**Promise of the Father** Acts 1:1-5 [www.bible-sermons.org](http://www.bible-sermons.org) January 15, 2017

The book of Acts was written by a Greek doctor named Luke, an associate of the Apostle Paul. The majority of scholars believe it was written in the mid to late sixties. Of all the New Testament books it is the most historically verifiable. It is filled with names and locations which can be attested to by archeology. This fact, along with the introduction, puts the book in historical biography category. Luke’s gospel tells us that it was compiled from eyewitness accounts (Acts 1:1-4). One theory suggests that Luke was writing to Paul’s Roman defense attorney to prepare him for his defense before Caesar. Without this book, we would know little about the growth of the first century church.

The book can be divided into three sections as outlined by the eighth verse of this chapter. Chapters 1 to 7 tell of the spread of the gospel in Jerusalem. Chapters 8 to 12 tell of the advance of the kingdom in Judea and Samaria. Chapters 13 to 28 tell of the witness to the ends of the earth.

*1 In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach,* *2 until the day when he was taken up, after he had given commands through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen.* Acts 1:1-2Luke had written to Theopholis to tell him of the life of Christ (Luke 1:1-3) and the spread of the early church. The gospel named after Luke was volume one. Acts is volume two. Luke reminds Theophilus that the previous book was about all that Jesus *began* to do and teach. In other words, the life, death, and resurrection of Christ was just the beginning. Luke would go on to share in this volume, the ascension and headship of Christ as He works in His body, the church. Jesus began to do and teach during His three years of ministry, but now He continues to do and teach through the His body, the church (Isaiah 43:10).

The gospel of Luke points out that Jesus’ life was a fulfillment of the Scriptures. In fact, Luke tells us that Jesus showed the two disciples on the road to Emmaus things concerning Himself from all the Scriptures (Luke 24:27). Shortly after that Jesus entered the room where the disciples were hiding. *44 Then he said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.” 45 Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures,* Luke 24:44-45 We read in Hebrews that things of the Old Testament were types and shadows of what was coming in the Messiah (Hebrews 10:1). All through the book of Acts we will see that Christ is preached from the Scriptures, which is to say the Old Testament (Acts 17:2-3).

Luke’s two books explain that history hinged upon the life of Christ and the pouring out of the Spirit. God had worked through the Jewish nation in times past, through their kings and prophets, and through the example the nation set when it was obedient (Hebrews 1:1-2). The laws given to Moses were the most advanced the world had ever seen. Some laws gave instructions for sanitation and prevention of infectious disease. Justice took a great leap forward. But most importantly, there was the realization that rebellion against God is serious, so serious that blood must be shed. Along with that came the realization that it was impossible to keep all God’s laws. Over and over the cycle of blessing, prosperity, turning away from God, judgment, and repentance repeated itself throughout their history. But there were glimmers of hope. A future king was promised in the line of David (Isaiah 9:7). A blessing to the whole world was coming (Genesis 12:3). He would reign in righteousness forever. Rabbis predicted that when He came to establish His kingdom, there would be an abundant outpouring of the Spirit. The prophets predicted that day a was coming when the Spirit would be poured out on men and women (Acts 2:16-18).

Israel had come out of captivity and was independent for a time. Then other powers occupied the land, trying to make the Jews be like the Greeks around them. A revolt made Israel independent again for a short time, but then Rome occupied the land and imposed taxation while controlling the temple grounds and choosing the high priest. The people were looking for the Messiah that was to come, but Jesus was a great disappointment to many. He offered salvation for their souls, but they wanted salvation from Rome. He offered a kingdom that was spiritual and eternal. They wanted an earthly kingdom that would conquer the surrounding nations. The physical examples of the past pointed to a spiritual reality that was coming, but the people would not let go of the desire of that physical hope. We see this struggle throughout the gospel of John. Over and over again Jesus’ words are misinterpreted as physical when He is speaking of the eternal spiritual realm (John 4:14-15; 3:3-4).

Isn’t that our problem too? We want physical healing, right conditions, and prosperity in the physical realm when all those thing will quickly pass. The eternal spiritual blessings are ours to receive in Christ, but we are hung up on physical desires (Ephesians 1:3). The Messiah had come. History was turning its focus from a nation of physical descendants of Abraham to spiritual descendants of Abraham, from flesh to Spirit, from carnal to faith. A much greater and lasting kingdom had come. God isn’t done with the Jews, but a new age had arrived, one that the prophets had predicted. The Messiah became a light to the nations (Isaiah 49:6).

