

## DEVOTIONAL READING

# Philip Yancey Devotional

## Departed, But Not Gone

### Acts 1

Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. (Acts 1:4)

The disciples' obsession with Israel's restored kingdom did not fade even after Jesus had died and come back to life. For forty days after the Resurrection he appeared and disappeared seemingly at will. When he came, his followers listened eagerly to his explanations of all that had happened. When he left, they plotted the structure of the new kingdom that he would surely inaugurate. Think of it: Jerusalem free at last from Roman domination.

Jesus gave some mystifying orders, however. He told his followers to return to Jerusalem and simply wait. Something more was needed. Do not leave the city, he said, until the Holy Spirit comes. At last, one of the disciples put to Jesus the question they had all been debating together, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?"

No one was prepared for Jesus' reaction. He seemed to brush the question aside, deflecting attention away from Israel toward neighboring countries, all the way to the ends of the earth. He mentioned the Holy Spirit again, and then, to everyone's utter amazement, his body lifted off the ground, suspended there for a moment, then disappeared into a cloud. And they never saw him again.

Christians believe that all of history revolves around the life of Jesus the Christ. But the plain fact is that Jesus left earth after thirty-three years. Furthermore, he declared it a good thing: "You are filled with grief. But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you" (John 16).

The book of Acts, written by the same author as the gospel of Luke, tells what happened after Jesus' departure when the Counselor came at last. First, though, the disciples began adjusting to new realities: They selected a replacement for Judas, made plans to follow Jesus' final instructions, and returned to Jerusalem to await the Holy Spirit.

**Life Question:** Project yourself back to the forty-day period after Jesus' resurrection. What would you have been expecting Jesus to do?