**Bible Study- The Acts**

**September 25, 2024**

1. **Prayer**
2. **Introduction**
   1. **Over the course of the last few years many in here have read this book a few times. What do you think about the name of this book- The Acts of the Apostles? Does that seem right?** 
      * + 1. **The Acts of the Apostles…really? Is this what the book is about?**
3. **Except for the listing of the 12 in the first chapter we only read about Peter and Paul.**
4. **So maybe an accounting of the actions of the Apostles is NOT its primary focus.**
   * + - 1. **Acts of the Holy Spirit?**
5. **The descent of the Spirit is certainly central to the book.**

**The power of the Spirit descends on the 120 gathered in the upper room.**

**Peter’s sermon to the crowd in Jerusalem was certainly Spirit inspired and filled.**

**From there we see an ever expanding circle of those on whom the Spirit descends…**

**On Samaritans in Acts 8:17…**

**On Saul/Paul in Acts 9:17…o**

**On God-fearing Gentiles gathered at the house of Cornelius in Acts 10 and 11.**

**The Spirit makes the disciples bold to speak the Word of God in Acts 4.**

**The Spirit enables Agabus to foresee the coming famine in Acts 11**

**We see the Spirit providing divine instruction and direction from Acts 8 through Acts 21**

**The Spirit enables His disciples to perform miracles authenticating their ministry as being connected to Jesus’ (Acts 2-28)**

* + 1. **The descent, the filling and the work of the Spirit in the book of Acts is vital to this book…but is He the answer to the question? In a way…perhaps. But there is more…**

1. **Acts of the Preached Word?**
   * + 1. **When the Spirit works He works through the means of the preaching of the Word.**

**On the day of Pentecost, the Spirit gave His people the supernatural ability to announce the Gospel of Jesus Christ in languages they didn’t previously know.**

**Peter preached and those who heard the Word were cut to the heart… (more on this cutting later.)**

**The Spirit works through the Word to accomplish a work of new creation.**

* + - 1. **The Word seems to almost take on an identity of its own…imagine that…as it is spreading.**

1. ***Acts of the Enthroned Lord Jesus*- (See Richard Gaffin, Jr’s, In The Fullness of Time, 2022)**
2. **As we read through Acts our Lord is at the center of all the action.**

**He calls to Himself all *“…who are a far off”-* Acts 2:39**

**We will see Him adding new believers to the Church. Acts 2:47, 11:21**

**He sends His angels to open prison doors – Acts 5,12.**

**He gives directions to His disciples in chapter 8 and 9.**

**He will appear to Stephen and to Saul/Paul Acts 7 and 9.**

**He speaks directly to Saul/Paul- Acts 9, 18, and 23.**

**Jesus speaks to Cornelius and to Peter Acts 10:4, 14.**

**He is striking down those who persecute His people Acts 12:23**

**He opens the hearts of the hearers of God’s Word Acts 16:14.**

**He appoints ministers of the Word – Acts 20:24.**

1. **Luke may give us the actual clue we need. Acts 1:1-2- *“In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach, until the day when He was taken up, after He had given commands through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom He had chosen.”***

**This is Luke saying that in his Gospel he was writing about the incarnation, the death, and the resurrection of Jesus.**

**But implied in that statement is that there is more to come…that is in this second book he is going to present what Jesus continues to do and teach.**

**This may mean (and I think it does) that the transition from Luke to Acts is not from what Jesus did to what the Apostles did, but rather the transition is from what Jesus did while on earth to what Jesus continued to do from heaven during the time Luke is writing.**

**This gives us pause to think if He was doing these things then…and He was…then He must be doing these things now to some extent…and He is.**

* + 1. **No other Gospel writer uses the word *“saved”* and it’s various Greek forms as much as Luke. In Acts Luke uses the word and its forms over 21 times.**
    2. **All of this so that salvation through Christ continues to go forth into the entire world! Maybe that should be the real title. Acts 2:21- *“And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”***
    3. **We must always remember …no matter where we are in the Bible…that the Bible is the book that recounts the work of God accomplishing His great purpose for history: to save His people from their greatest enemies, sin and death, and deliver them into the safety and rest of His eternal presence.**
    4. **One author summarized the whole book of Acts this way: *“We see the enthroned Lord Jesus at work by His Spirit through His apostles who are preaching His Word, taking the gospel to every nation, and it is accomplishing its intended purpose: people are being saved in Christ alone”***
    5. **Luke does not pen for us His chosen name for the book that was added later.**
  1. **This letter/book was written by Luke, one of the companions of Paul and is his second book/letter after the Gospel of Luke.** 
     + - 1. **Luke was a physician, a journalist, historian and faithful Gentile follower of Christ, and he was a traveling companion of Paul at the time.**
         2. **He is often associated with coming from Syrian Antioch.**
         3. **Church Fathers, Irenaeus (AD 150) and Clement of Alexandria (AD 150) and then much later Eusebius (3rd Cent. AD) a Greek Historian, all credit Luke as the author of both books.**
         4. **There is no real discussion of authorship found in the writings on the discussions during the time of the formation of the Canon.**
         5. **Luke’s authorship has been accepted by all credible authorities.**
  2. **The book is dated somewhere between AD 60 and 64 since the book ends with Paul in prison waiting to appear before Caesar and this was around AD 64. Paul’s death was around AD 68.**
  3. **The Audience and Occasion**
     + - 1. **Luke’s immediate audience is Theophilus…a high ranking Roman…hence the title *“most excellent”.* Luke 1:3**

