

Thus two very definite notes are stressed right at the end of Jesus' time with His disciples. One is that while they wait for Him to return and set up His kingdom they are to be His witnesses, carrying the message of salvation to those of their immediate neighborhood and also out to the very ends of the earth. The other is that while they are witnessing they are to be looking for His return, knowing that in His own time He will come back and set up His kingdom, as He has promised.

These same two notes are stressed at the beginning of what was probably the very first part of the New Testament to be written: Paul's First Epistle to the Thessalonians. In I Thes. 1:9-10 the apostle gives thanks in the following words for the fine start that the church has made: "For they themselves show of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come." Thus Paul stressed the importance of serving God by witnessing to Christ, and of constantly looking forward to our Lord's return.

A story is told of what might have occurred when Jesus ascended to heaven. The story is entirely imaginary, but it points a real lesson. According to this story, when Jesus ascended into heaven the angel Gabriel said to Him: "You have done a great work, but why did you leave it at this point? Why didn't you stay down there and spread the message of salvation?" Jesus answered: "I have trained twelve apostles. With the Holy Spirit's leading they will carry the message throughout the world."

As I thought about this story I wondered for a moment whether it might have been better if Jesus had stayed on earth and preached the Gospel Himself, instead of leaving the task to His disciples. Then I did a little figuring. Suppose that Jesus, instead of ascending to heaven, had gone either to India or to China. Each of these great areas contains many thousands of villages. Suppose that He spent