While tiny Israel was important and the center of the crossroads of the world, God’s kingdom was about to invade the whole earth. Israel at its most glorious days was still just a tiny nation on the surface of the globe. In Acts, a worldwide invasion begins. We saw the beginnings of it when Jesus went to Samaria (John 4:41-42) and the Decapolis region (Mark 5:20). Now through the body of believers the whole world would hear of salvation in Jesus.

Adam and Eve gave up their authority over the earth to Satan when they rebelled against God (Genesis 1:26). That is why Satan is referred to as the ruler of this world (John 11:31). Now a man had come and taken back the right to the world through complete obedience to God. He had faced Satan on the cross and won. The world is being reclaimed, but not for all men, but for those who are of the body of the Victor, Christ Jesus. This is the basis of the book of Acts. Jesus is taking back the land that was lost to the enemy, the souls of men and women who will hear His voice and open their hearts to Him. The Laws to Moses were being misrepresented as legalistic burdens of a demanding God who was ready to clobber you if you didn’t keep them and thousands of other rules made by man (Matthew 23:4). But around Jesus there was the refreshing breeze of freedom and love, of joy and peace. That is why the crowds flocked to Him. No one ever spoke like this man (John 7:46). Now that breeze was about to become a wind that would sweep the entire world.

*3 He presented himself alive to them after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God.* Acts 1:3 We’ve already spoken of the proofs shown to the two on the road to Emmaus and one of the meetings with the disciples. Paul sums up these many proofs in the opening of the 15th chapter of 1 Corinthians. *3 For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, 4 that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, 5 and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. 6 Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. 7 Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. 8 Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me.* 1 Corinthians 15:3-8 Verses 3 to 7 are thought to be the earliest recorded doctrinal statement of the church, probably written shortly after the ascension. Some scholars believe it was made into a song. As we will see later in the chapter, the witness of Jesus’ victory over death was essential to the faith (Acts 1:22).

Greek mythology taught that some men died and become a god, but that resurrection was not physical but spiritual. Jesus’ physical resurrection was the fulfillment of prophecy. Isaiah predicted the Messiah would be put in the grave, yet His days would be prolonged and He would see the fruit of bearing the sins of many (Isaiah 53:9-11). The psalmist declared that the body of the Holy One would not see decay (Psalm 16:10). The physical resurrection was the assurance that God had accepted the sacrifice of Jesus for our sins. This is what the disciples were to proclaim to the world (Acts 5:32).

Up until a week before Pentecost, Jesus continued to appear and teach the disciples. Some of the convincing proofs include letting them touch His wounds (John 20:27), eating in their midst, and speaking to them of their futures. They had a lot of preconceived ideas from their culture that needed to be overcome. While the rabbis got many things right, they were wrong about much more. All those misconceptions had to be corrected. Wouldn’t it have been wonderful to have been there during that time, wondering when Jesus would appear and teach you more about the kingdom and the deep meanings of the Scriptures, correcting our misunderstandings, and encouraging us about what was to come? But then, that happens now if you are walking with the Lord close enough to hear the whispers of the Spirit. As you read the Word, the Teacher, the Holy Spirit, opens our minds even today to understand the Scriptures. We don’t have to wait for Him to appear. He is with us wherever we go (John 13:13; Matthew 28:20).

*4 And while staying with them he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, “you heard from me;* *5 for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.”*Acts 1:4-5 Jesus had visited them first in Jerusalem and then in Galilee, but this visitation, one of the final ones, was back in Jerusalem. They may have come down in preparation for Pentecost, a feast all male Jews are required to attend. This was reiterating what Luke reported Jesus saying in Luke 24:49. *49 And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.”* Luke 24:49 In the next chapter Peter will explain that the promise was proclaimed through the prophets. *3 For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit upon your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants.* Isaiah 44:3 *28 “And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions. 29 Even on the male and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit.* Joel 2:28-29 (also see Isaiah 32:15; Ezekiel 36:26-27; 37:14; 39:29) What promises! Spiritual refreshment like water on a dry ground! Clothed with power from on high! Without the power, without the refreshment, enduring spiritual battles and walking in victory is impossible.