1. **He may or may not have been a believer yet…but one to whom was a friend of Luke’s that Luke is sharing the truth of Jesus Christ with.**
2. **Theophilus’ contemporaries would have been opposed to this eastern cult and would have advised him against it…so Luke seeks to persuade against all of that influence.**
   * + - 1. **Theophilus then also represents all Gentiles who would read this account seeking truth.**
         2. **Luke seems to indicate that this was the time of the “Pax Romana”= “Roman Peace” which enabled the church to grow in some “peace” just before the persecutions began in earnest under Nero.**
     1. **Some peace because we will see Peter thrown into prison by the Jews and then miraculously released.**
     2. **We will also see Paul thrown into prison as well, because while there was a relative peace the more “celebrity” Apostles were consider seditious.**
        + 1. **Luke seems to also be writing to people who are able to read and look forward to reading…middle to upper middle class types for:**
3. **His language and voice of Greek is Classic Greek which was only used at the time by the higher level of educated people.**
4. **This would be like him writing in the NASB- 12th grade and up as opposed to most everything else being written like the NIV- 4th-6th grade level.**
   1. **The Gospel of Luke was written to inform us of Jesus and what He did…His life and ministry. The Acts of the Apostles is written as a continuation of Jesus’ ministry, by the Spirit through His people.** 
      * + 1. **It is not simply a history of the early church as many have said…but also a history of the mission of the early church…which then is an example for every generation of the Church afterwards.**
5. **He does not give us a complete description of all the dimensions of the life of the primitive church.**
6. **He is primarily interested in showing us the spread of Christianity — how it broke through barriers of all sorts to change lives, families, cities, peoples.**
7. **So Luke uses real history, to teach us about being men and women of the gospel.**
8. **Therefore, when we look at the introductory words of Acts, we should study these two issues:**

**Luke claims to be giving a historical account — not a fabricated or fanciful series of stories.**

**Luke immediately shows us how Jesus prepared the first disciples for mission before he sent them out.**

1. **No one credible, doubts that the *“former book”* of Acts 1:1 is the gospel according to Luke. They are so closely tied that some have called them “Luke-Acts”.**
   * + - 1. **What is recorded for us in the book of Acts concerns a unique period of redemptive history.**
2. **Just as we do not anticipate that the crucifixion or resurrection will be repeated, we do not anticipate the events of Pentecost will be repeated.** 
   * 1. **In Acts, we’re given a record of a unique time in redemptive history when the Spirit was at work to establish Christ’s church throughout the world through the witness of the apostles.**
     2. **But the same Spirit that worked in and through them is still at work in us.**
     3. **The Spirit and the Word can and does empower us to change, empower us to pray, empower us to obey, empower us to proclaim to all who will listen, *“Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved”* (Acts 16: 31).**
   1. **Why is the book of Acts still important to us today…? Because:**
      * + 1. **It is God’s Word to His Church,**
          2. **It is God’s account of how He empowered His church to spread the gospel…**
      1. **…not just proclaiming the truth but also living the truth before men in a multi-cultural society much like our own today…**
      2. **…where everything is acceptable and permissible…**
      3. **…an experiment that gave birth to the despotism of Nero and others who persecuted all non-Roman religions but specifically Christianity because of its allegiance to the One true God.**
      4. **An experiment that eventually led to the downfall of the Roman Empire.**
3. **The principles and commands herein will guide us today in how we are to spread and live out the gospel.**
4. **The book of the Acts of the Apostles is about God growing His church which will not end until Christ returns so the principles and commands found within apply in all generations.**
5. **We are not to want to go back to the 1st century but we are to glean the principles and commands and incorporate them into our daily lives today.**
6. **The Book of Acts does not present a pristine or pure church…rather the opposite.**
7. **But it does enable us to see how we can maneuver through such a culture as we have today that is not that much different from the one in which Luke wrote.**
8. **A couple of more opening…reflective questions:**
   1. **Since the Church is God’s community…His Word is given to all of us for the benefit of the whole. We are to look at ourselves in the context of that community not as individuals. So with this in mind what separates the Church from any human organization?** 
      * + 1. **It is not a human organization;**
          2. **It is God’s chosen people…we didn’t chose it, He chose us…just as He chose His Apostles/disciples, revealed Himself to them/us; commissioned us as His witnesses; promised and gave us His Spirit.**
   2. **As we study this book it is important to personalize it. When you read this book in preparation for class read this with this church…Christ Presbyterian Church…in mind…as if Luke was writing this to us.**

