

Now What – Acts 1:1-8

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Cultural Context: Jerusalem is the town/city that the disciples were in. Judea was the equivalent of the state of which Jerusalem was the capital. Samaria was the equivalent of another state within the same region. Judea and Samaria were ruled by the same Roman appointed official.

Biblical Context: Because of the opening of Acts and the opening of Luke, most view Acts as part two of a two book set that Luke authored. We don't know much about Theophilus. We know that his name means "loved by God." We also know the name has the sense of "friend of God" because the kind of love used in the name is friendship love.

Samaria was the area where Jewish-like people lived. There were Jewish-like because they saw themselves as serving the same God as the Jews even though their religious practices included so many non-Jewish influences that Jews didn't consider them Jewish.

Going Deep:

- 1) According to the first three verses of today's lesson, there was a purpose for the visits that Jesus makes to his disciples over the 40 day period between his resurrection and his ascension. What does the purpose given suggest to you about what the disciples may have been thinking and feeling?

- 2) Reread verses 4-6. How does the disciples question about when Israel will be restored show that they still haven't grasped the purpose of the lessons Jesus taught, the death he died, his resurrection or what these things mean for their life with God?

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- 3) What's the danger of clinging to our own expectations of how God should work to make things right in the world even though God shows us that God has a different plan than what we expected?

- 4) Jesus promises that the Holy Spirit will give those in a committed relationship with God through him the power to be witnesses to Jerusalem, all Judea, Samaria and the end of the world. What is your "Jerusalem", your "Judea", your "Samaria" and your "end of the world" and why do you think God knew you'd need Holy Ghost power to witness in these areas of your life?

- 5) Has anything ever happened in your life that made you feel confused about what you had previously accepted as the purpose of your relationship with God and what that relationship means for how you are to live in God's world? If so, what happened to help you resolve your confusion?
