

Sunday Morning Message

April 14, 2024

Get Busy

Topics – Introduction to the Book of Acts; Christ's Instruction to the Apostles Before His Ascension into Heaven; The Great Commission

Text for Today's Message – Acts 1:1 - 11

Congregational Reading – Acts 1:9 - 11

Introduction

We celebrated the resurrection of the Lord Jesus a couple of weeks ago. The passage that we will be discussing today takes place several weeks after the time of Christ's resurrection when he ascends into Heaven. He had prepared the disciples ahead of time that He would be departing from them physically, but He also encouraged them by telling them that His presence would always be with them. He said that He would always be with them (Matthew 28:20) and that He would never leave them or forsake them (Hebrews 13:5).

How could Jesus always be with them if He was physically going to depart from them? He would send them His Holy Spirit. The Book of Acts is all about what the Holy Spirit does through these believers in Christ after the time that Jesus departs and ascends back into Heaven.

The ascension is recorded also in Mark 16:19 – 20 and Luke 24:50 – 53:

"19 So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God. 20 And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen." (Mark 16:19-20)

"50 And he led them out as far as to Bethany, and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them. 51 And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven. 52 And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy: 53 And were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God. Amen." (Luke 24:50-53)

In our text today in verse eleven, the angels rebuked the apostles. They said: why are you standing around here, you need to get busy.

The message is the same to us today – Quit Standing Around – Get Busy!

The Book of Acts is a Book about:

1. A Plan – The Great Commission

God's Great Commission was given right before the ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ (Mark 16:19 – 20; Luke 24:50 – 53; Acts 1:9 - 10). The Great Commission was given to us by the Lord, and is recorded for us in the Gospels (Matthew 28:18 – 20; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:46 - 48; John 20:21); and also here in the Book of Acts:

"18 And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. 19 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: 20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen." (Matthew 28:18-20)

"15 And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." (Mark 16:15)

"46 And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: 47 And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. 48 And ye are witnesses of these things." (Luke 24:46-48)

"21 Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you." (John 20:21)

"But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." - (Acts 1:8)

This Book of Acts will give us a glimpse of these 1st century Christians in action as they fulfilled the Great Commission.

2. A Power

Before Jesus left the earth, He promised that He would send the Comforter – The Holy Ghost of God; and the Holy Ghost of God would give the power (dunamis) that was needed to fulfill God's Great Commission. It is interesting to note that Jesus gave us power (authority) when He gave us the Great Commission, and then the Holy Ghost gives us power - the boldness, strength, and ability that we need.

We will see a great difference in the boldness of the apostles in this book as compared to their timidity and faithlessness in the Gospel accounts. This difference is due to the presence and power of the Holy Ghost of God:

"And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." - (Acts 2:4)

"And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness." - (Acts 4:31)

"And the disciples were filled with joy, and with the Holy Ghost." - (Acts 13:52)

3. A Progression

There is a progression in divine gifts.

This book is a transitional book. We are coming out of the time of the Old Testament, and entering into the Church Age. We will learn that there were many transitional gifts given to these early churches. These gifts included the gifts of tongues, prophecy, and healing. They were called "sign" gifts. 1 Corinthians 1:22 says, *"the Jews require a sign"*; 1 Corinthians 14:22 says, *"tongues are for a sign...to them which believe not"*.

"Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away." (1 Corinthians 13:8-11)

"That which is perfect" refers to the Bible – the Canon of Scripture, which was completed when John wrote the last book of the New Testament – *Revelation*.

These sign gifts will transition out as the first century concludes.

There is a progression in doctrine.

"And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue: whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly." - (Acts 18:26)

There is a progression in direction.

"And this continued by the space of two years; so that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks." - (Acts 19:10)

4. A Passion

Galatians 5:22 says, “the fruit of the Spirit is love”. 1 Corinthians 13:8 says, “charity never faileth”.

The Gospel accounts show us the story of God’s demonstration of love through the Lord Jesus’ shed blood on the Cross of Calvary. The Book of Acts will show us how these early church disciples of Christ demonstrated not only their love and zeal for the Lord, but also their compassion and care for the souls of men.

It is interesting to note that the word “love” does not appear one time in the Book of Acts, perhaps because these early church pioneers did not talk about their love; they demonstrated it through their obedience to the Lord and their passion for people.

5. A Persecuted People

In this book, we will see the brutal persecution of the followers of God’s Son primarily caused by the Jews, the people who were supposed to be God’s Chosen People.

We will learn about the martyrdom of Stephen, a man “full of the Holy Ghost”, and “full of faith and power”.