* 1. **This question has been asked from many pulpits through the years, “*What is the glue that binds together Christ Presbyterian Church?”* How would you answer that question?**
     + - 1. **The answer is the gospel plain and simple...the covenant truth that God promised to send a Savior and He did .**
         2. **The answer this book reiterates over and over again…we have a “common” bond, a “common” goal”, and a common Savior…Jesus our Immanuel.**
  2. **Let’s think a minute about the role of the church in society which we will see in this book as well. What is the difference between saying the Church is called to proclaim the gospel to impact society or saying the Church is called to change society?** 
     + - 1. ***“God does not send out his church to conquer. He sends us out in the name of the One who has already conquered. We go only because He reigns.”* — Kevin DeYoung and Greg Gilbert**
         2. **The Christian Nationalist movement would say that we are called to change society…or to return it to an early state of virtue and faith.**
         3. **Then that begs the question …are we called to bring in the kingdom…or is the kingdom already here and we are called to help expand it?**
         4. **We are not called to change society that is God’s doing…and He will burn this up…all things of the earth will burn!**
  3. **Food for thought: Is there an event or a season in your life that you can look back on and say, *“That changed the course of my life”*?** 
     + - 1. **I can actually think of a number of those events or seasons in my own life.**
         2. **<PAUSE>**
         3. **The first chapter of Acts covers a period of fifty days—fifty days that changed the course of the lives of the 120 followers of Jesus who spent these days together. ..and up to 500 who saw and heard Jesus teaching before His ascension.**

1. **Most significantly, it changed the course of the lives of the twelve apostles of Jesus, who were among those 120 people.**
2. **And it is not an exaggeration to suggest that what took place in those fifty days also had a significant impact on the course of our life as are a follower of Christ.**

**The resurrection of Jesus, which happened on the first of those fifty days, is what gives us hope that this life is not all there is, and that we follow a living Savior.**

**The forty days Jesus spent with the apostles, opening their minds to understand how to rightly read the Old Testament and preparing them to explain it in the pages of the New Testament, is what provided the gospel witness that the Spirit used to draw us to Christ.**

**The fortieth day, when Jesus ascended to the right hand of God the Father in heaven, where He rules over all things, is what gives us confidence that everything that happens in our life is purposeful and working together for your good and for His glory.**

**His promise as He ascended that He will return the same way situates our life in a grand story of future glory.**

**The selection of a replacement for Judas so that there were twelve apostles provided continuity and foundation for the new community in which we find our home and identity as a partaker of the new covenant.**

1. **What took place during those fifty days is significant, not just for those we read about in the pages of Acts, but also for us.**
2. **Before we move into Acts let’s look at Luke 1:1-4.** 
   1. **In the Luke 1 passage, how did Luke come to know the events to which he speaks?**
      * + 1. **Luke uses other resources, *“Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us…”***
3. ***“eyewitnesses and ministers of the word”* that carefully guarded and delivered to us what they saw…**
4. **Luke ‘s own personal research and experience.**

**He claims that *“…it seemed good to me also,(that is to investigate and confirm every shred of evidence) having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account…”* (vs. 3-ESV).**

**Luke is here claiming that he did not rely only on one eyewitness (say, the account of one of the apostles), but that he compared all his sources and “carefully investigated” them.**

**This would have been quite possible for Luke, who personally knew many of the apostles, but also possibly Mary and hundreds of other eyewitnesses.**

**He would have been in a position to check the accounts through interviews with many others.**

**Luke here tells us his method. He used both historical accounts and eyewitness material, which he carefully compared with one another and investigated with his own personal research.**

* + - * 1. **His goal was so that readers, specifically Theophilus, and then the greater church would *“may have (know) the certainty the things you have been taught”* Luke 1:4...that his audience could know for certainty the truth!**
        2. **Luke is then making a very direct claim to painstaking historical accuracy in both his account of Jesus’ life, and of the early church.**

1. **This puts the reader in a very interesting bind. It means that we cannot read Luke or Acts and say, *“these are legends that grew up about Jesus and the apostles — some of them are true, but many of them are embellished.”***
2. **Luke’s claim means that we must either assume he is writing accurate history or that he is writing an extremely deliberate set of lies to promote this new religion.**
3. **Luke’s language is not that of a compiler of stories and myths. He most emphatically denies that he was doing that. He says he wrote nothing down unless it was historically checked and certain.**

