**ACTS AND US / JESUS BEYOND THE GRAVE** R. Giglio 5/28/22

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After Jesus rose from the dead, he remained on earth for 40 days. During that time, he appeared to the Apostles several times and to over 500 people continuing to teach them about the scriptures and the Kingdom of God.

At the end of the 40 days he ascended to heaven, but not before giving special instructions, and the promise of the Holy Spirit.

* Writer of Acts: LUKE – Not one of the 12, a physician, close friend and traveler with Paul. The only non-Jewish writer of a New Testament book. Very articulate, observant and careful historian.
* Time it was written: 63-70 AD – Interesting that there is no mention however of major events that took place toward the end of that span; i.e. Burning of Rome (64AD), Martyrdom of Peter and Paul (67AD +/-), and the destruction of Jerusalem in 70AD.
* Written to: Theophilus – The same person the gospel of Luke was written to. Likely a person of prominence, perhaps Greek, possibly Roman.
* Theme: A written accurate historical account of the last moments of the life of Jesus and the beginnings of the early church.

**ACTS 1:1-11**

“In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach **2**until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen. **3**After his suffering, he presented himself to them and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God.”

Luke begins with a summary of what he had already written to Theophilus in his gospel. He continues from the point where Jesus had risen from the dead and showed Himself to His followers.

**4**On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: “Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. **5**For John baptized withwater, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.”

He specifically told them to wait in Jerusalem until they receive “the gift my Father promised”, and are “baptized with the Holy Spirit”.

**6 “**Then they gathered around him and asked him, “Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?”

**7**He said to them: “It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. “

This question, which is the final thing they asked of Jesus before He ascended, showed that they were still waiting and hoping for an earthly Kingdom, such as it was with David and the other Kings of Israel. Jerusalem was occupied by the pagan Roman Empire, and Jews were being crucified, sold into slavery, and the Temple was about to be destroyed. For Jews living in the first century, the very survival of Israel and the Jewish people were under threat of extinction. The disciples of Jesus, like all Jews, rightly wanted to know when Jerusalem and the Jewish nation would be restored

Jesus did not say No, He just said, “It is not for you to know the times or dates” of when it will happen. Ultimately it will happen, in the 1,000-year reign of Jesus after the tribulation and before the Great White Throne Judgment of the wicked. During the millennium, Jesus will reign as king over Israel and all the nations of the world.

Acts 1:8 is the cornerstone verse in the C&MA Mission statement. In fact the entire denomination calls itself an “Acts 1:8 Family”;

*“We pride ourselves on being a Christ-centered, Acts 1:8 family. It’s our identity, our family’s slogan. Acts 1:8 is a mandate from the Lord that we cannot afford to ignore. There is an unfinished task. And many of us have given our lives to this course and made sacrifices to obey this call to Receive the Holy Spirit's power, and be His witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the ends of the earth.” (cmalliance.org)*

**“8But you will receive power when the *Holy Spirit* comes on you; and you will *be my witnesses*in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”**

**THE ASCENSION:**

**“9**After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight.

**10**They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. **11**“Men of Galilee,” they said, “why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.”

This is the same event that we read in the long ending of Mark’s gospel last week;

* Mark 16:19

***“****After the Lord Jesus had spoken to them, he was taken up into heaven and he sat at the right hand of God.”*

It’s also what Luke wrote about in the very last verses in his gospel;

* Luke 24:50-53 “When he had led them out to the vicinity of Bethany, he lifted up his hands and blessed them. While he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up into heaven. Then they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy. And they stayed continually at the temple, praising God.”

They immediately returned from Bethany, over the Mount of Olives, and went right back to the Temple in Jerusalem, praising God.

It is plain from Scripture that Jesus’ ascension was a literal, bodily return to heaven. He rose from the ground gradually and visibly, observed by many intent onlookers. As the disciples strained to catch a last glimpse of Jesus, a cloud hid Him from their view, and two angels appeared and promised His return "*He* will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven."

**Matthias Chosen to Replace Judas**

**“12**Then the apostles returned to Jerusalem from the hill called the Mount of Olives, a Sabbath day’s walk from the city. **13**When they arrived, they went upstairs to the room where they were staying. Those present were Peter, John, James and Andrew; Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew; James son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James. **14**They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers.”

