

The Rest of the Story

Studies in the Book of Acts

***“We will move the world not by criticism of it, nor conformity to it –
but by combustion within it of lives ignited by the Spirit of God”***

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Text
Acts 1:1-8

Topic
Luke writes a sequel to his Gospel
to describe the on-going work of Jesus through His disciples

Title
Jesus Christ, Sequel Star

Acts 1:1 The former account I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach,

Acts 1:2 until the day in which He was taken up, after He through the Holy Spirit had given commandments to the apostles whom He had chosen,

Acts 1:3 to whom He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.

Acts 1:4 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;**

Acts 1:5 **for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.”**

Acts 1:6 Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, “Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?”

Acts 1:7 And He said to them, “**It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority.**

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.”**

Introduction

The book we are about to study originally had no title. The author called it an **account** (The word is translated **treatise** in the KJV). In the early days of the Church it was variously called *The Acts*, *The Gospel of the Holy Ghost*, and *The Gospel of the Resurrection*. Most modern Bibles title it, *The Acts of the Apostles*. Many contemporary Bible teachers like to call it *The Acts of the Holy Spirit*, or *The Acts of The Holy Spirit Through the Disciples*.

Does it really matter what we title an untitled **account**? It matters in terms of our **focus**:

1. If we think of the book as *The Acts of the Apostles*, then our focus will be on the apostles. Interestingly, the book contains no accounts of any apostles other than Peter and Paul! John is noted only three times, and all that is recorded of James is that he was beheaded by Herod.
2. If we think of the book as *The Acts of the Holy Spirit* or *The Acts of the Holy Spirit Through the Disciples*, then our focus will be on the Spirit of God. We should have a problem with that because Scripture indicates that the Holy Spirit's ministry is to focus attention on Jesus, not on Himself or on the disciples of Jesus.

Jesus gave the book its focus when, in verse eight, He said, **you shall be witnesses to Me**. Our real focus ought to be **Jesus Himself!** He is the One that the Holy Spirit wants the world to see and know. This book is about Him. We might want to call it, *The Continuing Acts of Jesus Christ on Earth Until His Second Coming*. Or, as I have suggested – *Jesus Christ, Sequel Star*. (In our teachings, I will be referring to this book as *The Book of Acts*, or simply, *Acts*).

As the book opens, we'll organize our thoughts around two points: #1 Jesus Has Provided You The Directions To Be His Witnesses, and #2 Jesus Has Promised You The Dynamic To Be His Witnesses.

- #1 Jesus Has Provided You
The Directions To Be His Witnesses
(v1-3)

One thing I will stress throughout our studies is this: *Acts* is meant to stir you up as a Christian. It tells the story of how a small group of believers were empowered by the Holy Spirit to be witnesses of Jesus and turn the whole world upside-down for the Lord. What happened in them, and through them, is to continue **in you** and **through you** until the Lord returns in His Second Coming to earth.

Act 1:1 The former account I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach,

The former account written to Theophilus is the Gospel of Luke (Luke 1:3). Theophilus is believed to have been a wealthy Roman official who converted to Jesus Christ and was born-again. He commissioned and sponsored Luke to write an account of Jesus Christ.

Luke is often a character in *The Book of Acts*, as a traveling companion of the apostle Paul's on his missionary journeys. You'll be reading along and suddenly you'll see the pronoun, **we**, in the story.

Luke considered the Gospel he wrote an introduction. It described what **Jesus began both to do and teach** on the earth. The Gospel was only the end of the beginning.

Jesus had done and taught His disciples many things prior to His death and resurrection. Then He gave them further directions after His resurrection:

Act 1:2 until the day in which He was taken up, after He through the Holy Spirit had given commandments to the apostles whom He had chosen,
Act 1:3 to whom He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.

Jesus continued to appear to His disciples, on-and-off, without warning, for a period of forty days after He rose bodily from the grave. In those appearances He gave them **many infallible proofs** that He was raised and real. He invited them to touch Him; He ate meals with them. The resurrection of Jesus is one of the most provable events in human history.

Do you ever wonder why Jesus came and went suddenly? Why He popped in-and-out? He was teaching us something. As our resurrected Lord, though He would be *physically* absent from the earth, He would be *spiritually omnipresent* with us. When He popped-in on the disciples, He knew what they had been thinking and talking about. He was there even though they couldn't see Him. As He is with you; as He is with us.

During those **forty days**, Jesus **through the Holy Spirit** had given **commandments**. Among the things Jesus commanded was what we call The Great Commission:

Matthew 28:19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,
Matthew 28:20 teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, *even to the end of the age.*" Amen.

The Book of Acts is going to show you how **the apostles** [He] had **chosen** were enabled by the Holy Spirit to fulfill that commission. It is going to show us how **we** are to go on fulfilling it until the Lord returns for us.

Jesus also spoke **of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God**. The Jews had been promised a literal kingdom of God on the earth. But they had rejected their King, and the kingdom would be delayed. *Acts* fills the gap and reveals what is happening during the delay. Jesus is building His Church on earth.

The Lord was risen; the disciples were commissioned to **Go**. It's the same today! Only **you** are the disciples who are to be witnesses. **You** are the ones receiving these directions.

But don't Go just yet! There is something we need in order to **be witnesses**.

#2 Jesus Has Promised You
The Dynamic To Be His Witnesses
(v4-8)

All the direction in the world – even coming directly from Jesus – could not enable the disciples to **be witnesses**. They required the baptism with the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is mentioned more than fifty times in *The Book of Acts*. We will see how He works in and through disciples and Churches to enable them to **be witnesses** to Jesus.