**Bible Study- The Acts**

**October 2, 2024**

1. **Prayer**
2. **Review**
   1. **Why is the book of Acts still important to us today…? Because:**
      * + 1. **It is God’s Word to His Church,**
          2. **It is God’s account of how He empowered His church to spread the gospel…**
3. **The principles and commands herein will guide us today in how we are to spread and live out the gospel.**
4. **The book of the Acts of the Apostles is about God growing His church which will not end until Christ returns so the principles and commands found within apply in all generations.**
5. **The principles within will enable us to see how we can maneuver through such a culture as we have today that is not that much different from the one in which Luke wrote.**
6. **Let’s consider together Acts 1:1-5.**
   1. **So the Gospel of Luke is about all that Jesus began to do and teach leadng up to His death and resurrection. Then what must the bool of Acts be about according to this text? Acts 1:1-5. *“In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach, until the day when He was taken up, after He had given commands through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom He had chosen. He presented Himself alive to them after His suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God. And while staying with them He ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, He said, ‘you heard from me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.’”* Acts is about what Jesus continues to do and teach through His Apostles.** 
      * + 1. **If this is true, and I am here to say it is, then how do these verses separate Christianity from all other religions?**
7. **Most religion speak of the founding and ending of their founders ministry as completed during his lifetime and they all died and were buried.**
8. **Luke says in his gospel what Jesus began to do and teach, and now in Acts he is telling us that after His resurrection, ascension, and gift of the Spirit He continued His work, first and foremost through the ministry of His chosen apostles and subsequently through the post-apostolic church of every period and place.**
9. **This Jesus we believe in…is both the historical Jesus who lived and the contemporary Jesus who lives, and directs His Kingdom through the Spirit.**
   * + - 1. **According to this passage, in what ways did Jesus prepare and equip His apostles to continue His Ministry and life on earth?**
10. **He chose them and then He commanded them many things before His death and resurrection.**
11. **He showed Himself to them “alive” after the Resurrection… walked among them for 40 days.**
12. **He further instructed them…through the Holy Spirit…seems to be a reference to commissioning them to preach the gospel…**
13. **He promised them the Holy Spirit…Jesus had already promised this now He is reminding them of His promise. *“He said, ‘you heard from me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.”* (vs.5)**
    * + - 1. **How would you say that the Apostle’s ministry would be affected by the fact that Jesus chose, commissioned, instructed them and gave them the Holy Spirit to enable them?**
          2. **How does knowing that we have been chosen, commissioned, and instructed and have the Holy Spirit help us as we seek to do God’s will today?**
          3. **What was the significance of the fact that Jesus showed Himself alive to the apostles and gave many convincing proofs? *“He presented Himself alive to them after His suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God.”* (vs. 3) How is this fact important to us today?**
14. **The Greek word “alive- Zwnta”- *“to be alive”…*real life not a ghost or a mythical person but real and alive …is very significant.**

**The Apostles are not merely to be witnesses to His ministry, His teachings and His death.**

**He wants them and us to know…and Theophilus…that they actually saw Him alive after His death.**

**And He gave them enough appearances/proofs over the course of the 40 days to substantiate that He is truly alive.**

1. **Since the church’s identity and authenticity is built and depends on whether or not Jesus resurrected it was extremely significant that He did and gave proofs to that fact.**
2. **Jesus left no possible doubt that He resurrected, exactly as He promised and Luke writes down that as well. Only the fool doubts!**
3. **What proofs do you have of Jesus’ Resurrection?**
4. **How confident are you in communicating these truths? Why would you say, in your own words, that the resurrection is important? I Cor. 15- Without the resurrection our faith would be futile---useless.**
5. **So He kept teaching on the kingdom…it is what He had proclaimed, *“The time is fulfilled and the Kingdom of God is at hand…”* …what they didn’t get before now Jesus Resurrection causes them to sit up and take notice. Probably remembering what God had said to them… *“This is my Beloved Son; Listen to Him!”***
   * + - 1. **With all of this teaching, the Apostles probably would have been wondering, “What do we do now? How do we get started?” We would want to be doing something. And Jesus told them exactly what He wanted then to do. What was it? *“And while staying with them He ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, He said, ‘you heard from me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.’”* (vs. 4-5)**
6. **He told them to wait in Jerusalem. What are they waiting for?**

**The *“promise of the Father…”*- The Holy Spirit. God had promised- Joel 2:28-29 *“And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions. Even on the male and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit.***

**God’s people had longed for the day of God’s promise. Numerous OT passages indicated that the Father’s gift of the Spirit would be an indication pf the arrival of a new era when God would establish His King and Kingdom.**

**Isaiah 59:20-21-*“And a Redeemer will come to Zion, to those in Jacob who turn from transgression,’ declares the LORD. ‘And as for me, this is my covenant with them,’ says the LORD: ‘My Spirit that is upon you, and my words that I have put in your mouth, shall not depart out of your mouth, or out of the mouth of your offspring, or out of the mouth of your children’s offspring,’ says the LORD, ‘from this time forth and forevermore.’”***

**Ezekiel 39:28-29 *“Then they shall know that I am the LORD their God, because I sent them into exile among the nations and then assembled them into their own land. I will leave none of them remaining among the nations anymore. And I will not hide my face anymore from them, when I pour out my Spirit upon the house of Israel, declares the Lord God.”***