(About 120 followers of Jesus were there including all the apostles except Judas who had already ended his own life). Peter was emerging as the leader of the Apostles for at least the first half of Acts.

**“15**In those days Peter stood up among the believers (a group numbering about a hundred and twenty) **16**and said, “Brothers and sisters, the Scripture had to be fulfilled in which the Holy Spirit spoke long ago through David concerning Judas, who served as guide for those who arrested Jesus. **17**He was one of our number and shared in our ministry.”

(My Opinion: v.18 is probably the most *unpleasant* verse in the New Testament)

**“18**(With the payment he received for his wickedness, Judas bought a field; there he fell headlong, his body burst open and all his intestines spilled out.”

**“19**Everyone in Jerusalem heard about this, so they called that field in their language Akeldama, that is, Field of Blood.)

**20**“For,” said Peter, “it is written in the Book of Psalms:

“‘May his place be deserted; let there be no one to dwell in it,”

and, “May another take his place of leadership.”

(he was quoting verses from Psalm 69 and 109)

**“21**Therefore it is necessary to choose one of the men who have been with us the whole time the Lord Jesus was living among us, **22**beginning from John’s baptism to the time when Jesus was taken up from us. For one of these must become a witness with us of his resurrection.”

They were about to replace Judas with another apostle. The criteria was that it had to be someone who had been following them around since the time Jesus was baptized 3½ years ago.

**“23**So they nominated two men: Joseph called Barsabbas (also known as Justus) and Matthias. **24**Then they prayed, “Lord, you know everyone’s heart. Show us which of these two you have chosen **25**to take over this apostolic ministry, which Judas left to go where he belongs.” **26**Then they cast lots, and the lot fell to Matthias; so he was added to the eleven apostles.” <end>

So the church is off and running into Acts. It’s important to remember that they stayed in Jerusalem, that is where the church started and remained headquartered, even throughout the rest of Acts as new churches are planted, persecution ensues and other leaders emerge (Paul, Barnabas, Silas, Apollos, Timothy, etc.)

They were already sizable church of about 120, but within ten days, were about to become a mega-church of well over 3,000 and were about to experience an outpouring of the Holy Spirit that had never taken place before. They were also about to begin the spread of the gospel throughout the world, reaching people thousands of miles away, and eventually thousands of years into the future.

Jesus’ final words before the Ascension predicated all this in Acts 1:8.

**Acts 1:8“**But you will receive power when the *Holy Spirit* comes on you; and you will *be my witnesses*in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

***“****you will receive* ***power*** *when the* ***Holy Spirit*** *comes upon you.”*

[and once you do, then…]

“you will *be my witnesses*in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

* POWER of the Holy Spirit – His power in us.
	+ “**dunamis**” **= power** - strength, ability, potency, force, might.

Jesus had already told them to wait in Jerusalem until they receive “the gift my Father promised”, and are “baptized with the Holy Spirit”.

Something was about to change. They were about to receive power that they had not experienced before. They had seen it in Jesus, and maybe been exposed to it themselves, but have not been *baptized in it.*

Without that power they would not have the wisdom, boldness, supernatural abilities to bring thousands of Orthodox Jewish people to faith in Jesus as their Messiah in one day. They would not be able to perform miracles, and wouldn’t have supernatural wisdom and knowledge to begin a work that would transform the entire world throughout history. They would just have their own human abilities, resources, faculties, and only be able to speak forth whatever they had retained in their minds and memories.

This is true of all of us. We all have talents, abilities, educated minds and maybe even exceptional giftedness. But without the power of the Holy Spirit working through us, we are severely limited in the impact and effectiveness that we have in the ministry God has for us, but we are also powerless to face the challenges and opposition that come against us every day of our lives.

We need the Power of the Holy Spirit not just to Be His Witness, but just to be able to navigate through the treacherous roads of life that we all are journeying on.

