

Northern California

Acts 1:8 But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

Literally, the Greek word for “witnesses” in Acts 1:8 means “martyrs.” Witnesses are those who bear a living testimony of the resurrected and ascended Christ in life. They differ from preachers who merely preach doctrines in letters.

In His incarnation Christ carried out His ministry on the earth, as recorded in the Gospels, by Himself to sow Himself as the seed of the kingdom of God only in the Jewish land. In His ascension He carries out His ministry in the heavens, as recorded in Acts, through these witnesses, these martyrs, in His resurrection life and with His ascension power and authority to spread Himself as the development of the kingdom of God from Jerusalem, as a start, unto the remotest part of the earth, as the consummation of His ministry in the New Testament. All the apostles and disciples in Acts were His martyrs, His witnesses, of this kind. (*LS Acts*, msg. 4, pp. 31-32)

Acts 9:31 *So then the church throughout the whole of Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace, being built up; and going on in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it was multiplied.*

The Jews regarded Judea as the best province. They considered Galilee a despised region and Samaria a region full of mixture. Therefore, the Jews in Jerusalem despised Galilee and rejected Samaria. But in 9:31 we see that the churches in these three provinces are regarded as one. This verse speaks of “the church throughout the whole of Judea and Galilee and Samaria.” I believe that the Spirit inspired Luke to write in this particular way in order to indicate that no matter how much Galilee was despised and Samaria was rejected by the Jews in Jerusalem, the churches raised up in those regions should all be considered one church. In the local sense, there were the churches, but in the universal sense, all these churches are the church. Here we have a basic revelation concerning the oneness of the church universally. (*LS Acts*, msg. 28, p. 228)

Romans 12:1 *I exhort you therefore, brothers, through the compassions of God to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, well pleasing to God, which is your reasonable service.*

To offer ourselves to God as a living sacrifice is our most reasonable service. The words “present” and “sacrifice” mentioned above indicate that the “reasonable service” is a priestly service. If we have a sober mind and if we intend to be reasonable, fair, and logical, then we certainly must have the church life. People who do not like to have the church life are the most foolish of people. To practice anything other than the church life is foolish, but to give up everything for the church life is logical and reasonable. Nothing is more reasonable than churching. To spend two dollars on a worldly item or amusement is foolish, but to spend two million dollars on the church life is reasonable. If I had a hundred lives, I would give them all for the church life. However, I would not give even the smallest fraction of my life to the worldly things, for to do that would be stupid. What a reasonable service it is to give ourselves to the church life! (*LS Romans*, msg. 25, p. 298)