**The disciples had been told to count on Him coming to them- John 14:25-26 *– “These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, He will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.***

* + 1. **Up to this time the Spirit’s work throughout the OT had been focused and specific but what was being promised in Joel and other places was for all His people to receive the Holy Spirit to enable us to believe*.***
    2. **So the 40 days was like a summary of all that He had taught them before as well as a mini seminary course….since it seems they had not paid particular attention to details before His death and resurrection.**
    3. ***“Baptized with the Holy Spirit”* The Greek word here for “with” speaks of instrumentality. The Spirit is the instrument God uses to circumcise our hearts so that we can believe.**

1. **What other names is the Spirit known by? Helper, Advocate, Paraclete, Comforter, Counselor, Seal, Guide, intercessor, witness…**
2. **Where do we see confirmation of the Trinity in these first 5 verses? Why is this important?**
   * + 1. **Acts 1:1-5**
       2. **We must believe in the Trinity…One God in 3 persons…otherwise we deny the person of God and the Scriptures.**
3. **Acts 1:6-11-*“So when they had come together, they asked him, ‘Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?’ He said to them, ‘It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. But 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.’ 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. And while they were gazing into heaven as He went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, 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.’”***
   1. **They had spent the last 40 days in intense study time with Jesus what does the Apostles question in vs 6, about restoring the kingdom to Israel reveal about their understanding still of Jesus’ mission?**
      * + 1. **Word study:**
4. ***“Restore”* is the Greek word used when speaking of expecting a political and territorial kingdom, and then that is confirmed with the use of the next word…**
5. ***“Israel”-* by using this they had in mind a national kingdom, like King David’s, then…**
6. ***“at this time”* designates they were expecting an immediate establishment of this earthly kingdom.**
7. **They envisioned a territorial kingdom. What is wrong with that picture? God’s kingdom is not bound by human definition. Old habits and understandings die hard…. It is hard to change life long understandings and habits.**
   * + - 1. **They may have been asking …when are we gonna get rid of the Romans…Jewish autonomy over the Romans.**
         2. **They may be wondering when the Religious elites would be gone replace by true priests.**
         3. **Maybe they are asking from a Jewish perspective…when will the full new heavens and new earth arrive…the Golden Age? After all they were all looking for the reuniting of the 12 tribes to be regathered and restored to be a beacon of light to the nations.**
         4. **Or maybe it was Jesus’ telling them that the Holy Spirit, which he talked a lot about in the Upper Room before His death, would come *“not many days from now.”***
         5. **Or they may have been asking when is your full kingship going to be realized…since after hearing so much about it they long to live there…now!**
   1. **So how did Jesus answer the question? Or maybe better did He answer the question?**
      * + 1. **He doesn’t answer the kingdom question.**
8. **He shifts their orientation away from WHEN the kingdom will come toward HOW and WHERE it is going to come. Vs. 7**
9. **Rather than coming in an instant, which is what they had been taught and were hoping for, it would come over an undisclosed period of time.**
10. **In other words, as He had said in the Gospels, WHEN is not important. What is important is doing the will of the Father…extending the kingdom and living as Kingdom citizen to his glory.**
    * + - 1. **But His answer gives a clue that it is yet future…since He has already told them that the Spirit must come.**
          2. **And then He will tell them that they are to be His witnesses. So there IS a present component to this in that the Spirit will come and they together will be His witnesses by the power of the Spirit to extend the kingdom. Vs.8- *“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses …”***
11. **Jesus meant something different than we usually think about being His witnesses:**

**A witness in a courtroom is one who testifies to what he has seen, heard and experienced firsthand.**

**Since we did not live back then and didn’t see with our own eyes our resurrected Lord…we can never be true witnesses to His resurrection the way He commanded these Apostles to be.**

**Jesus is actually not commanding us to be His witnesses ..rather Jesus is announcing that God has appointed the 11 (soon to be 12 again) apostles to witness to what they saw and heard**

* + 1. **Jesus does ask them to be His witness, He commands them to be His witnesses…they don’t have a choice because they were chosen by Him and empowered by the Spirit for this task. Much like the Priests and Levites… were chosen and appointed by God…He didn’t ask their permission.**