*[ During one of our visits to Nashville we had reserved a rental car from Avis to pick up at the airport. I usually rent the cheapest car I can find that will fit us all, But when I got to the desk the agent told me they were out of that kind of car and offered me an upgrade at no extra charge. He offered me a brand-new Jeep Cherokee Trail Hawk, it sounded good so I took it.*

*I didn’t really need a Jeep but it seemed more fun than the small 4-door we usually rent.*

*When I got into the driver’s seat I saw what make’s Jeeps so special. They have POWER that normal cars don’t.*

*In fact there is a whole section of the dashboard called “Power”. There were buttons and controls for things I never saw in a regular car; You can turn on the 4x4 Drive lock System and set it to Snow, Sand, Mud or Rock. It has something called “water-fording” which apparently enables it to drive through rivers (?).*

*I wish I can say that I drove over mountainous terrains, deep valleys, mud and rivers throughout the hills of Tennessee, but I didn’t. We basically stayed in the road and in parking lots.*

*The point is, I suppose I could have if I needed to because we had “POWER”. ]*

This is what it’s like to have the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives. It’s not just a spiritual display, it’s real power to get us through the tough moments in life that we all face. It’s wisdom in a storm of confusion. It’s perseverance when everything within you wants to give up. It’s joy when you have no circumstantial reason to be happy, or even content. And it’s the power of the Holy Spirit speaking, working and operating through you in ways that you could never do on your own.

Ultimately the Power of the Holy Spirit is meant to help us preach the gospel and be His witnesses to the world, but it is also intended to give us power to get us through the struggles of everyday life.

Just living in this world can deplete and discourage you Physically, Mentally, Emotionally, and even Spiritually. We need the Holy Spirit’s power in all four areas.

1. **Physically** – So many people I know are worn out. We keep schedules that pack more into 24-hr periods than the human body was ever created for. We may not “labor in the fields” as much as generations before us who worked hard every day until sun-up to sundown, but we fill our time with non-stop activities that drain us physically more than we were ever meant to be. The results are often, stress, sickness and sometimes chemical dependence just for relief.

**Romans 8:11** “But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.”

1. **Mentally –** The Information Age has created an unsustainable demand for our minds. We are constantly bombarded and inundated with not just information, but interaction. The results are that our minds are usually completely exhausted and get no rest. The access to nonstop interactive information through our phones and other devices keep us constantly “on”, and we are continually being drained of power.

**Romans 8:26“**In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans.”

1. **Emotionally** - Access to constant electronic information also keeps us constantly engaged in emotionally draining situations. News of tragedies, deaths, illnesses, injustice, etc. flood our emotions daily and keep us, sad, angry, frustrated, or disappointed.

**Galatians 5:22-23** “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.”

1. **Spiritually** – When the power of the Holy Spirit is alive in your life, you become “spiritually super-charged”. Each one of us is given Spiritual Gifts that when driven by the Holy Spirit become extremely effective in the purposes of Kingdom of God. This is when you allow the Spirit to motivate you and empower you to do the things God has called you to do, and you are miraculously enabled to accomplish things way beyond, your training, your skills and even your experience.

**1st Corinthians 1:5,7“**For in him you have been enriched in every way—with all kinds of speech and with all knowledge— you do not lack any spiritual gift.”

*Peter* was a perfect example of this. He started out his journey with Jesus as an unschooled fisherman. Often misunderstanding the things Jesus was talking about and afraid to speak up about Jesus when he was asked.

When the Holy Spirit came upon him in Acts Chapter 2, he instantly became the most articulate and powerful speaker, preacher and teacher of the early church. He was filled with wisdom, boldness and the ability to exegete the scripture in a way that confounded the religious leaders and brought thousands of people to the Lord in one day.

His spiritual gifts were ignited by the power of the Holy Spirit. That’s what happens to you and I when we are filled with the Holy Spirit. Our gifts become empowered, and the result of our ministry is supernatural.

 How do we receive that power? Ask Him (“The Holy Spirit”)
 to take control, and let Him govern your mind.

**Romans 8:6** **“**The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace.”

**THEN…** you will receive **power** when the **Holy Spirit** comes upon you. And you will be His **witnesses**, telling people about Him everywhere—**in Jerusalem**, throughout **Judea**, in **Samaria**, and to the **ends** of the earth.”

* “How can we be a WITNESS?” – Simply tell what you believe to be true.
* “In Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria, and ends of the earth.”
	+ Jerusalem - Local
	+ Judea - Regional
	+ Samaria – National
	+ Ends of the earth - Global

**“The power of the Holy Spirit in us gives us the ability to live the best life we possibly can, However, it’s not just about us, it’s about power to advance the Kingdom of God, so that many others may experience Him too.”**