

St Andrew's Anglican Church

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A Walk Through "The Deeds and Acts of King Jesus, part 2"

The Book of Acts is often overlooked between the four gospels and the letters of Paul, John and Peter. Once discovered, it can get easily tagged as a missionary journal. Our hope is to dive into the 28 chapters of Acts as if it were God's journal of those who first believed in the saving grace of Jesus. Courage, faith, grit, patience, longsuffering, joy, healing, miracles, worship, fellowship, sharing, the breaking of bread, anger, drama, disagreements, forgiveness - it's all there.

Promise ...

¹¹ so is my word that goes out from my mouth:

It will not return to me empty,
but will accomplish what I desire
and achieve the purpose for which I sent it. (Is. 55:11)

Fact ...

The Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you. The Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. (John 14:26)

Remember CALVIN'S reference to Acts as "A VAST TREASURE"? ... **ACTS 1 is a vast treasure!**

Acts 1 by GBA after a dozen readings - Jesus to the eleven: "Attention, men. This is your Commander. I've got a mission for you to do. First, nobody leaves. I need you here. I have a plan to advance the Kingdom – my way, not your way. But, I need you to wait for the promise of the Holy Spirit. Only then will you have the power you'll need to accomplish the mission to be my witnesses. While you wait, pick the twelfth man." *BOOM!*

The verbs, "given orders" and "commanded" paint the picture of MISSION DEPLOYMENT.

- The Mission was planned from the beginning.
- The Mission advances the Kingdom.
- The Mission is to bear witness that Jesus is alive (after suffering and death), He reigns, He will come again.

WAIT

Why wait? (vs 4)

- Don't get ahead of me (vs 7)

What happens to you when you wait?

- You subordinate your will to the Commander's.
- You have to TRUST!!
- You gain understanding.
- You pray.
- His timing happens, not ours.

KINGDOM

The 11 are still thinking in earthly terms. (Even after the 40 days?)

But, this time, they will *finally* get it.

How?

THE ASCENSION

4 references to "taken up"—v2, 9, 11, 22

Why is that so important?

- He is enthroned (as Messiah, King, Lord) in a way the 11 didn't expect.
- Kingdom isn't in the future ("When?") It's NOW!
- Again, it's not about our view of the world; it's more than heaven. (More on that in a minute.)
- The Lord is returning to "His dimension." (More on that phrase in a minute.)
- Consider the ascension in the context of Daniel 7, a passage well-known to the disciples. (*Click!*)

"and behold, with the clouds of heaven
 there came one like a son of man,
 and he came to the Ancient of Days
 and was presented before him.
¹⁴And to him was given dominion
 and glory and a kingdom,
 that all peoples, nations, and languages
 should serve him;
 his dominion is an everlasting dominion,
 which shall not pass away,
 and his kingdom one
 that shall not be destroyed." (Daniel 7:13-14)

N.T. Wright (one of ours): "[The Ascension] does not indicate that he was heading out somewhere beyond the moon or Mars, but that He was going into **God's dimension**. The cloud, as is so often the case in the Bible, is the sign of God's presence. That's how the disciples would have understood it. Think pillar of fire and cloud in the desert (Ex 14:19-24) or the cloud and smoke that filled the temple when God became suddenly present in a new way (2 Chron 5:14)

"In the Bible, heaven is not a location within our own cosmos of space, time and matter. Heaven and earth are the two halves of God's created reality. Heaven is God's dimension, and earth is ours. **From the ascension onward, the story of Jesus' followers takes place in both dimensions.** Heaven may well be our temporary home after this present life; but the whole new heaven-and-earth combination, united and transformed, is our eventual destination (see Rev 21:1-4). The risen body of Jesus is the first, and so far the only, object which is fully at home in both spheres, anticipating the time when everything will be renewed and joined together. Jesus has gone into God's dimension of reality; but he will be back

on the day when that dimension and our present one are brought together once and for all. That promise hangs in the air over the whole of Christian history from that day to this. That is what we mean by the second coming.”

N.T. Wright, Former Bishop of Durham, England
Current Research Professor of New Testament at University of St. Andrews, Scotland

What does the Ascension mean to you?

THE PROMISE

The Scriptures are replete with promise. Savior

- Salvation
- Messiah
- Heaven
- His return
- A new heaven and a new earth

In Acts 1, Jesus zeroes in on another promise – the promise of the fullness of God for the Mission.

- The Father promised it. (v4)
- The Son affirms it. (v4)
- The Holy Spirit is it! (v5)

Acts 1:16 – “the Scripture had to be fulfilled.”

“If I were Satan and my ultimate goal was to thwart God’s Kingdom and purposes, one of my main strategies would be to get churchgoers to ignore the Holy Spirit.” (Lewis?)

POWER

In our fallen world, it’s always about the power.

- e.g., God v Satan

Politics: “No one gives you power. You have to take it from them.” (Pelosi)

People: Between riches, fame, or power – power usually wins.

Henri Nouwen: “What makes the temptation of power so seemingly irresistible? Maybe it that power offers an easy substitute for the hard task of love. It seems easier to be God than to love God, easier to control people than to love people, easier to own life than love life ... The long painful history of the church is the history of people ever and again tempted to choose power over love, control over the cross, being a leader over being led.” (from In the Name of Jesus, p 77)

Kingdom power for the Mission is given to us in the person of the Holy Spirit, not of ourselves ...”so that no one can boast.” (Eph. 2:9)

c.f., Simon the magician story ahead in Luke 8.

PRAYER (includes praise and worship)

What drove the 120 to prayer? (v14)

When you urgently pray, what happens?

- BRINGS HEAVEN IN; IT BRINGS US INTO GOD'S DIMENSION.
- Builds one accord.
- Includes the Holy Spirit.
- Prepares us for what God wills.

“They were to be endued with power and, you see, **when God is going to do some great thing He moves the hearts of people to pray**; He stirs them up to pray in view of that which He is about to do **so that they might be prepared for it. The disciples needed the self-examination that comes through prayer** and supplication, that they might be ready for the tremendous event which was about to take place, the coming to earth of God the Holy Spirit to dwell in believers and empower them to witness for Him.” (Ironside, Acts, p 28)

Take away: Pray to prepare ourselves; pray before we act.

PICKING THE TWELFTH MAN

Why fill the seat?

- Ps. 109:8, Mt. 19:28

Was it supposed to be Paul?

Why lots?

- Prov. 18:18, 16:9
- Pre-Holy Spirit

Why didn't Jesus pick Judas' replacement? It's the 12th man, the 12th throne and he picked the other 11! Both men were qualified; they weren't guessing; they did it the Scripture way.

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