



GRACE

REFORMED BAPTIST CHURCH

SOLI ♦ DEO ♦ GLORIA

THE BOOK OF ACTS

Sermon Notes

Preparation for Pentecost

Acts 1:1-8

January 21, 2007

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I. The Prerequisites for Pentecost

- ❑ Luke opens up the Book of Acts with an address to Theophilus [‘loved by God’ or ‘lover of God’].
- ❑ Furthermore, in all of the New Testament, only Luke employed a ‘literary prologue’ [vv. 1-2], which was a common aspect of first century Greek writings. It is possible that the existence of a prologue, in both Luke and Acts, indicates that Luke views these books as works of literature intended for the educated public.
- ❑ In his prologue to the Book of Acts, Luke summarizes the Gospel of Luke: ‘In my first account I composed...about all that Jesus began to do and teach, until the day when He was taken up to heaven, after He had by the Holy Spirit given orders to the apostles whom He had chosen’ (vv. 1-2).
- ❑ Several truths can be drawn from Luke’s prologue to the Book of Acts which serve as ‘prerequisites’ to the Holy Spirit’s work in the life of the Church [in the Book of Acts]: (1) the Fulfillment of Christ; (2) the Ascension of Christ; and (3) The Continuation of the Ministry of Christ.

a. The Fulfillment of Old Testament by Christ

- ❑ The first ‘prerequisite’ for Pentecost, was the fulfillment of the Old Testament by Christ.
- ❑ This was absolutely necessary for our salvation. Without the fulfilling work of Christ, there would be no salvation, no righteousness to impute to our account.
- ❑ Luke explains his Gospel by referring to ‘all that Jesus began to **do** and **teach**.’
- ❑ This succinctly and accurately sums up the ministry of Jesus Christ as the fulfillment of the Old Testament and the Obedient substitutionary sacrifice: He fulfilled everything in both (1) **word** [‘teach’] and (2) **deed** [‘do’]

Luke 24:44-49 states:

Now He said to them, “These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.” Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and He said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day, and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. “You are witnesses of these things. “And behold, I am sending forth the promise

of My Father upon you; but you are to stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.”

i. The Works of Christ

- The ‘Works’ of Christ can be divided into two separate, but related, categories: (1) the Active Obedience of Christ; and (2) the Passive Obedience of Christ.
 - The **Active Obedience** of Christ describes His active obedience to the will of the Father throughout His earthly ministry. This specifically refers to Christ’s perfect obedience to the Law in thought, word and deed. His active obedience also includes His miraculous works, signs, etc. as each of these were also perfectly in accordance with the will of the Father.
 - The **Passive Obedience** of Christ refers to His substitutionary suffering and death on our behalf.

“The real use and purpose of the formula [active and passive obedience of Christ] is to emphasize the two distinct aspects of our Lord’s vicarious obedience. The truth expressed rests upon the recognition that the law of God has both penal sanctions and positive demands. It demands not only the full discharge of its precepts but also the infliction of penalty for all infractions and shortcomings. It is this twofold demand of the law of God which is taken into account when we speak of the active and passive obedience of Christ. Christ as the vicar of his people came under the curse and condemnation due to sin and he also fulfilled the law of God in all its positive requirements. In other words, he took care of the guilt of sin and perfectly fulfilled the demands of righteousness. He perfectly met both the penal and the perceptive requirements of God’s law. The passive obedience refers to the former and the active obedience to the latter. Christ’s obedience was vicarious in the bearing of the full judgment of God upon sin, and it was vicarious in the full discharge of the demands of righteousness. His obedience becomes the ground of the remission of sin and of actual justification.”
John Murray, *Redemption Accomplished and Applied*

ii. The Teachings of Christ

- The second aspect of the fulfillment of Christ, as revealed by Luke, was the **teachings** of Christ.
- Jesus was, primarily, a teacher.
- The main thrust of His teachings, however, was not to teach us to ‘live a good life’; but, rather, to **reveal the Father**.
- John 1:18 states, ‘No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him.’
 - The Greek word for ‘explained’ is literally ‘exegete’. Jesus **exegeted** the Father.

- The significance of teaching is emphasized throughout the Word of God, as faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the words of Christ. Furthermore, it is the Word of God that is the imperishable seed of salvation. Therefore, the central ‘act’ of Christ, as well as Christians today, is the proclamation/teaching of the Gospel message.

b. The Ascension of Christ

- The second ‘prerequisite’ for Pentecost was the Ascension of Christ.
- R. C. Sproul correctly writes, “The significance of the Ascension is often overlooked in the modern church...Most churches...make little or no mention of the Ascension. However, the Ascension is a redemptive event of profound importance. It marks the moment of Christ's highest point of exaltation prior to His return. It is in the Ascension that Christ entered into His glory.”
- Understanding the significance of the Ascension allows us to understand the final aspect of Christ’s work of Redemption, and consequently view Christ properly as He truly is – not just the Risen Messiah, but our Exalted King!
- There are multiple reasons *why* the Ascension was absolutely necessary for our salvation [which we learned of extensively in the Gospel of John and will examine next week]. However, in this context, **the Ascension made it possible for Christ to send the Holy Spirit so that the Holy Spirit could perform all of His work on the basis of Christ’s redemptive work (Matthew 3:11; John 3:5-8; 14:16-17; 16:8-9, 12-14; 15:26-27; Romans 8:26-27; 1 Corinthians 12:13).**