Acts 1:4 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**;

Before His crucifixion, Jesus told the disciples He was leaving for Heaven to prepare a place for them. He would return for them; but He would be gone for a while. In the mean time, He said He would send another Comforter. He was referring to God the Holy Spirit, Whom Jesus said would be *with* them and be *in* them (John 14:17).

The Holy Spirit had been *with* them throughout the Lord's ministry on the earth. After Jesus rose from the dead, in one of His post-resurrection pop-ins, He breathed on them, and the Holy Spirit was *in* them (John 20:19-20).

Now He tells them to **wait** for something more, something further, some additional relationship with the Holy Spirit. It's called the **Promise of the Father**. That phrase reminds you of something Luke wrote in his first account, in the Gospel of Luke:

Luke 11:11 **If a son asks for bread from any father among you, will he give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent instead of a fish?**

Luke 11:12 **Or if he asks for an egg, will he offer him a scorpion?**

Luke 11:13 **If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!"**

If God is your Father, you are already saved. The Holy Spirit is *with* you and *in* you. But there is still another experience with the Holy Spirit you are to **ask** for, and your Father will **give** you.

These men were saved; they were indwelt by the Holy Spirit. Whatever Jesus was talking about was something more. He compared it to **John** the Baptist baptizing people with **water**.

Acts 1:5 for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

In John's baptism, you were immersed in water. Spirit Baptism is like being immersed in the Holy Spirit.

Acts 1:6 Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, "Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?"

Don't be too hard on these guys. Christians today, with the Bible completed, *still* do not understand God's prophetic plan! These first century Jews grew up believing that their Messiah would come and establish God's kingdom on the earth. They did not understand that their Messiah would be rejected; they did not see that the kingdom would thus be delayed until His Second Coming to the earth. They did not understand the gap in God's prophetic timing. They didn't know they were in *The Book of Acts!*

The Book of Acts fills the gap. It shows you what is happening on the earth from the ascension of Jesus to Heaven until His return from there to establish the kingdom.

Acts 1:7 And He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority.

Before His crucifixion, Jesus told His disciples they would be able to discern the general signs of the times regarding His return, but not the exact date. What He said here reiterates that same idea.

As the New Testament letters are written, you learn that Jesus can return at any moment to resurrect the dead and Rapture the living. You are told about the Great Tribulation that is coming upon the earth. You see Jesus returning in His Second Coming, after the Tribulation, to establish His kingdom.

Jesus' words to His disciples in verse seven were meant to inspire them to a sense of urgency in their commission, not a sense of relaxation!

They were to **be witnesses**. But first:

Acts 1:8 ... 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."

On a technical note, this verse gives you Jesus' outline for *The Book of Acts*:

1. You'll see that they **receive power** in chapter two.
2. Then they are witnesses to **Jerusalem** in chapters three through seven; to **Judea** in chapters eight through twelve; and to **the end of the earth** from chapter thirteen to the end of the book, and to today.

The baptism with the Holy Spirit is one of those things Christians like to argue about. Some say it is synonymous with being born-again; others equate it with the receiving of certain spiritual gifts, especially the gift of speaking in tongues.

As we make progress in *Acts*, I hope you will see that the baptism with the Holy Spirit is not at all about receiving certain spiritual gifts. And I hope you will come to understand that, while it may occur simultaneously with being born-again, it is nevertheless a separate and essential experience and relationship you can have with the Holy Spirit.

I want you to set aside any biases or preconceptions you have about the baptism with the Holy Spirit. Ask yourself, *What sayeth the Scriptures?* Thus far we've seen that it is an experience promised to born-again believers. Those who have the Holy Spirit *with* them, and *in* them, have Him come *upon* them. We'll see as Luke's account unfolds that this experience with the Holy Spirit is what empowers a believer to be a witness for Jesus.

This is the real issue: Jesus said you would **be witnesses** to Him everywhere. There's a difference between what we commonly call witnessing, and with being a witness:

1. You can witness about Jesus, and be telling the truth, but *not* be living it out.
2. **Being** a witness means there is an undeniable change in how you live that cannot be explained naturally.

Jesus said, **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."** What if we said something like this: you shall **be witnesses** to Jesus in... your marriage? In your home? At work? At school? In your neighborhood?

Whatever your doctrinal position on the baptism with the Holy Spirit, ask yourself this: Am I being a witness in and through my life on earth? Am I being used by God to turn the world upside-down? Is there an undeniable change in how I live that cannot be explained naturally?

If you lack this dynamic **power** Jesus spoke of... why argue that it doesn't exist? Instead, **ask your Father for it**. He's promised to give it to you.

Which brings us to what we believe about how you receive the baptism with the Holy Spirit. If it's something you ask for, and then is given to you by a loving Father, **it is received by faith**.

Ask your Father to baptize you with the Holy Spirit, and then receive by faith His promise to you.

The disciples were told to **wait** for the baptism with the Spirit. It was because it was to be given on the Day of Pentecost, in fulfillment of Scripture.

You don't need to wait! It's available to appropriate by faith right now.

If you ask, and nothing seems to happen... *Go on asking!* The Lord will give what He's promised.

Why wouldn't you receive it immediately? For one thing, you'd be surprised how entrenched our biases and preconceptions are about this experience. It may take our study through *Acts* for the light to go off!

