

Brookland Baptist Church
Bible Study
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Lecture II

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The Book of Acts
Acts 1:3-6

Acts 1:3 – “After his suffering, he showed himself to these men 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.”

The ultimate culmination of the kingdom of God will not be fully realized until Jesus Christ comes again to rule, defeat His enemies, and consummate the kingdom (Matthew 24:29–31; 25:31–46; John 14:1–3). Before that time believers are to work to spread God’s kingdom across the world. Often the term “kingdom,” at least in Acts, is used almost synonymously with the gospel message.

This was not a blind leap in the dark. Jesus gave many proofs to the early followers. Today many people doubt Jesus’ resurrection. But history records that Jesus appeared in bodily form to His disciples on many occasions after His resurrection, proving that he was alive. Note the change that occurred in the disciples’ lives. At Jesus’ death, they scattered; they were disillusioned and fearful. After seeing the resurrected Christ, they were fearless and risked everything to spread the good news about him around the world. They faced imprisonment, beatings, rejection, and martyrdom, yet they never compromised their mission. These men would not have risked their lives for something they knew was a fraud. They knew that Jesus had been raised from the dead, and the early church members were fired with their enthusiasm to tell others. We can have confidence in their testimony. Twenty centuries later we can know that our faith is based on solid, historical fact.

So, we have the two aspects of Christianity that would soon spread like wildfire from the temple porticoes in Jerusalem:

- (1) convinced witnesses who had been with the resurrected Christ;
- (2) and a clear message of Christ’s desire to rule in people’s hearts and of His promise to return. (James 1:3–10)

Acts 1:4–5 – “In one of these meetings as he was eating a meal with them, he told them, “Do not leave Jerusalem until the Father sends you what he promised. Remember, I have told you about this before. John baptized with water, but in just a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.”

As the risen Christ met with His disciples, here eating a meal with them (yet another of the “convincing proofs” mentioned in Acts 1:3), He surely told them many things. Luke records only a handful of sentences from those forty days of instruction, so they certainly are important words. Christ first told His followers to stay in Jerusalem until the Father sends you what he promised. This points back to Luke 24:49. He had spoken about this before, at the Last Supper: “And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor, who will never leave you. He is the Holy Spirit.” (John 14:16–17 NLT; John 14:26)

This would be a new kind of baptism. John baptized with water, said Jesus, but these believers would be baptized with the Holy Spirit. John the Baptist had baptized people as a sign of repentance. They had confessed their sins and had determined to live as God wanted them to live. Baptism was an outward sign of commitment. To be effective, it had to be accompanied by an inward change of attitude leading to a changed life. John’s baptism did not give salvation; it prepared a person to welcome the coming Messiah and receive His message and His baptism. John himself had said, “I baptize you with water for repentance, but one who is more powerful than I is coming.... He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.” (Matthew 3:11 NRSV)

The “one” who was coming was Jesus, the promised Messiah. The coming of the Spirit had been prophesied as part of the Messiah’s arrival:

- “I will pour out my Spirit on your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants.” - (Isaiah 44:3 NIV)
- “The time is coming.... I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people.... For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.”- (Jeremiah 31:31–34 NIV)
- “I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to

follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.” - (Ezekiel 36:26–27 NIV)

- “And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days.” - (Joel 2:28–29 NIV)

The Old Testament promised a time when God would demonstrate His purifying power among people. (Isaiah 32:15; Ezekiel 39:29) The prophets also looked forward to a purifying fire. (Isaiah 4:4; Malachi 3:2) This looked ahead to Pentecost (Acts 2:1–6), when the Holy Spirit would be sent by Jesus in the form of tongues of fire, empowering His followers to preach the Gospel. All believers, those who would later come to Jesus Christ for salvation, would receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit and the fire of purification. This baptism would purify and refine each believer. When Jesus baptized with the Holy Spirit, the entire person would be transformed by the Spirit’s power.

If Jesus had stayed on earth, His physical presence would have limited the spread of the Gospel because physically he could be in only one place at a time. After Christ was taken up into heaven, He would be spiritually present everywhere through the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit was sent so that God would be with and within His followers after Christ returned to heaven. The Spirit would comfort them, guide them to know His truth, remind them of Jesus’ words, give them the right words to say, and fill them with power. The Holy Spirit would be the next great event in the life of the church.

In a series of meetings with the living, resurrected Christ, the disciples had many questions answered. They became convinced of the Resurrection, learned about the kingdom of God, and discovered the truth about their power source—the Holy Spirit. By believing in him, we can receive His power through the Holy Spirit to be new people.

The Ascension of Jesus

Acts 1:6 – “So when they met together, they asked him, “Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?”

The average Jew of Jesus’ day was looking forward with great anticipation to the literal coming of the Messiah’s earthly kingdom and with it the restoration of the fortunes and military might that the nation had enjoyed under King David. Jesus had certainly taught a great deal about His

coming kingdom in His ministry with the disciples. During this forty-day instruction period, the disciples had questions about the promised kingdom, for their anticipation had been heightened with their Master's resurrection from the dead. Fully expecting Jesus to bring in His kingdom on earth at that moment, the disciples asked: "Are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?"

The coming of the kingdom was closely associated with the coming of the Holy Spirit. When Christ told the disciples of the imminent coming of the Spirit, therefore, they were even more likely to assume the coming of the kingdom would also be at hand. During the years of Jesus' ministry on earth, the disciples continually had wondered about the coming of the kingdom and what their roles would be in it. In the traditional view, the Messiah would be an earthly conqueror who would free Israel from Rome. But the kingdom about which Jesus spoke was first of all a "spiritual" kingdom established in the hearts and lives of believers (Luke 17:21); behind it was the earthly kingdom that Christ promised to institute at His return.

Jesus' answer was disappointing to the disciples, a rebuke and a gentle reminder that the apostles' role (like the role he had modeled on earth) was to desire to be in God's presence in prayer and worship and to faithfully follow the Father's sovereign lead.

There were various ideas concerning the role of the Messiah:

1. He would be a political figure who would establish an era of justice and peace.
2. A nationalistic military figure messiah is expected to crush Israel's enemies and judge nations.
3. Davidic king and sometimes as a priestly figure and a wonder worker who would heal and perform signs and wonders.
4. Jesus instead chose the role of the suffering servant.

Further, the messiah may be of human or supernatural origin; he may even be described as being preexistent, hidden away until the right time for his appearance. The disciples wanted to know Jesus' timetable for the restoration of the kingdom. Like other Jews, the disciples chafed under their Roman rulers. They wanted Jesus to free Israel from Roman power and then become their king. Jesus replied that God the Father sets the timetable for all events — worldwide, national, and personal. If you want changes that God isn't making immediately, don't become impatient. Instead, trust God's timetable. Remember that he is wise, good, and all-powerful. Even when things seem chaotic, he is in control. His perfect will ultimately will prevail.