



## Message #2

# BASIC INSTRUCTIONS BEFORE LEAVING EARTH

Acts 1:4-11

Luke, writing to Theophilus, sets out to describe the **continuing work of Jesus through His people by the power of the Holy Spirit**.

After the resurrection, Jesus appeared to His followers over a period of 40 days. This was proof that the resurrection was a physical, bodily resurrection and not just some kind of “spiritual” event.

### Post-resurrection appearances of Christ:

- **To Mary Magdalene** (Mark 16:9-11; John 20:14-18)
- **To the women** (Matt. 28:9-10)
- **To the two on the Emmaus road** (Mark 16:12-13; Luke 24: 13-32)
- **To the Apostle Peter** (Luke 24:34; 1 Cor.15:5)
- **To the 10 Disciples** (Mark 16:14; Luke 24:36-43; John 20:19-23; 1 Cor.15:5)
- **To the Disciples with Thomas** (John 20:26-29; 1 Cor.15:5)
- **To the 7 Disciples by the sea** (John 21:1-24)
- **To the 11 on a Galilean mountain** (Matt.28:16; Mark 16:15)
- **To over 500** (1 Cor.15:6)
- **To James** (1 Cor. 15:7)

**ACTS 1:6**...in speaking of the kingdom of Israel, the disciples indicate that they are still thinking in the traditional Old Testament Jewish way....about an earthly Messianic Kingdom. Jesus wanted them to be more concerned with knowing their role and purpose in the *on-going work*.

**ACTS 1:8**...The instructions that Jesus left His followers in this verse covered some of the major themes of all of Acts, including: **The Holy Spirit** and **Evangelism and Mission**.

This brief passage (1:9-11) also presents us with one of the major events of all time...**The Ascension**.

The other major theme of Acts, **Fellowship** (the church together), is developed over the next few chapters.

### THE HOLY SPIRIT

ACTS is sometimes called “The Acts of the Holy Spirit” instead of the more common “Acts of the Apostles”. This is because all that the Church achieves is only enabled and empowered by the Holy Spirit.

Unfortunately, there has been much confusion and controversy over the Person and Work of the Holy Spirit...and the phrase used in Acts 1:5 (“baptised with the Holy Spirit”) is often at the centre of the debate! These early verses of Acts 1 are not the first time we come across the Holy Spirit being referred to in Scripture...but it is a very specific and important reference being made here.

### **For a little bit of background....**

- The Holy Spirit is the third member of the Trinity who exercises the power of the Father and the Son in creation and redemption. Also....

- The Holy Spirit appears in the Gospel of John as the power by whom Christians are brought to faith and helped to understand their lives with God. The Spirit brings a person to new birth. (John 3:6; 6:63).
- The Holy Spirit is the *Paraclete (Helper)* whom Jesus promised to the disciples after His ascension. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit are unified in ministering to believers (John 14:16,26). It is through the Holy Spirit that the Father and Son abide with the disciples (John 15:26).
- The Spirit guides believers into all truth with what He hears from the Father (John 12:49-50).
- Jesus refers to the Spirit of God (Matt.12:28-29; Lk 11:20) as the power by whom He is casting out demons.
- The Person and ministry of the Holy Spirit in the Gospels is confirmed by His work in the early church. The “baptism with the Holy Spirit” (Acts 1:5, 2:4ff) is the pouring out of the Spirit’s power in missions and evangelism (Acts 1:8).
- The Holy Spirit is the one called to our side by Jesus to help us, strengthen us and assist us (John 14:16).

- *Paraclete* is from the Greek word *parakletos* which means “one who speaks in favour of”, as an intercessor, advocate or legal assistant. This word only appears in John’s Gospel, speaking about the Spirit being the believer’s advocate after Christ’s ascension (John 14:16,26; 15:26; 16:7).
- The Holy Spirit is the way to Jesus Christ the Son (Romans 8:11) and to the Father (Rom. 8:14-15)
- The Holy Spirit intercedes for us (Rom 8:26-27), & reveals the deep things of God (1 Cor.2:10-12; Eph.3:3-5).
- The Holy Spirit acts with God and Christ as the pledge/guarantee by whom believers are sealed until the day of salvation (2 Cor. 1:21-22) and by whom they live (Romans 15:13).

The disciples had experienced aspects of the power and enabling of the Holy Spirit previously (see Matthew 10:20; John 14:17).

**Now Jesus was heralding the permanent indwelling and empowering of the Holy Spirit...but He had to leave the earth first!** (John 16:7).

Thus, the coming of the Holy Spirit in Acts after Christ’s ascension was a historical, as well as spiritual, event. It had to happen in such a way for the disciples/Christ followers at that time in that particular context.

Without getting bogged down with misunderstandings around terminology, we could say that the “*baptism* of the Holy Spirit” is at the point of conversion when every believer is placed into the Body of Christ (1 Cor.12:13). At that point the Spirit takes up permanent residency (Romans 8:9; 1 Cor. 6:19-20).

However, Christians need to experience the *release, filling, or anointing* of the power of the Holy Spirit in their lives (Eph.4:30, 5:18). This takes place as we continually yield control of our lives to Him.

### **THE MANDATE FOR MISSION**

**Acts 1:8** is one of the most important in the whole book of Acts.

**Firstly**, it shows us that the power of the Holy Spirit gives to God’s people is the power to witness to Christ.

**Secondly**, this verse functions as a form of the Great Commission (Matt.28:19-20). Jesus describes the Gospel moving out through concentric circles from Jerusalem to Judea and Samaria and finally the world.

**Thirdly**, this verse functions as a preview of the entire book of Acts, which will track the movement of the apostles as they move in obedience to this “mandate for mission”.

There are several words translated as “power” in the New Testament. The most common is ***dunamis*** (from which we get the word “dynamite”.) However, the word translated as “power” in **Acts 1:7** is ***exousia***. This word denotes “freedom of action, right to act”....it is usually a term used of God or, as used of men in this verse it means that “authority is delegated”.

So, Acts 1:7-8 is telling us that divine authority is delegated to mankind (through the Holy Spirit) for the purpose of witnessing for Christ (mission). Thus, the work of the church is by the authority of God, in the power of the Holy Spirit, to witness for Christ.

**How important is Acts 1:8 to the way you look at your own life, purposes and priorities?**

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**How would you personally apply the instructions of Acts 1:8?**

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### **THE ASCENSION**

Immediately following this second Great Commission and the promise of the coming Spirit, Jesus is taken up into heaven (Acts 1:9). The Ascension is often overlooked by the Church, yet is essential to our faith.

- The resurrection wasn’t the end for Christ – the ascension and exaltation followed (Phil 2:6-11)
- The angels that appeared afterwards heralded the *parousia* (Christ’s return/ Second Coming)
- The ascension demonstrates/reveals the reality of Christ’s lordship (Eph. 1:20-23)
- The ascension enables Christ to be the mediator for believers (Heb. 4:14-5:10; 7:1-10:39)
- The ascension allows for Christ to be active with the Father in judgement (Eph.1:20; Mark 16:19)

- **Are you consciously aware of the power of the Holy Spirit in your life and your witness? How?**
- **Have you ever spent much time contemplating the ascension of Christ and its significance?**
- **Put yourself in the sandals of those who witnessed the ascension. How would you have felt?**
- **Does thinking about the ascension now make any difference to you and your faith?**
- **What does the promise of Christ’s return mean to you?**