We learn about the death of James, and the imprisonment of Peter.

We will meet a persecutor of Christians, who will be miraculously converted by the Lord on the Road to Damascus. He will then become one of the world’s boldest preachers of the Gospel, but unfortunately, his preaching will draw attention to him, and the enemies of God will begin to attack him and his companions. When we leave the book Paul is a prisoner in Rome awaiting a hearing with Caesar.

6. A Perpetuating Story

The abrupt ending of the Book of Acts indicates that the story hasn’t ended yet. We are living right now in chapter 29 of this book, or perhaps in the sequel that is being recorded in Heaven.

Transition

Today, we will examine these opening verses to the Book of Acts and consider some of the contextual information about the book.

I. The Identification of the Correspondent (v. 1)

By definition – a correspondent is one who writes regularly to a newspaper or a person.

Of course, we know that the Holy Spirit if God is the author of the Book of Acts but let's see what we can learn about the human instrument that was used of God to pen the Words of God.

Though the writer is not specifically mentioned by name, we can determine that it was none other than Luke, "*the beloved Physician*" (Colossians 4:14). This book was written to an individual named Theophilus whose name means "friend of God." We can see from the opening verses of Luke's gospel (Luke 1:1 – 4) that The Gospel of Luke was also written to Theophilus.

Note – Theophilus was possibly a Roman official as Luke added the title "most excellent" to his name. (Acts 23:26 – "most excellent governor Felix")

The book had to have been written by a companion of Paul as is evidenced by the many passages in the book that are written from a first-person perspective. The words "us" and "we" are used indicating that the writer was personally present during portions of the story. (Acts 16:10 – 17; 20:5 – 21:18; 27:1 – 28:16)

Paul's letter to Philemon, which was written during Paul's imprisonment in Rome, specifically mentions Luke (Lucas) in verse 24.

The Book of Luke was most likely written before the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD. Certainly, an event of that magnitude would have been included in the Book had Luke heard about it. It is believed that Paul was under house arrest in Rome around 60 – 61 AD. It is very likely that the book was written at this time. This would be the specific period dealt with at the ending of the book. The Book of Acts spans a period of approximately 30 years.

The wording of Acts 1:1 gives us the idea that this book picks up right where his "former treatise" (Luke) leaves off.

II. The Reiteration of the Commission (vs. 2 – 8)

The definition of reiteration is to say something again, or several times, typically for emphasis or clarity. If there is anything that needs to be reiterated regularly to Christians, it's the Great Commission.

A. Start Waiting for the Promise (vs. 4 & 5)

Jesus had foretold them before regarding the coming of the Holy Spirit:

"And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever;" - (John 14:16)

"But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." - (John 14:26)

"But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me:" - (John 15:26)

"Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you." - (John 16:7)

They were to wait for the Holy Ghost who would come on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2). Today, all believers are sealed with the Holy Ghost when they trust Christ:

"In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise," - (Ephesians 1:13)

Whether the individual believer is filled with the Holy Spirit or not is dependent upon whether he is yielded to the Holy Spirit's lordship in his life.

The indwelling of the Spirit comes automatically with salvation, but the filling of the Spirit is commanded by God and is a decision that each believer makes.

"And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;" - (Ephesians 5:18)

B. Stop Worrying about the Kingdom (vs. 6 & 7)

The apostles must have thought that now that the Lord had paid for the sins of the world, that He was ready to set up His earthly Kingdom. The Lord mildly rebukes them and tells them to focus on His commission, and let God worry about the Kingdom.

C. Start Working on the Commission (v. 8)

III. The Ascension of the Christ (vs. 2; 9 – 11)

The angels admonish them for waiting around the site of the ascension; but they also encourage them by telling them that Jesus will come back for them.

"But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words." - (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18)

The same message could be preached today. What are you standing around for? Get busy. The Lord is coming back! Get busy telling everyone that you know about the Lord Jesus Christ. Tell them that Jesus loves them and tell them that He will save them from a Christless eternity in Hell if they will simply repent of their sins and turn to Him in faith, believing that He died for their sins, was buried, and rose again the third day according to the Scriptures.

This world needs Christ: your friends, family members, neighbors, and co-workers all need Christ. Christ needs you to tell them about Him.

Someday soon Christ is going to return for His Bride – the Church. If you are saved, He is coming back for you.

"1 Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. 2 In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." (John 14:1-3)

But before the time for His return comes, we have a job to do. We will not be able to tell our lost loved ones about Jesus after we are gone. We need to get the message of the gospel out into this world before it is too late.

Quit Standing Around – Get Busy!

Tell somebody about Jesus today.