

## THE ONCE AND FUTURE CHURCH

### #1: Witnesses

January 21-23, 2006

<sup>36</sup>While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you." <sup>37</sup>They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost. <sup>38</sup>He said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? <sup>39</sup>Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have." <sup>40</sup>When he had said this, he showed them his hands and feet. <sup>41</sup>And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, he asked them, "Do you have anything here to eat?" <sup>42</sup>They gave him a piece of broiled fish, <sup>43</sup>and he took it and ate it in their presence. <sup>44</sup>He said to them, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms." <sup>45</sup>Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. <sup>46</sup>He told them, "This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, <sup>47</sup>and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. <sup>48</sup>You are witnesses of these things. <sup>49</sup>I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high." <sup>50</sup>When he had led them out to the vicinity of Bethany, he lifted up his hands and blessed them. <sup>51</sup>While he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up into heaven. <sup>52</sup>Then they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy. <sup>53</sup>And they stayed continually at the temple, praising God. *Luke 24:36-53 TNIV*

<sup>6</sup>So when they met together, they asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" <sup>7</sup>He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. <sup>8</sup>But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." <sup>9</sup>After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight. <sup>10</sup>They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. <sup>11</sup>"Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven." *Acts 1:6-11 TNIV*

Introduction: So central to Christianity is the call to evangelize that it is difficult to claim to be a legitimate disciple of Jesus without being a bold witness to his life-changing power and saving grace. In fact, there is a strong Biblical case to be made that the church is not of Christ if it is not evangelistic, the believer not of Christ if not a witness.

- I. God's Love is Incarnational (Luke 24:36-43)
  - A. Luke goes to great lengths to point out that Jesus was physically present after the resurrection.
    1. The resurrected Lord had flesh and bones.
    2. The resurrected Lord ate with the disciples.
  - B. God's incarnation ("infleshment") in the human form of Jesus, the Messiah, fulfilled His plan to redeem humanity.
  - C. Our faith in Christ is also incarnational.
    1. Our minds have been opened to understand truth.
    2. We are witnesses to Jesus' life, death, and resurrection.
    3. We are "clothed in power," that is, filled with the Holy Spirit, so that we have become the Messianic incarnation of God's love until Jesus returns.
    4. Even our worship is incarnational.
- II. Christ's Church is Incarnational. (Acts 1:6-11)
  - A. Ours is not to establish an earthly kingdom.
  - B. Our task is to be evangelistic, to be Christ's Spirit-filled, incarnational witnesses.
  - C. Our mission extends from our Jerusalem (Washington, DC) to our Judea (the Mid-Atlantic region), to our Samaria (North America), to the ends of the earth (the whole world).
  - D. This is what we mean when we say that we are "Igniting Passion for Jesus Christ from Metro Washington to the World."

Conclusion: Even those who walked with Jesus in the flesh were apparently prone to stand around and wait for him to act. We are only his church if we are incarnational witnesses for him until he comes again. Christians are evangelists, period. "Igniting Passion" is our spiritual DNA.