

Living in Expectation The Acts 1 Church Part 9

We are bringing this series to a close this morning. I want to try to pull some things together. It's been a few weeks since we read the key text. Luke writes, **"In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen. 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. On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit." So when they met together, they asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes and a cloud hid him from their sight. They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. "Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven." Acts 1:1-11**

Imagine yourself as one of the 120 believers mentioned in Acts 1:15. You've been with the risen Lord, convinced he is alive, resurrected. You are still processing what this means for the future, what this means in terms of the Kingdom of God and what it means in terms of the Messianic Age that you have heard about your entire life as a Jew. You thought it was all about the land and people of Israel, but Jesus is talking about something larger, greater, something spiritual. You watch with the others as Jesus is taken up into the clouds. Jesus ascends to the Father and with him goes the answers to your questions. How will we carry on without him? How will we know what he means about the Kingdom of Heaven? How will we know what to say and do? Where will we even find the courage to tell others this miraculous story?

Questions in need of answers for this Acts 1 church. What did they know? What did they believe? We've pointed out these things over the past eight messages. They believed the

work and ministry of Jesus would continue. They knew they were a chosen church, chosen by Jesus himself. They were totally convinced Jesus was risen but unlike any other person, He had risen with a new kind of body, flesh and blood but risen incorruptible and glorified. They had a fresh revelation that Jesus was indeed the Messiah and Son of God. This Acts 1 group took Jesus' commands seriously, willing to risk everything for him, even to die for him and for the message of the gospel. They understood the importance and significance of Jesus' ascension into heaven, that he was seated now in authority at the right hand of the Father. They were anticipating the Lord's return and living in expectation of a final day when Christ would rule and reign as King and Lord of all. Finally, they were expecting this gift Jesus said the Father had promised, this gift of being baptized in the Holy Spirit.

When we stop to look back at this, almost everything they were expecting, everything they were anticipating was somehow tied to the person and work of the Holy Spirit. The key to the future of the church and the answers to their questions would be found in the power and abiding presence and ministry and guidance of the Holy Spirit.

We already know that everything Jesus did he did by the power of the Holy Spirit. ("The Spirit of the Lord is upon me and has anointed me to...") The passage we read said he gave them instructions "through the Holy Spirit." He did miracles by the Holy Spirit and told us we would do even greater works because he was going to the Father and would send the Holy Spirit. We also know that everything Jesus secured for us by his atoning death on the cross is brought to us, delivered to us, manifested in us by the Holy Spirit. When you repent of your sins and ask Jesus into your heart and life, he takes up residence in your life by the Holy Spirit. Jesus said the Holy Spirit would live with us and live within us. **"And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever - the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you...All this I have spoken while still with you. But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you."** **John 14:16-18; 25-26** The life we live in Christ, with Christ, for Christ, that all happens by means of the Holy Spirit at work in us. A personal change happens to us when the Holy Spirit comes into our life. The Holy Spirit is working in your life to make you more like Jesus. We are being shaped and made conformable to the image of Christ by the transforming and sanctifying

work of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is working in your life to produce the fruit of the Spirit which is the character of Christ. Our awareness of sin, of thoughts and behaviors and attitudes that are not pleasing to God and contrary to his word, that awareness comes to us by the convicting power and work of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is teaching us, leading and guiding us, reminding us of everything Jesus said.

Jesus emphasized the role the Holy Spirit is to make in the lives of His followers. Again, the Holy Spirit takes up residence in our life at our conversion, when we receive Jesus into our heart. I believe the disciples were converted, they believed in Jesus and their sins were forgiven but twice now in Acts 1 he gives them this command, stressing his instruction to remain in Jerusalem until they receive this gift the Father has promised, that gift being the empowerment of the Holy Spirit or the baptism in the Holy Spirit. Why was it so important? Why tell them twice? This was not just about the Spirit's presence, this was about the Spirit's empowerment. Jesus knew the importance of the Holy Spirit's work, then and now, for them and for us!

Unbeknownst to them at that moment, they were about to become the leaders of a movement, shepherds of an ever growing and increasing group of people called out from the world and called to be followers and disciples of the risen Christ. They were going to carry the message of Jesus to the ends of the earth and establish groups of disciples that would study together, worship together, pray and break bread together, live their lives in fellowship with one another. These would not only be Jews, but Samaritans, Gentiles, Romans, Greeks, Spaniards, people of every tongue and nation. Unbeknownst to them, they were going to shepherd what Jesus called his church. How? How could they lead and oversee a giant, worldwide, culturally and ethnically diverse church? They were mostly untrained fishermen from Galilee.

Here's the deal. They would be tempted to try their very best, by their own wisdom and knowledge and giftings. I mean, they would pray about it, read scripture to see if there were any good verses they could turn into mottos to decorate the walls in their offices. They could hire advisors, maybe Romans, they seemed good at organizing things. They would come up with buildings and parking lots for chariots and lovely brochures and web pages and social media accounts, they would have creative pastors and worship arts teams and greeters and parking lot attendants and children's play areas and clever marketing tools to reach everyone from gladiators to temple prostitutes. I'm not knocking or criticizing attempts to reach people with the gospel and we've used some of the things I just mentioned. But here is what Jesus knew. He knew if

they tried to do this on their own, using their creativity, their wisdom, their clever plans, all they would create would be lifeless programs when what was needed was life giving, life sustaining encounters with Jesus, the risen Lord. So Jesus said, “Don’t go out there without being baptized in the Holy Spirit. Don’t go out there trying to do this in your own strength and power because the world will chew you up. It’s going to be hard enough to deal with the problems and the persecution that will come. You’re going to face issues and controversies you haven’t even thought of yet. You’re going to make decisions that will affect people in the church for the next 2,000 years, trust me, you’re going to need the help and wisdom and power of the Holy Spirit working in you and through you.” Church, it’s still true for us today. We face issues and controversies we can’t find a way through without the help and guidance of the Holy Spirit. Jesus told the church in Acts 1 and he is telling us today, “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you and you are going to need it! Don’t leave Jerusalem until you receive that power.” Can you see why he said they needed the baptism in the Holy Spirit? Can you see why we need that experience today?

