from which he came, wherewith he abided before all things were created. Jesus, with his own words, affirms what we read in John 1:1-10. Whereas before we did not know him or who he was, now we do. In this, Jesus prays that we would become one with him and each other as he is one with God. We are invited, through Jesus, into his ascension. Jesus calls us by name to enter with him into the full presence of God forever.

- Jesus’s life is a glorification of God. As his disciples, we too are called to glorify God. How do we glorify God in our lives? How do we glorify God with our lives?

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