



# THE EXHORTER

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*“And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.” Acts 2:40*

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## Jump Start # 1406

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***Acts 1:12*** *“Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey away.”*

The New Testament is not a diary. It is not a collection of events that takes place day after day. It is not the recording of personal feelings about what happened, good or bad. It is a book of life. It is God's will revealed. It is intended to be the basis of our faith in the Savior who died for our sins. It is the source and the means to help us journey through this world to Heaven.

Not understanding this, some might find reading the Bible disappointing. They might look for more personal insights, more details, more this happened on this day. It's not written that way. Which brings us to our verse today. Standing alone, our verse doesn't tell us much. They returned to Jerusalem. The "they" are the apostles, minus Judas. Jesus had died and been risen. They had been with Jesus for forty days. The New Testament doesn't give us very much detail about the post resurrected Jesus. We know He was seen by many. We know about the Thomas story. We know the exchange with Peter, and the "Do you love Me?" But that's not very much. What happened on all those days?

Our verse today takes place after Jesus ascended up to Heaven. He left. They stood looking into the sky. Two angels appeared and assured them that He would return just as He left. Then those eleven returned to Jerusalem. In a short while the Holy Spirit would fill the house they were staying in and fill their hearts. Soon, they would be off preaching. Soon, they would be witnessing thousands being baptized. Soon, they would be arrested, imprisoned, released and imprisoned again. Soon, they would separate and go to the ends of the earth preaching. Much was just about to happen. They probably would not believe it all at this point. But on this day, they returned back to Jerusalem. There is no conversation recorded. We don't know what was swirling through their minds. They had been with Jesus for three years. All those miracles. Ten lepers near Jericho healed. A synagogue official's daughter raised from the dead. A storm calmed. Peter walking on water. Zacchaeus. A woman shamefully brought into the temple who had just committed a sin. Withered hand restored. Sight restored. Bent over woman healed. Demons cast out. Pigs with demons in them rushing over the cliff and two thousand dead hogs in the sea below. News of John the baptizer being executed. Those powerful stories, such as the prodigal son or the good Samaritan. Judas. A quick trial. Roman soldiers. Calvary. His last words. A fast burial. Rumors of an empty tomb. The risen Savior.

(OVER)

There was so much. All those memories. All those unbelievable events. And now, He was gone.

That is an empty feeling when someone dear to us is gone and never coming back to us again. Last evening, I felt this way. A hero of mine passed away a couple of weeks ago. I was honored to be able to speak at his funeral. This week I have been driving by his house every day heading to a place to preach. I stopped last evening to visit with his dear widow and son, who was visiting. I had been in that house many times. It is full of memories for me. His sweet family came to hear me preach last night. It just didn't seem right not seeing him. He would have been there. He had heard me preach so many times. A friend, last night, gave me a CD of a sermon he preached. His last sermon. He even read part of one of our Jump Starts in that sermon. As I drove home, in the dark, through the country last night, the full moon out my window, and listening to Jim preach, it was as if he was in the car with me. Boy, I wish he was. There are things I would like to talk to him about. There are things I would want to get his advice on. He was so special. But he is gone. That feeling took me to our passage today.

There is an emptiness that can never be fully replaced in the lives of some. The death of a mate, especially after so many years, is the partial death of self. As God says two shall become one, when one dies, a part of the living dies. Yet, as two shall become one, the departed still lives, because there is that one.

For those eleven apostles in our verse today, as we know, but must experience, the journey isn't over. There are more things to be done. Life goes on. It would never be the same for them and it's never the same for us when a mate passes, but faith, hope and love carry us on. I wonder if we don't do enough after the funeral. We put so much emphasis upon helping a family and some congregations just excel in this area by supporting the family, sending cards, sitting with the family and bringing food, but those wonderful acts all quickly stop. There are others to attend to. There are always others. But for the family, the hurt remains. The emptiness just begins. The pain doesn't go away. Those who have journeyed that way can be of great help. Don't forget those who mourning. Remember to include them and invite them.

When one of the righteous passes, there is a special and fond memory. There is that memory of worshipping together. There is that memory of good that was done. There is that memory of right living. There is comfort in believing and knowing that the righteous are with the Lord. There is great joy in knowing that they do not suffer any longer. There is great hope in knowing that they are exactly where they always wanted to be and that is with the Lord. Those thoughts help us.

I expect the walk back to Jerusalem for those eleven was quiet. I expect each one was thinking and remembering Jesus. I expect tears were flowing down their cheeks. I expect those impressions never, ever left them. I expect that memory kept them true to their cause and made them bold and fearless as they preached His word. Our memory of Jesus does the same. We were not there to see the Lord ascend upward, but we witness that event through Scriptures and by faith. It is our faith in the Lord that keeps us going. It is our faith in the Lord that keeps us busy. It is our faith in the Lord that reminds us that if our loved one was still with us, they'd want us to continue to worship, to continue to be a light of the world, and continue to be that loving disciple of Jesus.

Spend some time in the Gospels. That will help you. Look at Jesus. Come to know your Savior. See what He was interested in. See what He wanted. Watch Him, through those pages. Listen to Him, through those pages. Walk with Him through those pages. He will strengthen you. He will get you through those dark days. He will help you.

I think I'll take along that CD of Mr. Jim with me tonight. On my long, dark journey home tonight, I'd like to hear his voice once again. He reminds me that I need Jesus. He reminds me that what I am doing is right. He reminds me that I Heaven is all the world to me.

Roger Shouse