

EMPOWERED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT

LOVER OF GOD

Last week we looked at when Jesus appeared to a couple of His followers who were walking sadly down the road. Sadness came from the news that Jesus had died. They had heard that His tomb was empty, but they just didn't know if they could trust the news.

This was one of those times when Jesus was a bit mischievous and walked and talked with them, acting like He hadn't heard any of this. Inside, however, you know Jesus was smiling that smile that said, "I know something you don't know!"

The book of Acts is a continuation of the story. Dr. Luke, who wrote The Gospel of Luke, told what happened at the very end of Jesus' earthly trek and continues with the growth of the early church. Let's see who he wrote this book for.

Acts 1:1-3— I wrote the first narrative, Theophilus, about all that Jesus began to do and teach 2 until the day He was taken up, after He had given instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles He had chosen. 3 After He had suffered, He also presented Himself alive to them by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a period of forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God.

Who is this book written to? (verse 1)

No one actually knows who this person is, however, looking at the name meaning tells us more about who this book is written for.

Theophilus means _____.

Though Theophilus may be a real person, it can be said that the book of Luke and Acts are written to any and all who are friends of God and who love to know Him more. Hopefully, that includes you.

Acts 1:4-11—After His suffering, He presented Himself to them 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. 4 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. 5 For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."

6 Then they gathered around Him and asked him, "Lord, are You at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" 7 He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by His own authority. 8 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 had said this, He was taken up as they were watching, and a cloud took Him out of their sight.

Notice the first phrase of verse 3—“After His suffering.”

Have you ever “suffered” and wonder if there would be an end to it?

How are you changed through “suffering?”

Verse 3 continues to say that Jesus “presented Himself to them and gave many convincing proofs that He was alive.”

Physically speaking, what is the sign that we are alive?

Spiritually speaking, what is the sign that we are alive?

What would you say is your most convincing proof that you are “Theophilus?” (Friend of God)

A CHANGE HAS BEEN MADE

What does it mean to “get alone with God?”

Why then, do you think it is important to attend church, be in a small group, do life with other Christians, etc.?

Hebrews 10:24-25— And let us consider one another in order to provoke love and good works, 25 not neglecting to gather together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging each other, and all the more as you see the day approaching.

What are the verbs in these verses?

When Jesus rose from the tomb, He spent the next 40 days with His friends/disciples. He desired to make sure they understood what was happening and give them last instructions. He could have left them alone. He could have gone on to heaven to be with His father. But instead, He invested the 40 days in His friends. ‘

Acts 1:6-8—Then they gathered around Him and asked him, “Lord, are You at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?” 7 He said to them: “It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by His own authority. 8 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 had said this, He was taken up as they were watching, and a cloud took Him out of their sight.

What were the disciples hoping Jesus would do?

What does this question tell you about the understanding of the disciples?

What kind of questions do you ask? Are they concerning the things of the Spirit or do you more often ask for the difficult things of life to be brought to an end?

Do you think Jesus is more concerned about the matters of the government or the matters of the soul?

Has that changed today?

The disciples were revived by the resurrection, but they were still predominantly national. Even the Twelve were thinking, not of a kingdom of God, embracing all mankind, but of a sovereignty restored to Israel.

In essence, Jesus said to them, “Knowing the end date is not going to do you any good. This is not what is important. Here’s what you need to know: You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be My witnesses.”

What difference would it make to you to know when God has planned for government leadership or the end of time?

How much time do you think you spend thinking, worrying, praying, etc. about things that aren't really important?

Who was really going to be the ones that restored Israel?

Would it be a national switching of governments or a spiritual movement that would restore hope in the people?

Are there things in the world today that you don't agree with?

Do you think the world needs a change of government or a real renewal of the spirit?

How can this happen?

ARE YOU READY FOR CHANGE?

At the end of Chapter 1, Jesus taught all these things then ascended to Heaven. After the allotted time of 10 days, the Holy Spirit came upon all those who were in the upper room together.

Acts 2:1, 37-41 — When the day of Pentecost had arrived, they were all together in one place. 2 Suddenly a sound like that of a violent rushing wind came from heaven, and it filled the whole house where they were staying. 3 They saw tongues like flames of fire that separated and rested on each one of them. 4 Then they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in different tongues, as the Spirit enabled them.

37-41— When they heard this, they were pierced to the heart and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brothers, what should we do?"

38 Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, each of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 For the promise is for you and for your children, and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call." 40 With many other words he testified and strongly urged them, saying, "Be saved from this corrupt generation!" 41 So those who accepted his message were baptized, and that day about three thousand people were added to them.

If you read in Exodus, you will find that God had foreshadowed this event. Let's compare:

EXODUS

40 days after Passover,
Israel arrived at Mt. Sinai

10 days later Moses came
down from the mountain
with the Torah (the laws of God)

Sinai event had sounds and symbols-
wind, fire, smoke, voices-

God told the people to ready
themselves for the 3rd day and He
would come to them

The multitude of people rebelled and
3000 of them were killed as a result
(Exodus 32)

ACTS

40 days after Passover,
the disciples arrived at Mt. Zion
(Jerusalem)

10 days later the disciples
received the gift of the Holy Spirit

Upper room event had sounds and
symbols-wind, fire, smoke, voices-

Jesus told His followers that on the
third day He would rise and come
to them

The multitude listened as Peter
preached and 3000 were saved.

In the Old Testament, the people were given a great gift from God, but they continued to lose faith and disobeyed His commands.

In the New Testament, we were given a great gift from God that we can receive by His grace.

Are you ready for the change that the Holy Spirit can make in your life?

God has a great future for you if you do!

PRAYER TIME

- Thank God for the gift of His Holy Spirit that He has given to us.
- Ask for the Holy Spirit to lead you and speak through you daily.
- Ask God to help you demonstrate proof of His Spirit living in you. Ask Him to help you share your story with others.
- Pray for yourself and members of your group to boldly proclaim your faith in Christ.