



Session 3 | Acts 1: 4-8 | Promise, Kingdom, Power, and Witness

We looked at verses 1-3 and concluded Luke is the author, based on tradition which seems to be credible and there is no reason to doubt his authorship. Theophilus is most likely a patron who financed the travel, research, and publication of Luke's gospel and the Acts. The commandments of the so-called Great Commission found in all four gospels (Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:15-19; Luke 24:45-49; John 21:15-17) were given to the apostles and are not directly applied to us. Luke notes there were many infallible proofs of the resurrected Christ. And, for forty days after his resurrection, Jesus taught the apostles about the kingdom of God.

Acts 1:4-5 | The Promise to the Apostle of the Holy Spirit

Verse 4—

And being assembled...with them. At this point I take the reading to be it is only Jesus and the apostles assembled at this time. **Them** appears to point back to verse 2, *the apostles whom he had chosen and being seen of them forty days*. Later we will see more are gathered (Acts 1:15), but at this time, only the apostles are with Jesus. Where he **commanded them that they should not depart Jerusalem** (see Luke 24:49) because he was going to send the **promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me.**

What was the **promise**? It must be the *pneuma hagion (spirit holy)*. ..." This **promise**, fulfilled in Acts 2:4 was given to the apostles, allowing them the power to make a last proclamation of blessing for Israel on the one and only condition of *national repentance*. This was prophesied in Isaiah 44:3, "I will pour my spirit upon thy seed." Also, Joel 2:28. At this point this pouring out of the Holy Spirit has nothing to do with the church (or, the body of Christ). The promise has to do with the national repentance of the People of Israel. The result of repenting and receiving the promise was that *their sins would be blotted out and times of refreshing would come from the presence of the Lord* (Acts 3:19).

The New Testament promise of the Holy Ghost (hagion pneuma) was given by Jesus to the apostles in Luke 24:49. Also (among other places) in John 14:26; 15:26; 16:7.

Verse 5—

John baptized with water (Matthew 3:11). John baptized and preached the baptism of repentance. His purpose was to "Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight." **But ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.** Notice the 'red letters' in verse 5. John is the one who spoke the words, "ye shall be baptized..." not Jesus. Be careful with red letters. The first edition of a red-letter Bible was published in 1901. Remember, all Scripture is inspired. Nonetheless, in ten days this *baptism with the Holy Ghost* will be fulfilled, as noted above, in Acts 2:4.

Acts 1:6-7 | Which Kingdom?

Verse 6—

Jesus appeared to them often over a forty-day period (see vs. 3), teaching them *things pertaining to the kingdom*. This (vs. 6) appears to be another time **When they therefore were come together**. While in the gospels the disciples may not have

completely understood Jesus was Messiah, by now they do (See Luke 24:44-47). Jesus had apparently left out the timing of when he would restore the kingdom and since the pouring out of the spirit and the kingdom were linked in Scripture, it makes sense they would ask him the following question: **wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?**

The apostles must have understood the kingdom as an actual physical kingdom of God on earth. They would think that way because the kingdom of Israel had previously existed. They were not anticipating a spiritual kingdom. The gospel of Luke (among so many other Scripture) has references to the kingdom being physical, future, and fraternal: Luke 1:32-33; 22:15-16, 30.

Many teach the kingdom of God is the church. They do not get this from Scripture, rather their theology comes from *various confessions* like the Westminster Confession of Faith. This is what is called Kingdom Now theology. This teaching is unbiblical and has negative consequences for the church. We are living in Satan's domain, when we attempt to build the kingdom here, we are putting our efforts into the wrong kingdom. The church is not to forge alliances with the world and with groups (governments) who do not share its core biblical convictions. In fact, author Clarence Larkin wrote:

Those involved today in kingdom building are actually not building God's kingdom at all, but rather the kingdom of the antichrist.

Verse 7—

As for the coming kingdom? **It is not for you to know the times or the seasons...** Jesus doesn't correct the apostle's understanding that the kingdom will be a physical kingdom. Rather, he says **the Father** will be the one who chooses when the kingdom will come to earth and be set up.

Acts 1:8 | Power and Witness

Verse 8—

But in the meantime, **ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you.** Here Jesus promises again the empowerment of the Holy Spirit to be his witnesses. We should not take this for the church today as having the same *Holy Spirit Power* that Jesus gave to the apostles. For one, the body of Christ did not exist (nor did this power pertain to Gentiles in general). The power spoken of is apostolic power for the apostle's mission of pursuing the national repentance of Israel.

Ye shall be my witnesses unto me. What were they witnesses of? The context is on the promised kingdom of God. The Power they would receive from the Holy Spirit would be proof of the kingdom authority to be realized if Israel would repent. Their witness of the kingdom would extend to all in the nation of Israel in **Jerusalem, Judaea, Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth** (That is, the all the Jews of the Diaspora, or the dispersion of the Jews beyond Israel¹). In other words, wherever the Jews were dispersed the apostles would be witnesses. Peter, for example preached to the Jews in *Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia* (1st Peter 1:1). Apparently, Babylon as well (1 Peter 3:13). According to early church historians the other apostles went to Turkey, India, Spain, Rome, and other **uttermost** parts of the earth. Their witness would have also been to the Gentile nations who, with their gods vanquished, would honor and serve Israel, turning to their God and to their king and looking to their holy land (Isaiah 49:22; 52:10; 60:3-5, 11 ; 61:6, 9-11; 62:2; 66:12, 18-20)² Later, the gospel of grace would go to the Gentiles *unto the ends of the earth* (Acts 13:47).

¹ *The LORD prophesied the curse of the diaspora if the nation would not "hearken unto the voice of the LORD." See Deut. 28:15,25. The first significant diaspora began in 586 B.C. with the Babylonian captivity.*

² *Keener, Craig S. Acts: An Exegetical Commentary & 2: Introduction and 1:1–14:28. Vol. 1. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012–2013. Print.*