

A WHOLE NEW TEAM

WEEK 2

AN
ATHLETE
STUDY

THE TORCH

The 2026 Olympic Games will commence (or if you're reading this after the fact, commenced) on February 6th in Milan. 63 days before, on December 4th, 2025, the Olympic torch began its journey in Olympia, Greece. The torch will travel over 7,000 miles in 63-days carried by 10,001 torchbearers before lighting the Olympic flame that unceasingly burns throughout the Olympic games.

The idea of "passing the torch" is a metaphor for handing over responsibility to the next generation. Carrying the Olympic torch for any leg of its journey is considered a great honor for athletes, celebrities, and community heroes. How much more of an honor is it when Jesus "passes the torch" of his ministry to the Apostles. As we turn the pages in the book of *Acts*, we read of our heroes in the faith, the torchbearers. However, the flame didn't end with them. The torch of the Gospel has been passed from generation to generation, to those who by the Holy Spirit have placed faith in Jesus Christ. And, that flame continues to spread as we carry the torch.

As we consider today's lesson, remember from Zero Week that Luke was writing to *Theophilus*, about all that Jesus began to do and teach (*Acts* 1:1). Luke wrote *Acts* as a follow-up to his Gospel account, which tells the story of Jesus' life. Our passage today recounts the Apostle's last moment with Jesus on Earth. Jesus gave insight, not only to what the Apostles would do, but what the soon-to-come Holy Spirit would do through them.

ACTS 1:6-11

⁶ So when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" ⁷ He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. ⁸ But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." ⁹ And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. ¹⁰ And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, ¹¹ and said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven."

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Throughout our study, we'll make several references to the gospel. Literally, the word "gospel" means "good news." However, it's only "good news" if we receive it. While my desire is that everyone participating in the study is a true Christian surrendered to the gospel, the reality is many are not. You're bought into a Christian culture or coming with friends. The most important thing you can do in this entire study would be to Scan the QR code and consider its message in your life.



DISCUSSION

Describe a time when you made a plan, only to have it blow up in your face.

1. What did the disciples *want* to know from Jesus but were not privileged to know? (6-7)

2. What did the disciples *need* to know? (8)

3. Based on their question, what did the disciples seem to anticipate happening soon? (6, see also Study Notes)

4. God's game plan of taking the Gospel "to the farthest parts of the earth," is still happening. How do the words of the angels in verse 11 encourage you in your part as a torchbearer.

5. Write down three names who you might invite to this study as a torch bearer.

The classic KJV translated verse 11, "*Why stand ye gazing...*" What has your gaze? Do you see the mission field in front of you? Talk to your coach for help sharing.

ICEBREAKER

OBSERVATION

INTERPRETATION

APPLICATION

A WHOLE NEW TEAM

WEEK 2

AN
ATHLETE
STUDY

STUDY NOTES

LIVE YOUR LEGACY

In 2016, the world lost one of the greatest coaches of all time. Long-time University of Tennessee Lady Vols basketball coach, Pat Summitt, died in June at the age of 64. Not only was she the winningest coach in NCAA history with almost 1,100 wins, but what made her special was her care for her players—even more than the game. She famously once said, “I want to continue to help these young women be successful. You don’t just say goodbye at the end of their playing careers and end it there.”

We all want a coach like this, right? A coach who wants us to be successful, not just in sports, but in life as well. This is what Christ wanted for his Apostles. At the end of his time on Earth, he promised them what they needed most for success—the Holy Spirit!

The disciples had seen Christ’s coaching over the last three years. Then, at the height of Jesus’ ministry, he was captured and executed on a Roman cross. Thankfully, we know the rest of the story. Every Easter we celebrate Jesus’ resurrection from the grave. Not only that, but *he presented himself alive to them after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God.* (Acts 1:3).

GOD’S TEAM FOLLOWS CHRIST’S LEADERSHIP

Having no clue of what was just moments away, *they asked him, “Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?”* Though it may seem a strange question, the question was quite reasonable in their minds. After all, Jesus had just been talking about the kingdom. This long-awaited kingdom had been the hope of Israel since God made his covenant with David (1 Chronicles 17). It’s this hope they expected at the Triumphal Entry when Jesus rode into Jerusalem less than two months before. However, within a week they watched their Messiah die, losing all hope; then he was back—what better way to start God’s kingdom than with a just-resurrected king!

How did Jesus respond? As reasonable as the questioned seemed, he called a “foul.” *He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority.”* Great coaches understand that not everybody needs to know everything. Instead, players need to know only what is critical for their role while letting the coach worry about the rest. So what’s critical?

Jesus shared three critical things for their

player positions. *First*, Jesus reminded them of the promise that they would **receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon** them (John 14:26, Acts 1:4-5). *Second*, they needed to know why that power would be given—they would **be** [his] **witnesses**. *Third*, they needed to know the plan.

GOD’S TEAM OBEYS GOD’S GAME PLAN

Christ delivered God’s game plan saying that their work would begin in **Jerusalem**. That’s not only where they were at the moment, but it’s where thousands of residents witnessed Jesus’ Triumphal Entry, crucifixion (accompanied by miraculous signs that literally shook the city), and resurrection. They would be most ripe for the first harvest God had planned.

Jesus knew that, through the Holy Spirit, the Apostles would succeed and see many people come to faith in the next several weeks. If the Apostles spent the rest of their lives discipling and ministering to those only in **Jerusalem**, they’d have all the work they could handle. To be obedient, however, the message of the gospel must keep going.

The book of *Acts* records the Gospel starting in the city of **Jerusalem**. But, Jesus said in Acts 1:8 that the torch of the Gospel must go beyond the city to **all Judea**, which might be the equivalent of your state.

Not only was the Gospel to go state-wide, but it also needed to travel to **Samaria**. Samaria was like a neighboring state, but it’s less like Texas and Oklahoma now, and more like the states of the north and south in Civil War times—they weren’t pals. The Gospel isn’t just for your friends, it’s also for enemies.

Not only would the Gospel spread regionally, but they were to take the Gospel **to the farthest parts of the earth**. *Acts* records the Gospel spreading all over the Roman Empire. In fact, the book ends with a unique Apostle waiting his opportunity to take the Gospel to Caesar himself.

As amazing as this journey is, Jesus never intended his game plan to stop with the Apostles. They have passed on the torch to every believer since. It is now our mission and our privilege.

After Jesus’ final words, the Apostles stood watching as Jesus was **lifted up** ascending to Heaven. While looking into the sky, two angels appeared saying, *“Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.”* This scene is like a pre-game holy huddle, now it’s time to call “Break!” and go get to work.