

May 26, 2013
“Wait...Go!”
Acts 1:1-8

In my first book I told you, Theophilus, about everything Jesus began to do and teach until the day he was taken up to heaven after giving his chosen apostles further instructions through the Holy Spirit. During the forty days after his crucifixion, he appeared to the apostles from time to time, and he proved to them in many ways that he was actually alive. And he talked to them about the Kingdom of God.

Once when he was eating with them, he commanded them, "Do not leave Jerusalem until the Father sends you the gift he promised, as I told you before. John baptized with water, but in just a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit." So when the apostles were with Jesus, they kept asking him, "Lord, has the time come for you to free Israel and restore our kingdom?"

He replied, "The Father alone has the authority to set those dates and times, and they are not for you to know. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

An elderly woman who loved her church and knew her Bible had just returned home from the lady's evening Bible Study when she was startled by a burglar in her house.

Acts 2:38 immediately came to her mind, which states, "Turn from sin." So, with great biblical authority she yelled, "Stop! Acts 2:38"

The thief stopped dead in his tracks and didn't move. Then the woman calmly called 911 and ask for the police, explaining that she had a burglar in her home.

As the officer cuffed the man, he asked the burglar, "What stop you from burglarizing this home? All the old lady did was yell a Bible verse at you."

And the crook replied, "Bible verse? I thought she said she had an axe and two .38s!"

The first chapter of Acts is an introduction to the book. The "acts" really begin with chapter 2, when the Holy Spirit empowered the apostles and other believers. Yet, it is about "acts"; the believers didn't receive the Holy Spirit and idly waiting to get to heaven, no, they were active. Believers were never meant to be idle not then not now, they were meant to act, after being empowered by the Holy Spirit.

Luke, the writer of the third Gospel is also the writer of Acts. And so Acts begin with, “In my first book...” that first book being the Gospel of Luke. His purpose for writing is given in his introduction in ...

Luke 1:1-4

Many people have set out to write accounts about the events that have been fulfilled among us. They used the eyewitness reports circulating among us from the early disciples. Having carefully investigated everything from the beginning, I also have decided to write a careful account for you, most honorable Theophilus, so you can be certain of the truth of everything you were taught.

In both his Gospel and in Acts, Luke is writing to an individual named, Theophilus. That name means, “God-Lover” or “Friend of God” which is interesting, because although I believe Luke is writing to an individual by that name, his message has been passed on to all Christians or “friends of God.”

In **Acts 1:1-2** we read...

In my first book I told you, Theophilus, about everything Jesus began to do and teach until the day he was taken up to heaven after giving his chosen apostles further instructions through the Holy Spirit.

Luke says to Theophilus that in his Gospel he told him everything Jesus began to do and teach. “*Began*” would imply that what Jesus began would continue.

“As the Gospel [of Luke] tells us what Jesus *began* to do and teach, so Acts tells us what He *continued* to do and teach, by His Holy Spirit in the apostles, after His Ascension.” (F.F. Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles*).

The full title of the book of Acts is “The Acts of the Apostles.” I think a better title would be, “The Acts of the Holy Spirit (through the Apostles and other believers).”

One thing that would continue would be the message of the Cross.

1. The Cross Was Part of God’s Eternal Plan, From Before Creation

When Peter was preaching on the Day of Pentecost he said:

Acts 2:23-24

God knew what would happen, and his prearranged plan was carried out when Jesus was betrayed. With the help of lawless Gentiles, you nailed him to a cross and killed him. But God released him from the horrors of death and raised him back to life, for death could not keep him in its grip.

God knew that mankind would sin, and from the beginning had a plan to save us through the cross.

2. With Jesus' Sacrifice, Now God's Salvation Was Available for All Mankind

Acts 1:3

During the forty days after his crucifixion, he appeared to the apostles from time to time, and he proved to them in many ways that he was actually alive. And he talked to them about the Kingdom of God.

