

# Seventh Sunday of Easter – Acts

**CHILLIN' (OF THE HEAV'NLY FATHER)**

**Acts 1:6-14**

**Seventh Sunday of Easter  
Analysis by Marcus Felde**

6So when they had come together, they asked him, “Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?” 7He replied, “It is not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority. 8But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” 9When he had said this, as they were watching, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. 10While he was going and they were gazing up toward heaven, suddenly two men in white robes stood by them. 11They said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up toward heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.”

12Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a sabbath day’s journey away. 13When they had entered the city, they went to the room upstairs where they were staying, Peter, and John, and James, and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James son of Alphaeus, and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James. 14All these were constantly devoting themselves to prayer, together with certain women, including Mary the mother of Jesus, as well as his brothers.

Can we talk?

*This pericope actually happened to me once. At least, the first bit.*

*I was eating a modest homemade brown bag lunch, sitting on a bench on the campus of the University of Louisville, spring of 1969. A three-year-long “teen atheist” period had given way to intense conversations with my pastor and intent perusal of the Gospel of John, which resulted in a return to the Christian fold, and a sweetly quiescent period of my life.*

*Munching my peanut butter sandwich, paying no heed to my surroundings, I heard: “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up toward heaven?”*

*I stopped chewing and looked around. Apparently the speaker had been one of two guys who had just walked past me, talking to each other. For a split second there, I thought I had heard an angel. But it was just a real person.*

*Nevertheless, the verse was apt. I recalled it sentimentally, over the next few years, while I was preparing for the ordained ministry.*

*And are you standing there looking up into heaven? Don’t you have anything better to do?*

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## **DIAGNOSIS: “Cryogenics”**

**Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem) : Cheese!**

The “apostles whom he had chosen” (v. 2) were “gazing up into heaven” (v. 10). (Wish someone had taken a class photo, Jerusalem in the background.) Jesus had been “lifted up” from their midst as they were watching, taken out of their sight by a

cloud. His valedictory speech was fine as far as it went, which was not far. They were still mystified. Frozen. Couldn't take their eyes off that cloud. Didn't want to let go of the One-and-only who had given them life and power. Their eyes followed the contrails, thinking, "Well, there goes that." Stymied, they were.

### **Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem) : *Plan-B-itis***

They froze, frustrated, because they did not yet know the power that would be theirs through the Holy Spirit. They were still clinging (v. 6) to a picture of power that had nothing to do with becoming orphans on Olivet. They wanted to seek remedies, as men at arms, to the problem of this present time, namely Rome's invasion and occupation. Surely Jesus only needed to have this line of thought presented to him and he would begin "working their plan." Plan B (in my book) is whenever the people of God figure God has gotten too idealistic or is taking too much time, so we need to advise him. "If you aren't going to save your people from their sins, could you at least get us a Whig governor?"

### **Step 3: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem) : *Frozen***

"Men of Galilee," said the white-robed men, "why do you stand looking up toward heaven?" I want to speculate here, interpolate a motive not explicit in the text. I personally think they were still "afraid of the Judeans," as in John 20. (Hey, they were from Galilee-personae not very gratae in Jerusalem.) The peace he had given them had not incubated. They were riding the cusp between the past and the future, and they still preferred what they thought they knew, to what was still a mystery. If they would not hearken to the gentle prodding of the angels, the world might never know that peace, either. Might get stuck once again in the rut of mere wishfulness: "Lord, is this the time to . . .?"

## PROGNOSIS: “Chi-rho-genics”

### **Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal Solution) :** *Thaw!*

This cut of Scripture does not complete the picture. We won't see the Spirit thawing the apostles until chapter 2 of Acts. But we catch a hint of it, in the simple proclamation of the angels: “This Jesus” (unlike so many other Jesuses they had known or heard about), “This Jesus” is not finished. Will come again. Will do what he will do. Will keep the promise.

### **Step 5: Advanced Prognosis (Advanced Solution) :** *Letting God Be God*

So they went back to square one, that being the prayer rug. They “devoted themselves to prayer,” which since we know Jesus taught them to pray, meant saying the Lord's Prayer-“Your will be done”-and then going for a nice walk or something. Just chillin' around Jerusalem, awaiting the happening of God's will, the coming of his kingdom. They practiced “not our timetable, but yours,” and other aspects of prayer. Started having church suppers and getting to know each other better. Waiting for God.

### **Step 6: Final Prognosis (External Solution) :** *Breeze!*

They awaited there the zephyr that would blow them into action, into “acts” (Acts of the Apostles, get it?) which would do so much more than they dreamed. Film at eleven.