

THE BEGINNING OF THE ONGOING

ACTS 1



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A Scriptorium Study from The Fellowship of Ailbe

The Beginning of the Ongoing: Acts 1

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Acts 1: Introduction and Overview

The book of Acts is one of the most important books in the New Testament. It bridges the Old Testament into the New, the Gospels into the Apostolic Age, and the whole of Scripture into the time/space continuum in which we live and move and have our being.

Acts is the story of one kingdom being replaced by another. The Son rises on the Kingdom of Light, and He, working by His Spirit in His Church, drives back the darkness of unbelief, turning the ancient world rightside-up for Jesus Christ.

Acts is the story of the ongoing work of Christ – how He, through His Church began flowing the living waters of His Spirit and the peace and joy of His Kingdom to an Empire in decline and degeneration. And it is also the story of how He continues to do this work in our own day. The Acts of the Apostles are our acts as well, as we take up our cross and follow Jesus in pursuit of His ongoing work.

And it all begins in Acts 1.

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We hope you find this study of Acts instructive and helpful to equip you for your walk with and work for the Lord. Thank you for joining us.

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1 Marching Orders

Pray Psalm 110.5-7

The Lord *is* at Your right hand;
He shall execute kings in the day of His wrath.
He shall judge among the nations,
He shall fill *the places* with dead bodies,
He shall execute the heads of many countries.
He shall drink of the brook by the wayside;
Therefore He shall lift up the head.

Sing Psalm 110.5-7

(Aurelia: [*The Church's One Foundation*](#))

The Lord at Your right hand, Lord, in wrath shall shatter kings,
when judgment by His strong Word He to the nations brings.
Then, all His foes defeated, He takes His hard-won rest,
in glorious triumph seated with us, redeemed and blessed!

Read Acts 1.1-3.

Preparation

1. Which work of Jesus is the subject of the book of Acts?
2. How did Jesus prepare His disciples for this work?

Meditate

Luke's "former treatise" is, of course, the Gospel of Luke. It, too, was written to Theophilus, that he might know the truth of things that were being reported about Jesus (Lk. 1.1-4).

The book of Acts presents the first records of the *ongoing* work of Jesus Christ, what He continues to do from His throne on high (v. 2), by His Spirit, through His Church, and for the sake of His expanding Kingdom and glory.

What Jesus *began* to do (Acts 1.1) was to "bring near" the Kingdom of God, invading, investing, and driving back the kingdom of darkness and the works of the devil (Matt. 4.17; 12.22-29; 1 Jn. 2.8), and establishing a beachhead for the fulfillment of such Old Testament visions as Psalm 72, Daniel 2.44, 45, and Isaiah 9.6, 7. Acts will tell us what He is *continuing* to do from His throne at the right hand of the Father.

Three matters stand out in these verses, which cover a period of forty days (v. 3). First, Jesus went to considerable lengths to convince His disciples that He had risen from the grave (v. 3). We read about these encounters in Matthew 28, Mark 16, John 20 and 21, and Luke 24. If we are not persuaded that Jesus is alive and reigning in glory, we're not going to be very likely to follow Him.

Second, Jesus reiterated His instructions to His disciples. He gave these in the form of *commandments*, not options (v. 2). Jesus fulfilled the old Law and now He gives the new Law. That new Law brings

the old Law forward with new power and focus for the purpose of making disciples of all nations (cf. Matt. 5.17-19; 22.34-40; 28.18-20) and seeking the Kingdom and righteousness of God (Matt. 6.10, 33). This must be our burden and agenda as well if we call ourselves followers of Jesus Christ.

Finally, Jesus reviewed and doubtless added to all His previous teaching about the Kingdom of God (v. 3). The Good News Jesus proclaimed is the Good News of the Kingdom. The Gospel is not merely a gospel of salvation and eternal life. It is the Gospel of the Kingdom, of a new order and economy which has broken into the old sinful and dying world to bring new hope, new life, and new power for restoring the world for the glory of God. We have been sent like Jesus to seek, bring near, and advance this Kingdom in every area of our lives (Jn. 20.21).

These verses set the cornerstone for Acts. They will guide Luke in all his reporting of the exciting and almost unbelievable beginnings of the ongoing work of Jesus Christ.

Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

The first book of Luke was about “all that Jesus began both to do and teach” (Acts 1.1), and the second is about how Jesus’ command and commission in Acts 1.8 began to be fulfilled. It is “the story of the men and women who took that commission seriously and began to spread the news of a risen Savior to the most remote corners of the known world” (from NKJV preface to the Book of Acts).

“This must be our burden and agenda as well if we call ourselves followers of Jesus Christ.”

We will have confidence to carry this burden and agenda because we are sure of our calling; and we are sure of the Savior Who has called us.

