

The Book of Acts

Week Two, The coming work of the Holy Spirit

Last week we looked at the two main characters regarding who wrote the book and who was it written to. in the Book of Acts

4 And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, “which,” He said, “you have heard from Me; 5 for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.” 6 Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, “Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” 7 And He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority. 8 But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

I want to take a moment just to look at the question of the disciples. “Will you at this time restore the kingdom of Israel? So we get a good idea of what all of Israel was waiting for, that the Messiah would remove the Roman dominance and they would once again be a free nation. How do you think we would handle this if we were in the same situation today? As we look around we are witnessing our nation not just fall away from God, but intentionally run away and trying to deny Him. People insist that there are other ways to get to heaven, churches are actually teaching such, but it is all deception yet it is what people want to hear. Him being my God I can make him, small h to bring Him down to serve me, not knowing that in serving Him we discover all the riches He seeks to bless us with.

Warren Wiersbe asks the following questions: How is Jesus’ post resurrection teaching represented in the book of Acts? Why do you think it was so important for the church that Jesus continued to minister after His resurrection? How is our situation similar to that of the early church?¹

To the first question Wiersbe asks, we need to look back to **Luke 24:45-47, And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures.** Then He said to them, “**Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, “and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.** It is important for Luke to tie the gospel of Luke and now Acts together since it is actually a continuation of what he already wrote and what would now begin to take place.

Prophecy fulfilled Luke 24:26-48

¹ Wiersbe, Warren W.. The Wiersbe Bible Study Series: Acts: Put Your Faith Where the Action Is (p. 14). David C Cook. Kindle Edition.

So we find here Jesus had earlier given the disciples the command that the gospel is to be preached to all nations beginning in Jerusalem. Why in Jerusalem? We talk frequently about the strongest resistance or the most damage to the gospel comes from within the church. Here in Luke 24:45 we see that Jesus is opening their eyes that they might understand all that is taking place now and what had been given to them before in the gospel'. Had Jesus not been raised and come back, where and what can we suppose the disciples might have done? To have a prophecy validated gave great strength to the faith in all Jesus had been teaching them and that His teaching was yet to be concluded. **However, as we read these verses we need to remember Jesus was crucified in Jerusalem by the leaders of the then church. Jealousy, pride, political clout were all factors that led to the church sentencing Him to a horrible death, and yet where would grace and forgiveness show the strongest if not in the offer to those who punished Him the most. We can think of the sky turning dark from the gospels as He was nailed to the cross.**

Light of the World.

It seems an intentional reaction or representation of man's hearts as Jesus was born. There were those who saw the bright and shining star that lit the way to the NewBorn King, and the Lord was the light of the world. Now we see it from the ugliness of the world as darkness, (Matthew 27:45, Mark 15:33, Luke 23:44–45) that covers the earth for about three hours as Jesus suffered and died for our sins. Jesus did what no other could do, He raised Himself back up and defeated death, John 10:17-18.

Stay and "wait for the promise of the Father" **"which,"** He said, **"you have heard from Me; 5 for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."** Was the waiting to be just about receiving the Holy Spirit, or was there more importance in Jesus actually being with them? This is one of those perplexing questions since we now know the importance of both, the promises to be fulfilled and the coming of the Spirit to empower the disciples. This is an important comment each of us needs to remember for all time, who does the empowering? **Zechariah 4:6, "This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: 'Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,' Says the LORD of hosts.**

Acts 1:8, "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

John 7:39, He was speaking about the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were later to receive. For the Spirit had not yet been given, because Jesus had not yet been glorified.

14:16, the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever—

15:26, When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father--the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father--He will testify about Me.

16:7, But I tell you the truth, it is for your benefit that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you.

17:9, I ask on their behalf. I do not ask on behalf of the world, but on behalf of those You have given Me; for they are Yours.

Why?

Why do you think it was so important for the church that Jesus continued to minister after His resurrection?

Jesus had been put to death and returned, He had been martyred for our salvation. When we read the word martyr we think of the ugliness, hatred and persecution of those put to death. However the word itself implies something much more meaningful than dying for one's faith. "with a genitive of the possessor 'one who testifies for one', Acts 1:8", it is the witnessing of events, the power beyond life as we knew it. We read of Jesus' death and we find Him worthy of dying to bring us to salvation, but as we unfold the events we find the strength of faith, that which carried Stephen even to the point of asking God to forgive them. **Acts 7:60, And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.** Forgiveness was in his heart and the strength of faith proved to be a greater witness than those zealous to murder him for their misguided beliefs. The church began to grow faster because of the persecution that those who surrendered demonstrated to those who saw their faith, found a better promise beyond the life lived here on earth and of the promises of man.

How is our situation similar to that of the early church?

As we look at the condition of the church's overall wellbeing today do we look as strong and as grounded in as much faith as they had? I would have to say not even close in most countries. Again, this past week I was talking with a friend who believes we are persecuted when people insult us because of our testimony. Again I ask, can you see yourself sitting in heaven with many of those martyred for their faith and as the question comes around, "How did you suffer for your faith?" will you stand up and boastfully say, "I was verbally insulted". I can only picture Stephen near death from being stoned and asking God to forgive his persecutors. Even in dying we can cast out a witness of the strength and faith in our God through the work and power of the Holy Spirit within us.

But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."