

Any present-day Christian would surely regard the wonderful promise in verse 5 regarding the baptism of the Holy Spirit to prepare the disciples for service as a subject of overwhelming interest. Yet it is questionable whether the disciples grasped its significance at that time. In the previous forty days Jesus had been speaking about "the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God," and this subject was uppermost in their minds. Their next question had nothing to do with the length of their stay in Jerusalem or with the meaning of the baptism of the Holy Spirit to fit them for service. As soon as they found opportunity they asked: "Lord wilt thou at this time restore again the Kingdom to Israel?"

It is important to notice how Jesus handled this question. He did not say that they had a completely false conception of the nature of the promised kingdom. He did not say that the kingdom is not something to be realized in the external world but only within the hearts of Christians. He did not say that it is up to Christians to establish the kingdom. He did not say that there is to be no kingdom for Israel.

If Jesus had been presenting any such ideas during the forty days when He talked with them about the kingdom of God, it would surely have been a shock to Him when they asked: "Wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" In such a case the question would have shown that they had not the slightest conception of what He had been saying.

It is very clear that the disciples' question implied their expectation that the wonderful kingdom promised in the Old Testament was to be made a physical reality on earth, and that Jesus Himself was going to do this by His own power. If He had been teaching something entirely different during the forty days, and they then asked such a question, we would surely expect Him to have felt entirely frustrated. We would expect His reaction to be at least as strong as it was on the road to Emmaus when He rebuked two disciples for not having correctly understood the Old Testament.