“For thus says the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel:

‘In returning and rest you shall be saved; in quietness and confidence shall be your strength’ (Is. 30.15).

“Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me” (Mk. 8.34).

We believe that He is alive: “Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen!” (Lk. 24.5, 6).

We believe that He is ruling from heaven in His Kingdom: “For Yours is the Kingdom and the power and the glory forever” (Matt. 6.13).

We believe that we are members of His Kingdom, therefore we eagerly serve our living King:

“...whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many” (Matt. 20.26-28).

We agree to live gladly by the rules set forth by our King: “Jesus said to him, ‘You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets’” (Matt. 22.37-40).

As the Body of Christ, the unwritten third book of Luke, let us take up our marching orders and

follow Him daily into our own Personal Mission Field, to “spread the news of a risen Savior” into our corner of the world.

For reflection

1. How do you know that Jesus is risen from the dead? What difference does that make in your life?
2. What commandments has Jesus given you, that you should follow day by day?
3. How does seeking the Kingdom and righteousness of Jesus serve to inform and guide your daily life?

What did he command? “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.” Great is the praise of the apostles, when they have been entrusted with such a charge, that is to say, the salvation of the world. John Chrysostom (354-407) Homilies on the Acts of the Apostles

Pray Psalm 110.1-4

Spend some minutes meditating on Jesus, exalted in glory. Praise Him for His excellent greatness, then offer yourself today as a “volunteer” to go to your world like the refreshing dew of the morning, bearing the grace and Good News of Jesus as you go.

Sing Psalm 110.1-4

(Aurelia: [*The Church's One Foundation*](#))

“Sit by Me at My right hand,” the Lord says to my Lord,
“until I make Your foot stand on all who hate Your Word.”
From in His Church the Savior rules all His enemies;
while those who know His favor go forth the Lord to please.

Filled with the Spirit’s power, in holy robes of love,
from early morning’s hour they serve their Lord above.
Christ reigns a priest forever, the King of Righteousness
and King of Peace who ever His chosen ones will bless.

2 A Promise Worth Waiting For

Pray Psalm 51.10-13

Create in me a clean heart, O God,
And renew a steadfast spirit within me.
Do not cast me away from Your presence,
And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.
Restore to me the joy of Your salvation,
And uphold me *by Your* generous Spirit.
Then I will teach transgressors Your ways,
And sinners shall be converted to You.

Sing Psalm 51.10-13

(Passion Chorale: [*O Sacred Head, Now Wounded*](#))

Create in me a clean heart, renew me from within!
Take not Your Spirit from me because of all my sin.
Salvation's joy restore, Lord, and keep me in Your hand;
thus shall I tell Your strong Word to sinners in the land.

Read Acts 1.1-5; meditate on verses 4 and 5.

Preparation

1. For what were the disciples to wait?
2. To what did Jesus compare this?

Meditation

The mention of “the Promise” would have cued up at least two significant ideas in the mind of the disciples.

Secondarily, the promises made to Abraham in Genesis 12.1-3 would undoubtedly have come to mind – a people blessed with the favor of God, provided for in every way, and extending the blessings of God to all the earth and every generation. God was about to fulfill this promise “not many days from now.”

Primary, however, because Jesus further clarified what He meant, would have been the promise of the Spirit, which was prominent in the preaching of such prophets as Joel, Isaiah, and Ezekiel. The baptism of the Spirit would fulfill the promise of Deuteronomy 30.1-10 and Ezekiel 36.26, 27, of a new immersion in the life of the unseen realm, one in which we are indwelt, suffused, instructed, transformed, and empowered by a Reality not of this world.

“Not many days” (v. 5). Isn't that just like Jesus? He holds out incredible promises, and we take them, as we should, to be certain. But we *cannot* be certain precisely when or how those promises will be ours. That's in the Lord's hands. The disciples would still have to *wait* a bit for God to bring the Promise, but Jesus was making it clear: Their time of waiting was nearly at an end, and this Promise was well worth waiting for.

Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

Jesus told them to “wait for the Promise of the Father...” (Acts 1. 4).

This Christmas our daughter Kristy’s gift was delivered perilously early. I suggested strongly that she wait to open it. But waiting is very, very hard. She is notoriously bad about opening things when they arrive; and perhaps doesn’t even wait for the actual date of her birth or Christmas. She is a competent, smart, beautiful, loving and delightful woman of God. She just might be a little bad about this one thing. Anyway, she managed to wait until Christmas morning. It was even the very last thing that she opened. I mean, she really waited. And waiting paid off, for when she finally opened her gift, it was a sweet surprise and brought her great joy. Even she said she was glad she waited, because when she opened it, it was worth waiting for.

The disciples did exactly as Kristy did. They waited and it paid off supremely for them, too. They were baptized with the Holy Spirit. The perfect gift at the perfect time. Worth waiting for.

