

Week of May 6-12

LIFTOFF!

Scripture Reading: Read John chapter 20

What were you doing on July 20, 1969? For those of us who were around at the time we were probably glued to our television sets. Why? Because on that day, at 10:56 PM EDT, Neil Armstrong stepped on to the surface of the moon and declared, "That's one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind!" It is estimated that somewhere between 500 and 600 million people worldwide witnessed the event.

There is something about a spaceflight that stirs the imagination, isn't there? Can't you feel the excitement building as you hear, "T minus 15 seconds, guidance is internal. Twelve, 11, 10, 9, ignition sequence starts...7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, zero, all engines running, LIFTOFF! "

In our chapter reading today, we witness a launch of sorts. Oh, it's not the launch of a Saturn V rocket as it lifts off the ground to put a man on the moon, but it is a launch nonetheless. It's a launch that we don't want to miss.

Following Jesus' resurrection, he appeared to his disciples and, after assuring them that he was alive, he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit." What's going on here? Wasn't the Holy Spirit to be poured out at Pentecost? Why are the disciples receiving the Holy Spirit now?

To answer these questions, we have to go back several days to the last supper Jesus celebrated with his disciples before he was betrayed. At that meal, he took a cup of wine after supper and declared that it was the new covenant in his blood. In making reference to a new covenant, Jesus expected his disciples (and us!) to realize that he was referring to the prophecy of Jeremiah the Old Testament prophet who promised that God would make a new covenant with his people, a covenant where he would forgive their wickedness and remember their sins no more. Such a covenant, however, could only be launched after Jesus' death since, as we saw in yesterday's devotional, it was only through his death that the debt of our sins was paid in full.

Well, with his death and resurrection behind him, Jesus is now free to launch a new covenant on Resurrection Sunday evening as he meets with his disciples. As he did so, he gave liftoff to brand new life in them. Just as God breathed into Adam and he became a living being, so, now, the Son of God (through whom all things were created), breathed into his disciples. They were filled with the Holy Spirit and became spiritually living beings under a brand new covenant. Every believer following, who trusts Christ as Savior, enters the same new covenant that was launched on Resurrection Sunday and receives the same Holy Spirit. And with this launch, it's not gravity we're freed from. It's the power of sin and death (Romans 8:2). It's not the moon that is our destination but eternal glory. "Houston, we have liftoff!"

Action Step & Prayer Focus: Read Jeremiah 31:31-34 to learn about this brand new covenant that was launched on Resurrection Sunday and then ask the Lord to drive home the truths of the new covenant to your heart.

Take-away: *Apollo 11's launch put a man on the moon. The new covenant's launch puts the Creator of the moon in a man's heart.*