

The Book of Acts

Lesson 3

The Apostles – Acts 1: 1-11

Acts 1:1-11

“The first account I composed Theophilus about all that Jesus began to do and teach until the day when He was taken up to heaven after He had, by the Holy Spirit, given orders to the apostles whom He had chosen. To these, He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a period of 40 days and speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God. Gathering them together, He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised, which He said, ‘You heard of from me.’”

“‘For John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.’ So when they had come together, they were asking Him, saying, ‘Lord, is it at this time you are restoring the kingdom to Israel?’ He said to them, ‘It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority, but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.’”

“And after he had said these things, he was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud received him out of their site. And as they were gazing intently into the sky while he was going, behold two men, two angels in white clothing stood beside them. They also said, ‘Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus who has been taken up from you into heaven will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven.’”

The Apostles great need: They were called to be witnesses.

They (the Apostles v.2) were chosen to do a job impossible to do by natural gifts. The responsibility for the proclamation of the Gospel and the establishment of churches passes to the apostles. A 12th, Matthias, will be chosen to take the place of Judas. Two millennia later, hundreds of years later, and we’re still engaged in the same work passed down generation to generation to generation of gathering the redeemed into churches and even establishing churches in places where Christ is not named, taking the gospel to the ends of the earth. The Lord then passes the baton in verses 1-11. Could the apostles be able to take the gospel to Jerusalem? If each one founded a Christian church in Jerusalem, would you not need more people just to blanket Jerusalem? Educationally they are unqualified. Perhaps seven may have been fishermen. They have demonstrated very weak faith, while this kind of task would take some very strong faith. They have a track record of very sketchy obedience. They’re as likely to be disobedient as to be obedient. After Christ’s resurrection, He asked them to go to Galilee and wait for Him. They did go to Galilee, but they didn’t wait for Him. They went back to their old vocation, fishing.

This is a massive undertaking, an unthinkable thing. If you were to start a business with a small group of people and your mission was to take this product to every person on the planet, that would be beyond your wildest imagination.

John 15:16 - *You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you.*

The Need for the task is the result of the presence and ministry of the Spirit

If these 11 are going to change the course of human history, something transforming has to happen to them. The apostles become the focus of our Lord in this opening section. He leaves in verses 9-11. He will send another, like He is, who will come along beside them and help them. The new relationship to the Helper will be a better advantage than having the visible Lord with them.

John 16 :7 - *Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you. ⁸ And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: ⁹ concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; ¹⁰ concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer; ¹¹ concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.*

The Apostles thought the Lord's promise of the coming of the Spirit was a fulfillment within the coming Kingdom. (v.3) Ezek 36:25 "I will sprinkle clean water on you, you will be clean. I'll cleanse you from all your filthiness, from all your idols. I'll give you a new heart, put a new spirit within you. I'll remove the heart of stone from your flesh, give you a heart of flesh. I will put my spirit within you and cause you to walk in my statutes, and you will be careful to observe my ordinances."

Whenever you see the term "kingdom of God," (v.3) you want to mentally differentiate whether he's talking about God's universal kingdom as the Psalmist does repeatedly (Psalm 145) or whether he's talking about the immediate kingdom, that is, the kingdom of God on earth. Jesus taught his disciples to pray, "Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." God is ruling, yet there will be a future kingdom that will literally come to earth from heaven in which He will mediate the will of God on earth. Remember John the Baptist's message was an offer of the kingdom because the King had come. "Repent, for the kingdom is at hand." It is handy, because the King is handy. Jesus was offered to Israel to reign as King of kings and Lord of lords over the earth. He was fulfilling the promises made in Isaiah "...and the government shall be upon His shoulder..." (9:6)

The coming of the Holy Spirit is the promise of the Father. Jesus said the Apostles heard of the coming of the Spirit "from me." That's God's pledge to the Jews. Jesus's dove at His baptism is the prototype of the filling of the Holy Spirit, the empowering of the Holy Spirit for ministry. Joel 2 is yet to be fulfilled as a sign of God's restoration of Israel at the end of the Tribulation.

Vss.6-9 ... 'Lord, is it at this time you are restoring the kingdom to Israel?' He said to them, 'It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority, but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.'"

It is not for us, His disciples, to know the times or epochs. "Times" (Grk, *chronos*) is any length of time. It is an umbrella word which includes *Kairos*-opportune moments or critical, epoch-making periods. The Lord doesn't give the Bible student, His disciple, the warnings or revelation of the timings of trouble or good. No disciple is given grace or revelation to know the outflow of time nor of the events which distinguish them from others. Time nor events are our business but becoming a witness to the remotest part of the earth is. We must take the Gospel to people we may not naturally like or be drawn to, remembering that the Gospel alone is God's power for salvation to all who believe (**Romans 1:16**). The word "**witness**" is a major theme in Acts, occurring 39 times. Since it is the Lord's command and since

we cannot escape being witnesses of some sort, seek by our verbal proclamation and by our godly lives a witness so that we bring glory to Jesus Christ. We need the sufficient power of the Holy Spirit and the focus on the Great Commission to fulfill Christ's command in v. 8.

Vss.9-11 "And after he had said these things, he was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud received him out of their site. And as they were gazing intently into the sky while he was going, behold two men, two angels in white clothing stood beside them. They also said, 'Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus who has been taken up from you into heaven will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven.'"

Luke repeats the story of Jesus' Ascension, which he told at the end of his gospel. The cloud that received Jesus out of their sight was probably the Shekinah glory of God (the cloud of Majesty) as was seen in the Tabernacle and the Temple. As the disciples, quite naturally, stood gazing up into the mid-day sky at this unusual sight, two men in white clothing, probably angels, suddenly stood beside them and said, "Quit gazing into heaven and get on with what Jesus told you to do. He will return in just the same way as you saw Him leave, bodily, with power and glory." Thus the certainty of Jesus' ascension guarantees the certainty of His bodily return. The knowledge of Jesus coming back motivates His disciples to be obedient to the work He gave us to do. Before the Lord returns upon the earth, the Gospel will be preached to all the nations. The sending of the Spirit upon the clay vessels called His disciples will be successful. Matthew 24:14 "And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached throughout the whole inhabited earth as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come." Mark 13:10 "First the gospel must be preached to all nations."

If you have believed the Gospel and if you will rely on the Holy Spirit's power, you can tell the Good News to a farm laborer or to a Ph.D., a King or a homeless person. God will use it mightily according to His purpose. He has given us the tools that we need. Our task is to use what He has provided in faith so as to successfully accomplish the work that Jesus began.