God likes for His people to wait:

“Be still and know that I am God...” (Ps. 46.10).

“Wait on the LORD; be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart...” (Ps. 27.14)

“Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for Him...” (Ps. 37.7).

“I waited patiently for the LORD; and He inclined to me, and heard my cry” (Ps. 40.1).

“But those who wait on the LORD shall renew *their* strength...” (Is. 40.31).

We are...”eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body. For we were saved in this hope...we eagerly wait for *it* with perseverance” (Rom. 8.23, 25).

“...wait for the Promise of the Father” (Acts. 1.4).

“To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation” (Heb. 9.28).

Waiting itself is a gift. And we will always continuously need to wait for sustenance from His gracious hand.

But there are some gifts that we can open now. It is allowed. Kristy concurs:

The gift of knowing God.

The gift of courage and strength to obey Him.

The gift of rest and patience to strengthen us for our days.

The gift of the Holy Spirit to lead us daily into our own Personal Mission Field.

The gift of Jesus’ imminent return to take us home to be with Him eternally.

“Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above...” (James 1.17)

Let’s tear off the bow and rip the paper and get busy Opening!

For reflection

1. What makes the Promise of the Holy Spirit so special?
2. God likes His people to wait. What does it mean to wait upon the Lord?
3. Why do you think God doesn’t give us more specific information about the future?

Our Lord told the disciples the work they were to do. The apostles met together at Jerusalem; Christ having ordered

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them not to depart thence, but to wait for the pouring out of the Holy Spirit. This would be a baptism by the Holy Ghost, giving them power to work miracles, and enlightening and sanctifying their souls. Matthew Henry (1662-1714), *Commentary on Acts 1.1-5*

Closing Prayer Psalm 51.16-19.

Offer yourself as a living sacrifice to the Lord for today (Rom. 12.1, 2). Ask Him to use you for good in the lives of others and in building His Church.

Sing Psalm 51.16-19

(Aughton: [He Leadeth Me](#))

No sacrifice, no offering would You have us, Your people, bring;
but broken spirits, cleansed of lies, and pure hearts You will not despise.

Refrain vv. 15, 18

Lord, open now our lips to raise to You sweet songs of joyous praise!
Thus let Your favor on us fall, and build and strengthen Zion's wall!

Now build Your Church, raise high the wall of those who on Your mercy call.
And take our lives and let them be sweet sacrifices, Lord, to Thee!

Refrain

3 What We Can and Cannot Know

Pray Psalm 132.1-5.

LORD, remember David
And all his afflictions;
How he swore to the LORD,
And vowed to the Mighty One of Jacob:
“Surely I will not go into the chamber of my house,
Or go up to the comfort of my bed;
I will not give sleep to my eyes
Or slumber to my eyelids,
Until I find a place for the LORD,
A dwelling place for the Mighty One of Jacob.”

Sing Psalm 132.1-5.

(Finlandia: [*Be Still My Soul*](#))

Remember, Lord, we pray, in David’s favor, the hardships he endured, the oath he swore, the vow he made to Jacob’s mighty Savior: “I shall not enter through my palace door; I shall not sleep, nor slumber my eyes favor, until I make a dwelling for the Lord!”

Read Acts 1.1-8, meditate on verses 6-8.

Preparation

1. What were the disciples seeking from Jesus?
2. How did Jesus answer their question?

Meditation

See that word, “restore” (v. 6)? The answer to the disciples’ question, while not given here, is the story of the book of Acts: “No!” and “Yes!”

One of the great themes of Scripture is that of restoration, of God returning His people to Himself, so that they can enjoy all the benefits of the blessed life of His Presence and glory (cf. Ps. 126). It makes sense that the disciples would ask about the Kingdom, since Jesus had been plying them with instruction on the subject for forty days. They were primed. They were ready.

But, no, they weren’t.

The disciples asked about the Old Testament kingdom of David, and no, that was not coming. The Kingdom of David’s greater Son *was* coming, but they weren’t quite ready. They had to wait. And then *power* would come. The unseen world of infinite spiritual power was about to be fused with the temporal world of men and things, and all heaven would break loose on earth, spreading from Jerusalem to the farthest parts through the *experience of restoration* borne witness to in the words and deeds of those first believers.

“It is not for you to know.” Let’s say that again, shall we? “It is not for you to know.” The specific

details of the *when* of the Kingdom's coming are not within the scope of our calling. However, *what* we should be seeking is abundantly clear (the Kingdom and restoration to the Lord), as well as *how* we should seek it (be witnesses).

Jesus filled His apostles with a vision of the Kingdom and promises of God. They were eager for it, but they still lacked the most important component – the Spirit of God. We can neither enter, know, experience, nor seek the Kingdom apart from the Spirit of God. He is the *power* for God's new Kingdom to replace our old ways of sin and death with His new ways of light and life.

Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

The disciples wanted to know the future (Acts 1.6).

They wanted to know when things were going to come out right for them.

“Lord, when exactly will all this happen?”

Well, the Lord told them that they will never know the answer to that question; but that shouldn't prevent them from living obedient, victorious, and busy lives right now. In the power of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus tells us the very same thing. The future? Not for us to know. But regardless, be witnesses.

We might not know the future, but there are many things that God is happy for us to know:

“I will take you as My people, and I will be your God. Then you shall **know** that I *am* the LORD your God who brings you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians” (Ex. 6.7).

“For I **know** *that* my Redeemer lives, and He shall stand at last on the earth; and after my skin is destroyed, this I **know**, that in my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another” (Job 19.25-27).

“...we have come to believe and **know** that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Jn. 6.69).

“...that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith...to **know** the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God” (Eph. 3.17, 19).

“...I **know** whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day” (2 Tim. 1.12).

“Now by this we **know** that we **know** Him, if we keep His commandments” (1 Jn. 2.3).

“We **know** that we are of God, and the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one. And we **know** that the Son of God has come and has given us an understanding, that we may **know** Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life” (1 Jn. 5.19, 20).

Do we really need to know the future when we know so many other things to be true? And truly, the things we are allowed to know are enough.

“You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and

that your fruit should remain...” (Jn. 15. 16)

Reflect

1. Why is it important that we know what we can and cannot know?
2. As far as our lives here on earth, what can we know?
3. What should we be doing with the things we can know?

Christ forbiddeth us to apply those things unto ourselves, which God doth challenge as proper to himself alone. Of this sort is the foreknowledge of those things which God hath taken to himself to govern and direct, according to his own pleasure, far contrary to our opinion, and otherwise than we could invent. John Calvin (1506-1564) Commentary on Acts 1.7

Pray Psalm 132.8-12

Pray that God would move among His people with renewed power to help us in seeking and advancing His Kingdom on earth as it is in heaven.

Sing Psalm 132.8-12

(Finlandia: [*Be Still My Soul*](#))

Arise, O Lord, come to Your resting place; Your holy Presence meet with us in might.
Clothe us with righteousness in Jesus' grace, and we will shout to Your divine delight!
For David's sake, turn not away Your face, but look upon us in Your holy light.

Remember, Lord, the oath You swore to David; do not turn back, do not deny Your Word:
“One of your sons, with your throne I will favor, and He shall keep My cov'nant evermore,
and walk within My testimonies ever, thus He shall ever rule as Israel's Lord.”

4 What on Earth?

Pray Psalm 47.1-4.

Oh, clap your hands, all you peoples!
Shout to God with the voice of triumph!
For the LORD Most High *is* awesome;
He is a great King over all the earth.
He will subdue the peoples under us,
And the nations under our feet.
He will choose our inheritance for us,
The excellence of Jacob whom He loves.
Selah

Sing Psalm 47.1-4.

(Truro: [*Shout, for the Blessed Jesus Reigns*](#))

O clap your hands, you peoples all; with joy to God your songs intone!
Shout out to Him, and on Him call, He is the mighty, sovereign One!

High is the Lord, O, fear His Name! He rules, a King o'er all the earth.
Nations and peoples He has tamed, the heritage of His holy worth.

Read Acts 1.1-11; meditate on verses 9-11.

Preparation

1. Where was Jesus taken?
2. How did the two men instruct the disciples?

Meditation

One of the most neglected teachings of the entire Bible is the ascension and enthronement of Jesus Christ as King of kings. Luke doesn't flesh out the details here, not because they're not important, but because they were well known from the psalms and prophets of the Old Testament. Indeed, the enthronement of Christ provides the unspoken backdrop, overarching agenda, and essential motive force for everything that happens in Acts (and beyond, for that matter).

Jesus ascended in a cloud as the disciples watched. He will return in a cloud as well, and every eye shall see Him. Meanwhile, we might ask, "What in heaven is Jesus doing on earth?" He is building His Church, advancing His Kingdom, upholding the entire creation, gathering and perfecting His chosen ones, keeping Satan bound and defeated, and preparing a place for us to be with Him forever.

And you thought you were busy.

If the book of Acts were a baroque cantata, the ascension and enthronement of Christ would be the harpsichord *continuo* running consistently under all the other instruments and voices. Take away that harpsichord, and the piece loses its integrity, continuity, consistency, and undergirding energy. Soon

enough, we'd all get bored and find something else to listen to. But keep that harpsichord *continually* in motion, and the whole piece moves gloriously, ineluctably forward.

Is this how you experience the Kingdom and rule of Jesus? Jesus is even now exalted at the Father's right hand, continuously doing the work only He can do. He is doing an important aspect of that work through those who know, love, and serve Him. So we need to be ready. We need to keep Him always exalted in our minds. And we need to wait on Him and His Word, always making ourselves ready for obedience. What will that require of you today?

Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

"...while they watched..." (Acts 1.9).

The disciples had been allowed to watch Jesus for three years.

They watched Him perform miracles,
they watched Him deal with His earthly parents and siblings,
they watched Him deal with the Pharisees and Sadducees and all forms of hypocrisy,
they watched Him love His enemies,
they watched Him scold His enemies,
they watched Him in the midst of storms,
they watched Him love and teach them,
they watched Him be persecuted,
they watched Him die,
and they saw Him resurrected.

They watched Him teach them during His forty last days on earth, and

they watched Him ascend out of their sight.

They saw everything that had to do with Jesus' life, death, resurrection, and ascension.

We, too, are privy to the same observation of Jesus. We see Him in His Word.

"All of Scripture is about Jesus. In our reading of Scripture, we must not be content to delight in theological ideas or fleeting spiritual insight only. These are good and necessary, but we must, like those ancient Greeks, say to the Spirit... 'Sir, we would see Jesus.' (Jn. 12.21)

We would see Him as the Light of the world.

We would see Him on His throne in glory.

We would see Him riding forth, conquering and to conquer.

We would see Him putting His enemies under His feet.

We would be dazzled by His radiance.

We would see Him in all His majesty, brilliance, strength, peace, wisdom, love, holiness, joy, and victory.

We would see Jesus!" (*Revision 26 October 2020, T. M. Moore*)

We are also called to do something about all we've seen.

We are told in Acts 1.11 that He will return. Jesus also said Himself, "When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory" (Matt. 25.31) And He will begin to judge between the sheep and the goats based on how they lived out what they saw and heard and did. "Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.' Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry...thirsty...a stranger...naked...sick...in prison?'" (Matt. 25.34-39).

His answer to us in our own Personal Mission Field is, “Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me” (Matt. 25.40).

Will we watch and do? Jesus is waiting to see.

For reflection

1. What makes the ascension of Jesus so important for us as His followers?
2. Why is it so important to focus on Jesus as we live each day for Him?
3. How can you help your fellow believers stay focused on Jesus in all they do?

*When we stand gazing and trifling, the thoughts of our Master's second coming should quicken and awaken us: when we stand gazing and trembling, they should comfort and encourage us. May our expectation of it be steadfast and joyful, giving diligence to be found of him blameless. Matthew Henry (1662-1714), *Commentary on Acts 1.6-11**

Pray Psalm 47.5-9.

Give praise and thanks to God for Jesus, ascended in glory and ruling at the right hand of the Father. Pray for the coming of His Kingdom, in and through your life, and in all the nations of the earth.

Sing Psalm 47.5-9.

(Truro: [*Shout, for the Blessed Jesus Reigns*](#))

God has ascended with a shout, the Lord with sound of trumpet bold!
Sing praise to Him, let praise ring out! Let praise through all the world be told!

God is the King of all the earth; sing praise to Him with glorious psalms!
He rules the nations by His worth, and on His throne receives their alms.

Princes of peoples gather all to Abraham and to our God.
Exalt the Lord, and on Him call – the earth is His, so praise our God!

5 Waiting on the Promiser

Pray Psalm 27.11-14

Teach me Your way, O LORD,
And lead me in a smooth path, because of my enemies.
Do not deliver me to the will of my adversaries;
For false witnesses have risen against me,
And such as breathe out violence.
I would have lost heart, unless I had believed
That I would see the goodness of the LORD
In the land of the living.
Wait on the LORD;
Be of good courage,
And He shall strengthen your heart;
Wait, I say, on the LORD!

Sing Psalm 27.11-14

(Joanna: *Immortal, Invisible God Only Wise*)
Lord, teach us; Lord, lead us because of our foes!
Hear, Lord, when we plead for release from their woes.
Had we not believed all Your goodness to see,
our heart sorely grieved and in turmoil would be.

Wait, wait on the Lord; persevere in His grace.
Hold fast to His Word; seek His radiant face.
Be strong, set your heart to abide in His Word;
His grace He imparts; therefore, wait on the Lord.

Read Acts 1.12-14, 24-26

Preparation

1. What did the disciples do as they waited for God's Promise?
2. How did Luke describe their prayers?

Meditation

“OK, guys, let's head back to Jerusalem and wait.”

Is that what Peter said? Maybe. But this was no ordinary waiting – like at the DMV, for your number to be called, sitting around, everybody reading this or that or checking their watches or twiddling their thumbs, *waiting* for *someone* to *do something*. No, this *waiting* is a form of *servicing* the Lord and His purposes, to be precise.