1. **And while they had been taught that this Golden Age was exclusively for Israel…Jesus confirms that His people will come from, *“…Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”***
2. **It is not like this was a “new idea”…there had been much said about other non-Jews coming into His kingdom.**
3. **But the rabbi’s had taught that they would be “less than” God chosen children…and the children would be a blessing to them as they ruled over them in peace.**
4. **So their concept of restoration needed to be expanded to include the whole world…something extremely hard for a Jew.**
5. **Vs. 8 is also a type of outline for the rest of the book.**
6. **In Chapter 2 they receive the Spirit and begin teaching in Jerusalem (Chapter 2-7)**
7. **Chapters 8-11 have them witnessing outside Jerusalem in Judea and Samaria.**
8. **Chapters 12 on we see Paul taking the gospel to the rest of the then known world.**
9. **They WILL be Hs witnesses.**
10. **Jesus had said *“I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”* (Matt. 16:18) What we see in Acts is how that building of His Church is going to come about.**
11. **It will be built as the Holy Spirit comes upon the 12 Apostles (and later Paul) enabling and empowering them to witness to what they saw and heard and experienced from Jesus Himself.**
    1. **What does Jesus’ response to them especially in verses 1-8 tells us about our calling as Christians today?** 
       * + 1. **We too be witnesses! But what does that mean for us …look like?**
           2. **Since we have the reliable witness …the Gospels and the Epistles…. we have the record of what these men saw, experienced and heard Jesus Teach and do.**
           3. **So our role is to proclaim what these witnesses handed down to us…firsthand accounts. We are to proclaim the Gospel according to the Apostles.**
           4. **We are to hold fast to that Gospel just as they proclaimed it…not changing it or embellishing it…or it no longer is their firsthand account.**
           5. **And we are totally dependent upon the Holy Spirit to make our “witness” effective.**
           6. **R.C. Sproul stated, *“The mission of the Church, the reason we exist, is to bear witness to the present reign and rule of Christ, who is at the right hand of the God.”***
           7. **Verse 8 always causes me pause…especially this part…*”…you will be my witnesses…”***
12. **This is first commanded of the disciples. It is a command and an expectation.**
13. **It is by virtue of our connection, as we have discussed, a command and an expectation for us as well.**
14. **This is what hits me whenever I read this…**

**The fact is, based on what Chris says, we will be His witnesses.**

**So do I even consider on a day to day basis …what does my witness communicate to those around me? Is my witness glorifying Him or myself?**

* 1. **How does the ascension of Jesus connect to His promise of the coming of the Holy Spirit? *“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. And while they were gazing into heaven as He went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, 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.’”* (Acts 1:9-11)**
     + - 1. **It answers His promise to send the Holy Spirit that he made to His disciples that last night…John 16:7- *“ Nevertheless, 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.”***
         2. **So the Spirit had to come to fulfill the work left to be done…and to that end He must leave.**
  2. **Why was it necessary for Him to ascend …that is, why not just disappear?**
  3. **How do you think you would handle watching Jesus ascend, especially after you have just been told that everything you have understood about God’s kingdom was wrong and even after Jesus’ extensive 40 day/seminar on the Spirit and the Kingdom you were still confused? What does this reveal to us about the nature of man…even believing men like the disciples?** 
     + - 1. **They needed the Holy Spirit’s power to fully understand.**
         2. **This does not speak of a 2nd baptism of the Spirit it speaks of what happened then to these men who would lead because the rest of the NT reveals to us that we receive the Spirit when we believe then we are empowered along the way to do the work that He sends us to do.**
         3. **But for the disciples they had had the Son personally with them…and now we have the Spirit personally with us.**
         4. **Just as the Spirit had come upon Jesus to equip Him for His public ministry (interesting thought don’t you think?), so now the Spirit was to come upon His people to equip them for their public ministry in growing the kingdom.**
  4. **What is the angel seeking to do by calling the apostles up short in staring up into the clouds? *“‘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.’”* Is there a lesson there for us today?**

**Bible Study- The Acts**

**October 16, 2024**

1. **Prayer**
2. **Review**
   1. **What did Jesus mean by *“witness”* in vs. 8 as He spoke to His disciples and what does that mean for us today? *“But 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.”***
      * + 1. **They are to testify as eye-witnesses to what they saw and experienced.**
          2. **We too are be witnesses!**
3. **Since we have the reliable witness …the Gospels and the Epistles…. we have the record of what these men saw, experienced and heard Jesus Teach and do.**
4. **So our role is to proclaim what these witnesses handed down to us…firsthand accounts. We are to proclaim the Gospel according to the Apostles.**
5. **We are to hold fast to that Gospel just as they proclaimed it…not changing it or embellishing it…or it no longer is their firsthand account.**
6. **And we are totally dependent upon the Holy Spirit to make our “witness” effective.**
   * + - 1. **Verse 8 always causes me pause…especially this part…*”…you will be my witnesses…”***
7. **This is first commanded of the disciples. It is a command and an expectation.**
8. **It is by virtue of our connection, as we have discussed, a command and an expectation for us as well.**
9. **This is what hits me whenever I read this…**

**The fact is, based on what Chris says, we will be His witnesses.**

**So do I even consider on a day to day basis …what does my witness communicate to those around me? Is my witness glorifying Him or myself?**

* 1. **How does the description of Jesus’ ascension impact your understanding of Jesus’ divine nature?**

1. **Acts 1:12-26**
   1. **According to vss. 4-5, Jesus had told them to stay in Jerusalem and not begin their mission until they receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. *“And while staying with them He ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, He said, ‘you heard from me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.”***