Fifty years ago I read a book titled *Brethren Hang Loose* by Robert Girard. It was a significant book in my life and my view of ministry. Girard was the pastor of a Wesleyan church in Arizona who began to simply believe in and trust the Holy Spirit to do what the Bible said he would do in the life of his church. They were not a Pentecostal church. The pastor simply believed what the Bible said. He wrote, **“It is clear in the Scriptures that the Spirit will teach, guide into all truth, glorify Christ, convince men, reveal Christ to men, fill men, empower the church, lead its leaders and members, illuminate the Bible to the believing mind, organize the church program, direct church affairs, solve church problems, discipline and chasten, give untrained men the ability to minister, enable men to love each other, unify believers, edify, produce growth, draw people into the Body, meet financial needs, recruit workers, heal minds and bodies, purge and purify, witness, overcome human weakness, increase the effectiveness of prayer, confirm Christ’s work in men’s hearts...The truth is, the Holy Spirit can be trusted to provide the church with all it needs to function as the New Testament reveals it should and can. True, He does these things in and through men – but He must be the one to do it! The hardest and most exciting thing we are learning is the near-lost truth that the Holy Spirit can be trusted. He will build the church into a Living Body if we will simply stop trying to do His thing for Him – and let Him do it! Everything**

the Bible says about Him is true. And when the Spirit does it, it is beautiful.” ...Robert Girard

The Acts 1 church didn't have any idea what was coming, they didn't know how to navigate the strange waters they were going to go through as God brought Jews and Gentiles together into one body, different languages and different cultures with different values and styles, all coming together around the cross and the crucified and risen Savior and Lord. Jesus knew the only way for them to succeed as the church was to be full of the Holy Spirit, to receive the power of the Holy Spirit, to learn from the first to be dependent upon the Holy Spirit, to listen to and be led by the Holy Spirit.

It wasn't just the church corporately, but believers individually needed the baptism in the Holy Spirit. The Baptism in the Holy Spirit made them witnesses, just as Jesus said. The Holy Spirit gave them boldness to testify, boldness to witness, boldness to even lay down their lives for Christ. The Baptism in the Holy Spirit brought spiritual gifts into their lives, gave them discernment to recognize evil spirits, wisdom to deal with church members and government officials, power to lay hands upon the sick and see them recover. Miracles happened by the power of the Holy Spirit. The Baptism in the Holy Spirit gave them power to live, to serve, to overcome. The Baptism in the Holy Spirit is not just power for evangelism, it is a deepening of the relationship between the believer and Jesus. Quoting Girard again, **“The Spirit of Jesus living in me pleases the Father – completely. And the Spirit of Jesus living in me produces life...The Spirit puts God's laws into my heart and writes them in my mind. The Spirit works in me both to will what pleases God and to do what pleases God. The Spirit of God in me will do in and through me all God calls me to do. The Spirit who began God's work in me will perform God's work in and through me until Christ comes again. The Spirit who lives in me, since I trusted Jesus, fulfills all God's requirements by His presence in my life.”**

You can see why twice in those 11 verses of Acts 1 Jesus told the disciples to wait until they were baptized in the Holy Spirit. You can see why he says it to us today. We need the Spirit of God to be at work in us, empowering us and enabling us to be all he has called us to be.

Next Sunday morning and Sunday evening and Monday and Tuesday evening we are going to be blessed by the teaching ministry of Tim and Rochelle Enloe. He will have much more to say about the person and work of the Holy Spirit in those services. But I want to encourage you to open your heart to the work of the Spirit. Some of you may be hesitant about

this because this wasn't something you heard in your church growing up. They warned you about those crazy Pentecostals and all that speaking in tongues stuff. But think about it. Is there anything I've mentioned that you wouldn't want in your spiritual life? A deeper relationship and walk with Jesus? Greater spiritual power and awareness in your life? Who doesn't want and need that? And if Jesus says you need this experience, don't you think he has a good reason for it? He knew the first church needed it and the church in the last days will need it as well.

I read something yesterday that our friend Bryan Davenport wrote. **“I will not require the Holy Spirit to condescend to my frame of reference in order to operate fully in my life. I acknowledge humbly that experience often precedes understanding.” ...Bryan Davenport**

Opening your heart to the fullness of the Holy Spirit is an act of faith. You may not understand it all, but you don't have to. You can trust Jesus and you can trust His Holy Spirit. What is he saying to you? Jesus has called us to live by the Spirit. We can walk in obedience by the help and power of the Holy Spirit. Trust him! Open your heart and mind and ask Jesus to baptize you in the Holy Spirit. If you desire a deeper experience with Jesus and a deeper experience with the Holy Spirit, if you need his power and anointing, ask. Jesus said if we ask the Father, he would give us the Holy Spirit. Let's ask!