The verb means something like *linger around*. The apostles were lingering around together, all of one accord, thinking about the Promise of the Father, the coming of the Spirit, and whatever might follow from that. And they're doing this, with the other members of their small community, in

prayer. The apostles and the others took up the exhortation of Psalm 27 to wait on the Lord and not to despair, but to keep on waiting until the goodness of the Lord appeared in the land of the living.

We note that they waited like this *for ten straight days* (Christ taught them for 40 days, then ascended; Pentecost came 50 days after Passover). If Christ exalted in glory is the *continuo* of our Kingdom cantata, prayer is the *composition* in which we all join, taking our separate parts in a single thematic motif, following the notes provided, until the composition reaches its end.

There's a second facet to the waiting which the disciples engaged in for ten days: They took care of the business immediately at hand, as the Word of God directed (vv. 24-26). There's always something to do in seeking the Kingdom, even if it's some mundane detail like "officer elections." We must not despise the details of obedience. Whatever the Lord shows us to do, we must do it at once, and with excellence.

Waiting is an act of faith and obedience. The Lord commands us to wait. The saints of both the Old and New Testament practiced waiting on the Lord. If we want to know the full benefits of what the Father has promised for us in Jesus, we need to become better at waiting on Him.

Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

"These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers" (Acts 1.14).

Can you imagine the emotions contained in that one room?

Mary has just watched her first-born Son be crucified, rise again, and then ascend into heaven.

His brothers, who were not always seemingly on board with everything their Brother did, are now bereft of Him, and suffering His loss. Maybe even feeling a little guilt?

The remaining 11 disciples have lost their leader, mentor, guide, and best friend. They too, are suffering loss.

Now, can you imagine the excited anticipation of waiting for this Loved One's Spirit to infuse each one of them? They will no longer be bereft of Him, and each one will receive an equal measure of His love, power, and strength. Strength to do His will. And how wise it was to add their newest 12th member, so he too, could participate in this joy from the beginning (v. 26).

The Promise. Remember what Jesus said?

"And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever—the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. A little while longer and the world will see Me no more, but you will see Me. Because I live, you will live also. At that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you" (Jn. 14.16-20). Boom! Life-changing.

The same Promise. Remember what He said to us?

"I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do *them*" (Ezek. 36.27).

"Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God" (1 Cor. 2.12).

"There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit" (1 Cor. 12.4).

"...the Spirit gives life" (2 Cor. 3.6).

"By this we know that we abide in Him, and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit" (1 Jn. 4.13).

And the main purpose of the Promise? Hear what Jesus prayed in John 17.22, 23:

“And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one; I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me.”

The Promise is for life-changing Love! In and through us.

Reflection

1. What are some things for which you are currently waiting on the Lord?
2. What makes the Promise of the Holy Spirit so important to our lives as Christians?
3. The disciples practiced extended, focused, communal prayer and waiting on the Lord. Should we? Explain.

...all of them not only remained in the same dwelling but also spent time together in common affection, with a singular diligence, and with great perseverance in the practice of prayer and praise, asking God to grant the blessings that Jesus had promised them and to deliver them from wicked people and the persecution with which they were threatened by their enemies. Moise Amyraut (1596-1664), Paraphrase of the Acts of the Apostles 1:13.2

Pray Psalm 27.7-10

Seek the Lord's Presence and help for the day ahead. Be specific in asking Him for mercy and grace to help in all your times of need (Heb. 4.16).

Sing Psalm 27.7-10

(Joanna: *Immortal, Invisible God Only Wise*)

Hear, Lord, when we cry and be gracious, we pray!

Lord, do not deny us Your favor this day!

Our help, our salvation, though others may fall,
preserve our good station when on You we call.

6 Help for Your Prayers

Pray Psalm 25.4, 5.

Show me Your ways, O LORD;
Teach me Your paths.
Lead me in Your truth and teach me,
For You are the God of my salvation;
On You I wait all the day.

Sing Psalm 25.4, 5

(Festal Song: [*Revive Thy Work, O Lord*](#))

Make me to know Your ways, teach me Your paths, O Lord!
My Savior, all day long I wait and seek You in Your Word.

Read Acts 1.15-26.

Preparation

1. What did Peter lead the disciples to do?
2. What prompted him in this matter?

Meditation

I think it's quite possible – we'll see why in chapter 4 – that those folks in that upper room were praying through the psalms, because, after all, they didn't know how to pray as they should any more than *we* do (Rom. 8.26). It's interesting to note that Peter quotes from the psalms – in the order they appear – to call a pause in the meeting so that the community can take care of some business. Psalm 69 may have caught Peter's attention and started him thinking as they prayed through it (v. 20). And when they got to Psalm 109 (v. 21), Peter became convinced that the Lord was speaking to him through His Word.