There is much controversy over the baptism of the Spirit. Some call it a second work of grace. Others call it entire sanctification. Others refer to it as entire surrender. Some say it is a one-time event, but we will see that what happened in chapter two is repeated in chapter four with the same people (Acts 4:31). Denominations differ on their interpretation of being filled or baptized in the Spirit. Whatever your conviction, we can agree that we need refreshment and the power to live as a witness of the resurrected life of Christ in us. Amen?

The testimony of a great many men and women of God point to a time of realization that they needed more strength than they could muster. They needed the supernatural power of God to enable them to be fruitful and to persevere. They cried out to God and God refreshed them, empowered them, with the Holy Spirit. That is what Jesus said would happen in Luke 11:13. *13 If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!”* It’s a matter of recognizing the need and asking, knowing that God wants to give you that blessing.

Two weeks ago I shared with you from the book *In His Likeness* by Yancey and Brand. We learned all sensory input to the brain only takes up one tenth of one percent of our brain cells. All motor expressive functions, movement, balance, speech, etc. only takes up two tenths of one percent. So most of what we think of as brain function only takes up three tenths of one percent of our brain. The rest is memory, free will, emotion, values, judgment, reason, etc. We are made in the image of the triune God. We are comprised of body, soul, and spirit (1 Thessalonians 5:23). The bodily input and output is less than half of one percent of the brain. It led me to the thought that the soul (thoughts, will, emotion, judgment, desires) take up most of the rest of the brain, 99+%. But the foundation of it all is the non-physical spirit. The core from which we make our decisions is the bedrock that affects all the soul and actions resulting from its decisions made in the soul. Without my spirit be born in Christ, I am essentially selfish, and my soul then desires, chooses, and plans accordingly.

The renewing of our mind is the transformation of the fundamental purpose from which all else is decided in the soul (Romans 12:2). The animal like person is led by the body. All choices are made to please the body. The soulish person functions from selfishness or some mantra that usually is selfishness in disguise. For example, the philanthropist who is making a name for himself via his "generosity." It is about his reputation and wanting the respect and praise of man. Religion can be a goal but the motivation of one’s religion can be for the praise of man as well. A person can desire respect from men as a "deeply religious" person (Matthew 23:5-6). Only the one who is born-again can have a truly unselfish nature in their spirit, which is the foundation of their soul.

That change of the source from selfishness to being born of the Spirit of God is what renews the mind so that choices and plans and desires are rooted in the love of God and desire to do His will out of that love at the leading of the Spirit (Hebrews 13:20-21). This is the battle of flesh and spirit (Galatians 5:17). Our spirit is alive in Christ and gives us desires that contradict the old soulish behavior. We then choose based on our current connection and cooperation with our renewed spirit. If I am walking with the Lord, in communion with Him, in fellowship, and in the Word, the Spirit prevails. If not, the flesh will often win out even though my spirit is alive in Christ. Then comes conviction. To be filled with the Spirit is to have the Spirit freely reigning over my soul. I desire His will. I react to outside input at His direction instead of my old self-preservation instincts and preferences.

It’s an ongoing process as we will see with the believers who needed to be filled again with the Spirit. Conflict stirs our old nature. We cry out to God for help and are again filled and empowered to act from an eternal perspective at the leading of the Spirit.

The disciples were about to get their first bath in the Holy Spirit so that they could go out and let their lives be an example of the living Christ in them (2 Corinthians 4:11). They were about to be commissioned, and the world would never be the same. As we go through these opening chapters of Acts, I’m going to be challenging you to ask God to give you the Promise of the Father, the fullness of the Holy Spirit. We need Him to be fruitful. We need Him to help us renew our minds. We need Him as a church to be a witness to our families and this town. Will you pray from now through the coming weeks to be filled, or perhaps filled anew, with the power of the Holy Spirit? Will you begin the exciting adventure of allowing Christ to reign in your heart?

Questions:

1 Review the basics of this letter.

2 What is the significance of “began” in verse 1?

3 What was the historical hinge? Why?

4 Why is Jesus disappointing to many?

5 What was Jesus restoring?

6 Why was the physical resurrection so important?

7 What is the promise of the Father?

8 Review the O.T. references of the promise.

9 Why do we need the Holy Spirit?

10 How do we receive the Holy Spirit?