* 1. **What were the characteristics of the early church since Christ’s ascension, as seen in vss. 12-14? *“Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day’s journey away. 13 And when they had entered, they went up to the upper room, where they were staying, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot and Judas the son of James. 14 All these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and His brothers.”***
     + - 1. ***“A Sabbath Day’s journey”-*usually less than a mile…it was to be a short journey otherwise it was considered work.**
         2. **They displayed obedience- they went to Jerusalem and did what Jesus had commanded**
         3. **They displayed togetherness- we grow together not separately.**

1. **We were not meant to be alone especially as God’s people.**
2. ***“with one accord”* speaks to what binds us together…being in Christ and seeking to do His will as He has commanded us.**
   * + - 1. **And they prayed together-**
3. **Corporately- *“all of these”* vs. 14- men and women…**

**Acts 2:41-42 sees 3000 people come into the Lord’s Church and then *“…devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to breaking of bread and the prayers.”* I think it would be wrong to assume that this was only 3000 men who came to faith and worshiped in the way described in vs. 42.**

**All prayed during this time…just like in Acts 12:12 where men and women had *“gathered together”* a phrase used for early worship.**

1. **United- *“with one accord”***
2. **Constant- *“devoting themselves to prayer”-***

**Persistent and diligent in prayer regularly.**

**It doesn’t say how often or for how long but the word indicates that it was happening with regularity and maybe even vast amounts of time.**

* + - * 1. **Prayer foster unity among God’s people…just like it does with couples who pray together.**
  1. **Speaking of prayer: Why was it so important that they are *“devoting themselves to prayer”*? I, mean, after all, Jesus said to wait and the Spirit would come. What did they need to be praying for?**
     + - 1. **Jesus had established a pattern of regular and fervent prayer when He was with His disciples.**
         2. **Prayer is a means of grace…especially corporate prayer.**
         3. **Prayer is also an exercise of faith and they needed to be together, exercising their faith now maybe more than any other time for all they knew for sure was that the Spirit was coming.**
         4. **God’s promises do not remove the need for prayer.**
         5. **In fact, it is His promises which give us the reason to pray and the confidence that He will hear and answer.**
         6. **God has commanded His people to pray throughout Scripture saying how much He delights in our prayers.**
  2. **What would you have been praying for with your brothers and sisters who you had shared so much since Christ’s death, resurrection and ascension?**
  3. **We will see them pray again in verse 24-25. In fact we will see a lot pf prayer going on throughout the book. What does this tell us about the role of prayer in the early Church?**
  4. **Looking closer at verses 15-20- *“In those days Peter stood up among the brothers (the company of persons was in all about 120) and said, 16 ‘Brothers, the Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke beforehand by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus. 17 For he was numbered among us and was allotted his share in this ministry.’ 18 (Now this man acquired a field with the reward of his wickedness, and falling headlong he burst open in the middle and all his bowels gushed out. 19 And it became known to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the field was called in their own language Akeldama, that is, Field of Blood.) 20 ‘For it is written in the Book of Psalms, ‘May his camp become desolate, and let there be no one to dwell in it’; and ‘Let another take his office.’”***
     + - 1. **According to what these verses say, why did Peter believe it necessary to replace Judas?**

1. **Evidently the 40 days of intensive teaching by Jesus opened their minds and hearts to long forgotten texts and their meaning in the future.**
2. **Peter will read or quote from memory all or parts of Ps. 69-*“May his camp become desolate, and let there be no one to dwell in it”…* and Ps. 109- *“Let another take his office.”* Luke may have chosen only to include the necessary texts referred too…which would point to the whole Psalm.**
3. **Peter’s words show this acquired wisdom even before the Spirit has come fully upon him.**

**He notes here that Judas didn’t spoil God’s plan but he actually fulfilled it… *“…the Scripture had to be fulfilled…”***

**So Peter concludes from the Psalter, *“For it is written in the Book of Psalms…”* that Judas needed to be replaced thus fulfilling prophecy.**

**He recognizes by the inspiration of the Spirit that these texts had more to them than simply David talking about his enemies…they spoke more profoundly about Jesus and His enemies…namely Judas.**

**Peter sees… in the way and the place… where Judas died that he died under God’s curse for His treason against God’s King, Jesus. Same thing with Ps. 109.**

* + - * 1. **Side note: It appears that Luke included the gory details of Judas’ death to connect more clearly with the curses spoken of in Ps. 69…an imprecatory Psalm that pronounces a curse on the life and the land of the evildoer who opposes God’s king.**
        2. **Interestingly, Peter has no interest in picking a replacement Apostle, but the knowledge of this Scripture led him to conclude the need for there to be 12 again before the Spirit comes.**
  1. **Looking closer at vs. 21-26. *“’So one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, 22 beginning from the baptism of John until the day when He was taken up from us—one of these men must become with us a witness to His resurrection.” And they put forward two, Joseph called Barsabbas, who was also called Justus, and Matthias. And they prayed and said, ‘You, Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which one of these two you have chosen to take the place in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place.’ And they cast lots for them, and the lot fell on Matthias, and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.”***
     + - 1. **What were the criterions for one to become an Apostle according to these verses?**