Something wasn't quite in order. Some further preparations were needed before the Promise of the Father would come. Peter assumed the lead role here. We might think he'd be a bit gun-shy after his denial. But Peter took the Word of Christ seriously in John 21, and regardless of what others may have thought, he was not going to fail the Lord again. He stepped up to tend and feed the Lord's lambs, and to set the flock in order for what was about to occur. Even in their prayer (v. 24) it's possible the people were drawing from their knowledge of Psalm 33.13-15.

Using the psalms to guide our prayers can keep our prayers focused, meaningful, expansive, and sincere. God can use the psalms to speak to us about daily needs, just as He did with Peter and the disciples. We don't know how to pray as we should, so we need all the help we can get. And the psalms are a powerful resource to enrich our prayers and guide us through our day.

Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

“And Samuel hacked Agag in pieces before the LORD in Gilgal” (1 Sam. 15.33). Arresting. Shocking. Why are such verses included in Scripture?

But here we have another one of those verses. “...and falling headlong, he burst open in the middle and all

his entrails gushed out” (Acts 1.18). Why? Why do we need to know this?

Because sin is awful and always has bad consequences. And the person who succumbed to this horrible demise was one of the twelve. One who “was numbered with us and obtained a part in this ministry” (Acts 1.17).

One who had eaten with them, walked with them, worshiped with them, and learned with them. If this could happen to him, it could happen to anyone.

And for Christians, his style of betrayal is the hardest kind to bear. “For *it is* not an enemy *who* reproaches me; then I could bear *it*. Nor *is it* one *who* hates me who has exalted *himself* against me; then I could hide from him. But *it was* you, a man my equal, my companion and my acquaintance. We took sweet counsel together, *and* walked to the house of God in the throng” (Ps. 55.12-14). One of the family. One of *us*.

His downfall needed to be rehearsed as a warning to this group of courageous Christians. These are the folks chosen to carry out the Plan, and there was no back-up plan. Their love and protection of one another would be key in disseminating the Gospel. Being of one mind and heart. (Jn. 17.11, 21; Gal. 3.28)

Just as Mary had been chosen to carry Jesus in her womb, these people had been chosen to carry the Holy Spirit in their lives. Into the world. And they needed to get their hearts right before the Lord. And be afraid enough to keep them right for the rest of their lives and ministry.

They were warned. We are warned. Being a vessel of the Holy Spirit is serious business: “Therefore I say to you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy *against* the Spirit will not be forgiven men. Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come” (Matt. 12.31, 32).

Judas’ brutal end, and the psalms, should be help for our prayers!

Prayers to be pleasing and obedient vessels of the Holy Spirit.

Reflection

1. Do you think praying the psalms could improve your prayer life? Explain.
2. Why is it important that we always remember how serious a matter sin is?
3. As vessels of the Holy Spirit, how can we make sure that we are serious about getting the Good News out to the people in our Personal Mission Fields?

Pray Psalm 25.16-22.

Commit your day to the Lord, allowing these verses to guide your requests. Wait on the Lord for a fuller measure of His redeeming and transforming grace.

Sing Psalm 25.16-22

(Festal Song: [*Revive Thy Work, O Lord*](#))

Be gracious, Lord, to me; my heart is weighed with woe.
My troubles and affliction see; let my transgressions go.

Consider all my foes, who hate me all the day;

The Beginning of the Ongoing: Acts 1

and rescue my poor soul lest I should stumble in the way.

Preserve me in Your way, redeem Your people, Lord!
We wait for You and refuge seek in Your own faithful Word.

7 Things Pertaining to the Kingdom

Pray Psalm 22.23-25

You who fear the LORD, praise Him!
All you descendants of Jacob, glorify Him,
And fear Him, all you offspring of Israel!
For He has not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted;
Nor has He hidden His face from Him;
But when He cried to Him, He heard.
My praise *shall be* of You in the great assembly;
I will pay My vows before those who fear Him.

Sing Psalm 22.23-25

(Darwall: [Rejoice, the Lord is King](#))

All you who fear the Lord, now praise His holy Name!
You children of His glorious Word, declare His fame!
We stand in awe of our eternal God, and on His mercy call.

For He has not despised the anguish of our King,
Nor from Him hid His eyes, Who knew such suffering.
Let praise arise from all who love and serve the Ruler of the skies!

Read Acts 1; meditate on Acts 1.1-4.

Preparation

1. What are the primary activities outlined in this chapter?
2. For what are these activities preparation?

Meditation

Acts 1 is like the opening chapter of a great novel. Most of the main characters are present. Some plot or direction is established. Key ideas are introduced. And a heightened sense of anticipation urges the reader to keep turning pages.

Acts relates the ongoing work of Jesus, exalted in glory, as He brings His Kingdom to earth. Jesus taught us to pray for this and to seek it as the defining priority of our lives (Matt. 6.10, 33). He overwhelmed us with glorious and memorable stories and parables illustrating the desirability of the Kingdom. As He hung on the cross, Jesus saw the Kingdom in prospect, and He rejoiced (Heb. 12.1, 2; cf. Ps. 22). For forty days more He taught His disciples the things pertaining to the coming of the Kingdom. Then He sketched out the worldwide parameters of its impact and told His disciples to wait in Jerusalem.

