

The Book of Acts

Lesson 4

Pentecost - Acts 1:8-14

Acts 1

^{1c} I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach, ² until the day when he was taken up, after he had given commands through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen...

⁴ And while staying with them he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father...

⁵ you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now...

⁸ you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” ⁹ And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. ¹⁰ And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, ¹¹ and said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.”

Jesus told the disciples not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which they had heard from Him (John 14-16). Pentecost was a unique, sovereign act of God in history. The reason Jesus told the disciples to wait in Jerusalem was that in God’s timetable, the pouring out of the Holy Spirit was to coincide with the Jewish Feast of Pentecost, fifty days after Passover. Pentecost, also called the Feast of Weeks, was a time for Israel to offer to God the first fruits of their harvest (Lev. 23:15-21; Num. 28:26-31; Deut. 16:9-12). By His resurrection from the dead, Jesus became the first fruits of those who have died (1 Cor. 15:20, 23). Through the new birth, brought about by the Holy Spirit, we become the first fruits of His creation (James 1:18).

Before the Day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit empowered many of God’s people, but He did not permanently indwell every believer (Exod. 31:3; Ps. 51:11). Jesus told the disciples that the Spirit “abides with you, and will be in you” (John 14:17). On the Day of Pentecost, the disciples received the permanent indwelling of the third person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit.

Acts 1:8 provides a good outline of the book. In Acts 2, the believers in Jerusalem receive the Holy Spirit. In Acts 8 and 10, the new believers in Judea and Samaria receive the Spirit. In Acts 19, believers in Ephesus (the remotest parts of the earth) receive the Spirit. Since then, every Christian receives the baptism of the Holy Spirit at the moment of salvation (1 Cor. 12:13; Rom. 8:9; Gal. 3:2-5).

Although every Christian has received the Spirit, we need continually and repeatedly to be filled with or controlled by the Holy Spirit (Eph. 5:18). This is “walking in the Spirit” (Gal. 5:16) and it results in the nine-fold fruit of the Spirit in our lives, overcoming the deeds of the flesh (Gal. 5:19-23). The power of the Spirit that we need for witnessing is not just the power to speak the Gospel boldly and clearly. We also need the Spirit’s power to live spiritual and holy lives. Godly lives are the foundation for verbal witness. You must be walking in the Holy Spirit, seeking to please God with your life, and forsaking all known sin to be a consistent witness for Christ.

The power for verbal witness is not identical with being an effective Gospel sales person. An effective salesman may be able to talk someone into making a decision for Christ, but only God can impart new life to a dead sinner. Let's be clear and persuasive when we present the facts about Christ and the Gospel, but the power to save a sinner lies with the Holy Spirit, not with us. We cannot witness effectively for Christ unless we rely upon the Holy Spirit to produce godliness in our daily lives and to use our verbal witness. We must have the power of the Holy Spirit, which is all sufficient.

V. 9-11 is a PROFOUND statement of hope for the whole church in every age. 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. As the disciples, quite naturally, stood gazing up into the sky at this unusual sight, two men in white clothing, probably angels, suddenly stood beside them and in effect 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 as witnessed by the apostles guarantees the certainty of His bodily return. Until then, we will be obedient to the work He gave us to do.

Before He comes in the way He left, (the Glorious Return at the end of Israel's time of trouble and the Millennial Kingdom), the Gospel must first be preached to all the nations (Matt. 24:14; Mark 13:10). Our ability to carry out the Lord's missionary mandate depends on the fact that Jesus possesses all power and authority (Matt. 28:18-20; Eph. 1:19-23). Because He has made one offering for sins for all time (Heb. 10:12-13), we can confidently proclaim forgiveness of sins in His name to everyone who repents and believes in Him. His place at the Father's right hand also means that He is interceding for His saints. We can be assured of His care for us, even when we suffer persecution for the sake of the Gospel. He is coming again as He left motivates us to be faithful to the mission He has entrusted to us.

Acts 1: 12-14 Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mountain called the Mount of Olives (which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey away). ¹³ When they had entered Jerusalem, they went to the upstairs room where they were staying. Peter and John, and James, and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James were there. ¹⁴ All these continued together in prayer with one mind, together with the women, along with Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers (Acts 1:12-14).

Verses 12-14 is a description of where the apostles stayed and what they did from the time of our Lord's death till Pentecost. The apostles journeyed to Jerusalem, and stayed there as instructed. They devoted themselves to prayer, along with those who were closely associated with Jesus in His earthly ministry. When the Holy Spirit comes there will be 120 of them. Among this group were the brothers of our Lord (Acts 1:14). Jesus' unbelieving brothers (John 7:5) before His resurrection had come to believe in Jesus, no doubt largely due to His resurrection, His appearances and His teaching during the 40 days before coming to Jerusalem.