1. **That Jesus would be the one choosing. Peter it seems has learned His place. He may be the lead Apostle on one hand but Christ is His head…he will not presume to take the Lord’s place here. (vs. 24-25-*“And they prayed and said, ‘You, Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which one of these two you have chosen to take the place in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place.’”***
2. **He was to be male…**

***“one of the men…” vs. 21***

**by referring only to the brothers he was being exclusive as to the pool from which to choose…another reminder that church spiritual leadership is exclusively male.**

1. **He was to have been with them and witnessed all including Christ’s resurrection… *“men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, 22 beginning from the baptism of John until the day when He was taken up from us…”***
2. **These are given to us here under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and**

**Then written down for us so that we would know that this was an office for this time and this place.**

**They knew what Jesus had meant by *“witness”* and they would work out the details for Judas’ successor accordingly.**

1. **One of the two…of the 120… who had been with them through everything with the Lord Jesus from His baptism by John the Baptist even up to His ascension so they could be a *“witness”* like the other Apostles. And only 2 fit that bill:**

**Joseph/Justus**

**Matthias**

1. ***“And they cast lots for them, and the lot fell on Matthias, and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.”***
   * + - 1. **Where have we seen believers casting lots before?How was this appropriate for picking an Apostle?**
2. **Overriding Scriptural authority- Prov. 16:33- *“The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the LORD.”***
3. **They also prayed expecting God to lead them before they cast lots and chose Matthias.**
4. **An old and accepted method of discerning the Lord’s will.**

**At the sacrifice- Lev. 16:6-10- *“Aaron shall offer the bull as a sin offering for himself and shall make atonement for himself and for his house. 7 Then he shall take the two goats and set them before the LORD at the entrance of the tent of meeting. 8 And Aaron shall cast lots over the two goats, one lot for the LORD and the other lot for Azazel. 9 And Aaron shall present the goat on which the lot fell for the LORD and use it as a sin offering, 10 but the goat on which the lot fell for Azazel shall be presented alive before the LORD to make atonement over it, that it may be sent away into the wilderness to Azazel.”***

**The Hebrew word Azazel’s meaning is uncertain but it is used as one separated from the other or scapegoat. In Islam it is another name for Satan.**

**Choosing the guilty-**

**Concerning Achan- Joshua 7:14-15- *“In the morning therefore you shall be brought near by your tribes. And the tribe that the LORD takes by lot shall come near by clans. And the clan that the LORD takes shall come near by households. And the household that the LORD takes shall come near man by man. 15 And he who is taken with the devoted things shall be burned with fire, he and all that he has, because he has transgressed the covenant of the LORD, and because he has done an outrageous thing in Israel.”***

**Also, they choose by lot Jonah as they were seeking the guilty party… Jonah 1:7**

**Choosing where tribes would go and what portion was theirs. Joshua 18**

**Selecting people for tasks for the Lord like here and Zachariah, John the Baptists father was chosen by lot to burn incense in the temple- Luke 1:8-9-*“Now while he was serving as priest before God when his division was on duty, 9 according to the custom of the priesthood, he was chosen by lot to enter the temple of the Lord and burn incense.”***

* 1. **How might this exercise of choosing Matthias teach us about seeking God’s guidance when making decisions?**
  2. **Have you ever ask the question, whatever happened to Matthias? Do you know anything at all about Matthias? I mean, anything at all?** 
     + - 1. **Matthias is a shortened form of Mattathias. (gift of Yahweh)**
         2. **This extraordinary man was given the extraordinary office of the twelfth Apostle, and we hear absolutely nothing about him in the Bible afterwards.**

1. **Greek historians say that Matthias was part of the 70 or 72 that Christ sent out.**
2. **Clement of Alexandria believed his proper man may have been Zacchaeus…perhaps the Zacchaeus of tax collector fame.**
3. **Later Church traditions place him as a missionary to the Ethiopians.**
   * + - 1. **This act of choosing him was still important, not because of who Matthias was, and not because of what Matthias did, but because the overarching thing that Luke wants us to see here is that Jesus is building His church.**
         2. **And by the power of the Holy Spirit which will come not many days from now, He intends for the church to do what Peter has been doing here: searching wholeheartedly the Word of God and coming in the presence of His people and saying “Whatever it is the Bible says, that we will do, no matter how insignificant it may seem to be.”**
         3. **Oh, if we could learn just that lesson...just that lesson! *“Whatever the Bible says, that we will do”*, we will have learnt a lesson that will make the knees of Satan buckle. May God help us to learn it.**
   1. **How might the activity in prayer that we see here challenge us in our personal and corporate prayer time?**
   2. **What does the unity among the disciples throughout this chapter teach us about community in the church? An answer: *“Unity is in direct correlation to obedience. No obedience no unity no unity no desire for obedience.”***