We can imagine that as the disciples waited in that upper room, they were filled with wonder, excitement, anticipation, and perhaps even fear. Jesus had ascended to His Father, and they must not hesitate to follow His every word: “wait for the Promise of the Father...” (v. 4).

The Promise of the Father – the Holy Spirit, sent from God the Father and God the Son – would bring the operative power of the Kingdom to earth with ineluctable power. Then the work Jesus had begun will continue with ongoing and increasing power. And all they had to do was wait.

Hear the Word. Devote yourself to prayer. Encourage your fellow believers. And attend to the daily duties God unfolds for you in your Personal Mission Field. He will send the world-transforming power of His Spirit and Kingdom (1 Cor. 4.20) in His measure and time. And then nothing will be the same.

Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

A very important part of this waiting was spent in remembering:

Remembering what Jesus was like while living His perfect life.

Remembering His love, and wisdom, and courage.

Remembering how He responded to everything and everyone.

Remembering what being filled with His Spirit should look like. (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John)

They also needed to call to mind what their lives looked like without the Spirit:

They couldn't understand what Jesus was teaching them (Mk. 4.13; 8.17-21).

They lacked faith (Mk. 4.40).

They weren't as kind as they could have been (Mk. 6.35,36).

They were ego-driven and selfish. (Mk. 9.34).

They slept when they should have prayed (Matt. 26.36-45)

They betrayed Him (Matt. 26.46-50).

They abandoned Him (Matt. 26.56).

They denied even knowing Him (Matt. 26.69-75).

In all this remembering, they realized they needed help. Help to make all things new. New in their hearts and minds and lives.

Remembering, they knew that:

“The way of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD,
but He loves him who follows righteousness.

Harsh discipline is for him who forsakes the way,
and he who hates correction will die” (Prov. 15. 9,10).

“Yup. Been there, done that,” said they. But they also knew this to be true:

“...the prayer of the upright is His delight” (Prov. 15.8).

So they waited. And prayed. And they were filled with His Spirit.

And nothing was ever the same again.

“Therefore, if anyone *is* in Christ, *he is* a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new” (2 Cor. 5.17).

These who were self-absorbed foolish cowards became the next generation of Jesus.

These are the people who turned the world upside-down! (Acts 17.6)

We have waited.

“Spirit of the Living God, fall afresh on me,

*Spirit of the Living God, fall afresh on me.
Break me, melt me, mold me, fill me.
Spirit of the Living God, fall afresh on me.”
(Daniel Iverson, 1926)*

Now what are we waiting for?
Let's get busy turning our world upside-down!

Reflection

1. How would you describe the believer's relationship with the Promise of God, the Holy Spirit?
2. For what does the Holy Spirit empower us? Where does He send us to do that?
3. What do we mean by saying that the Spirit of God is the “operative power” of the Kingdom of God?

Our Lord told the disciples the work they were to do. The apostles met together at Jerusalem; Christ having ordered them not to depart thence, but to wait for the pouring out of the Holy Spirit. This would be a baptism by the Holy Ghost, giving them power to work miracles, and enlightening and sanctifying their souls. This confirms the Divine promise, and encourages us to depend upon it, that we have heard it from Christ; for in Him all the promises of God are yea and amen. Matthew Henry (1662-1714) Commentary on Acts 1.1-5

Pray Psalm 22.26-28.

Psalm 22.21-31 represents the joy that Jesus saw as He was enduring the cross for us and for His Kingdom (cf. Heb. 12.1, 2). Pray for the coming of the Kingdom, by the power of God's Promise, according to all the ways outlined in these verses.

Sing Psalm 22.26-28.

(Darwall: [Rejoice, the Lord is King](#))

Then all the poor shall eat and praise with us the Lord.
Forever we His praise repeat and trust His Word.
Praise God above, all you who keep His vows and who His mercies love!

All nations shall repent and hasten to the Lord.
All those to whom His truth is sent shall praise His Word.
The Lord is King! His sovereign rule on high now we His people sing!

For reflection or discussion

1. What is the Kingdom of God? Jesus came to earth to bring the Kingdom *near* or *at hand* or even *within* us. How does life in the Kingdom of God differ from life outside it?
2. Look back, look ahead, look around: This seems to be how Jesus taught us to live. Explain.
3. What does it mean to *wait* on the Lord? Why is it important that we do so? What are we seeking as we wait on Him?
4. The Kingdom of God comes in the daily details of life. What does this suggest about how we should prepare for the coming of the Kingdom each day?
5. What's the most important insight or lesson you've learned from Acts 1?

For prayer:

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