First notice, because this is the only place in the Bible where we get this information, that Luke tells us the length of time of Jesus' ministry after His resurrection. Jesus ascended into heaven 40 days after His resurrection. During that time he appeared to the apostles from time to time, proving in many ways that He was actually alive. And during that time He talked to them about the Kingdom of God. Through His sacrifice all can be forgiven of sin and therefore, the Kingdom of God was now open to all people.

Acts 2:38-39

Peter replied, "Each of you must repent of your sins, turn to God, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ to show that you have received forgiveness for your sins. Then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. This promise is to you, and to your children, and even to the Gentiles—all who have been called by the Lord our God."

John 12:32-33

And when I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw everyone to myself." He said this to indicate how he was going to die.

This is the message Jesus wanted them to share. Through His sacrificial death on the cross, salvation is available to all people.

3. The Enabling Power to Share the Message of Salvation Was Now Available

Through the filling of the Holy Spirit which occurred in Acts 2:

Acts 2:1-4

On the day of Pentecost all the believers were meeting together in one place. Suddenly, there was a sound from heaven like the roaring of a mighty windstorm, and it filled the house where they were sitting. Then, what looked like flames or tongues of fire appeared and settled on each of them. And everyone present was filled with the Holy Spirit

4. The Apostles Would Be Empowered and Would Be Witnesses in All the World

Acts 1:8

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

This verse is an outline of The Book of Acts. Empowered by the Holy Spirit the apostles preached the message of salvation through Jesus Christ first in Jerusalem (Acts 1-7), then throughout Judea, and in to Samaria (Acts 8-12), then they would witness to the Gentile world (Acts 13-28).

Before all this could happen they needed to be empowered by the Holy Spirit; and before they could receive the Holy Spirit, in order to be empowered to be witnesses to the World; they had to keep Christ's commandment. Actually He gave them **two commandments**, one to be obeyed before they received the Holy Spirit and one to be obeyed after receiving the Holy Spirit.

The first commandment He gave them was to **wait**.

Acts 1:4-5

Once when he was eating with them, he commanded them, "Do not leave Jerusalem [NIV: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait] until the Father sends you the gift he promised, as I told you before. John baptized with water, but in just a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."

Here is the commandment to wait. They could not be powerful witnesses until they were filled by the Holy Spirit. If the church is not a powerful witnesses to the world today it is because believers do not wait to be filled with the Holy Spirit. What does it mean to wait? How did the apostles wait?

Acts 1:14

They all met together and were constantly united in prayer

They waited in prayer until their ...

- spirits blended – united in prayer
- longing to be filled became their dominant desire
- consecration was full and they were completely committed to the will of God
- faith rose to a point of expectancy for the fulfillment of the promise.

The first commandment Jesus gave them was to wait, and they did, in prayer. The second commandment Jesus gave them was to **go**.

"...you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere..."

Or as Jesus said in ...

Matt 28:18-20

"I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. **Therefore, go and make disciples** of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

5. Now It Is Our Time to Go Into The Entire World With the Message of God's Eternal Salvation

Obedience to God will prepare and equip us for service that is marked by God's power in our lives. Obedience to God means wait and be filled, go and make disciples.

In the 40 days Jesus spent with His apostles after his resurrection, He spoke to them about God's kingdom and commissioned them to tell others about the message of salvation. He gives them two distinct directives which require their obedience:

First, wait in Jerusalem until they are baptized in the Holy Spirit (1.4).

Then, go and share the message of Jesus with the rest of the world (1.8).

This world-wide evangelism campaign that would begin only *after* the apostles were filled with power given them by the Holy Spirit was the means that gave birth to the Early Church and which continues to draw people to God even today.

Jesus' command to share the gospel is concise and clear: Go! What do you think hinders today's Church from carrying out the command and what are some solutions?

Over and over the Bible speaks of obedience to the Word of God as being a quality God values and one that brings blessings (John 14.15, 16; John 15.10, 11).

Commit to praying for surrender of self and a heart of obedience.

Pray that as a body, our church will be ignited by the Holy Spirit and be zealous in its mission to reach others with the gospel of salvation.

Seek out opportunities for ministry in your community and beyond.

Begin to thank God for the miracles that will happen.