II. The Preparation for Pentecost

a. The Command of Christ to His Disciples

- In Verse 4, Luke states, ‘Gathering them together, He [Christ] commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised, ‘Which...you heard from Me...’
 - The Greek word, translated ‘Gathering them together’ can mean: (1) assemble, gather together; (2) lodge or spend the night with; or (3) share salt, that is, eat with.
 - The word translated ‘commanded them not to leave’ literally means ‘**stop departing from Jerusalem.**’
 - The reason this was significant is revealed in Acts 1:8. **It was God’s plan that the Gospel go forth from Jerusalem – the holy city of the Jews;** thus, Christ commanded the disciples to remain in Jerusalem in order to ensure this would happen. This is possibly implied in Paul’s letter to the Romans, ‘For I am not

ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek' (Romans 1:16). Furthermore, it would be the rejection of the Gospel by the Jews [not completely, however] that would be one of the primary factors in the spread of the Gospel 'to the uttermost parts of the earth.'

- Jesus also states, 'but...wait for what the Father had promised, 'Which...you heard from Me...'
 - In Luke 24:49, Jesus stated, 'And behold, I am sending forth the promise of My Father upon you; but you are to stay in the city **until you are clothed with power from on high.**'
 - Also, in John's Gospel, specifically in Chapters 14-16, Jesus makes several references to the promised Holy Spirit.
 - John 14:26 states, 'But 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 that I said to you.'

b. The Baptism of John

- Luke, then, states, in Verse 5: 'for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.'
 - Luke 3:16 [and also Mark 1:8; Matthew 3:11; and John 1:33] states, 'John answered and said to them all, 'As for me, I baptize you with water; but One is coming who is mightier than I, and I am not fit to untie the thong of His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.'
 - The baptism by John foreshadowed the promise of when ALL believers in the Lord Jesus Christ would be baptized with the Holy Spirit.
 - Joel 2:28-32 [quoted in Acts 2:17-21] prophesied the widespread outpouring of the Holy Spirit.
 - Furthermore, John's baptism, a baptism of repentance, further prepared the hearts of those whom he baptized for the coming judgment [for Pentecost was, in a very real sense, an act of judgment upon the people of Israel] and the spiritual baptism all believers in Christ would receive in the Holy Spirit.
 - Remember, however, that the baptism with the Holy Spirit could only occur AFTER the work of Christ, to include His ascension, was completed.

c. The Appearances of Christ to His Disciples

- Verse 3 states, ‘To these He also presented Himself alive after His suffering, by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a period of forty days and speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God.’
 - The word, in the Greek, translated ‘proofs’ is a ‘technical term from logic’, meaning ‘demonstrative proof, evidence.’
 - The significance of the appearances of the risen Christ before His apostles cannot be easily overstated. Indeed, it was, in part, His appearing before them that qualified the apostles to serve in such capacity.
 - John Polhill writes, ‘The appearances to the apostles are absolutely essential for their primary role in Acts of being witnesses to his resurrection (1:22; 2:32; 3:15; 5:32; 10:39-41; 13:31).

□ 1 John 1:1-3:

‘What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life – and the life was manifested, and we have seen and testify and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us – what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.’

□ 1 Corinthians 15:1-8 states:

Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep; then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles; and last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared to me also.

□ Ephesians 2:19-22:

‘So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, **but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets,** Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.’

- In other words, the written word of God is based upon the testimony of the Apostles. Further, it was the miracles and signs that Jesus performed **in the presence of His disciples** that authenticated the truth of His message, claims and identity.

As Calvin writes, ‘[I]t does not follow that they were performed in vain, for they profited that age. Secondly, though at the present day we have not a minute knowledge of them, still we must not suppose it to be of little importance for us to know that the Gospel was sealed by a vast number of miracles.’

Herman Ridderbos: “This is why it is specified here that Jesus did signs ‘before’ or ‘in the presence of His disciples. Here again we see the distinction made in Verse 29 [‘Blessed are they who did not see, and yet believed’] between those who have ‘seen’ and those who have not. The disciples constitute the salvation-historical link between Jesus and those who will believe in Him through their word, which they speak as those authorized by Jesus to speak it.’

- Luke also makes it clear that the risen Christ appeared before His disciples ‘over a period of forty days...’
 - The period of forty days is rich in biblical symbolism: Christ was in the wilderness for forty days, Moses spent forty days atop Mt. Sinai receiving the Law, it was a forty day period that Elijah sojourned on Mt. Horeb.
 - **It seems most likely, however, that the strongest references is to Jesus’ time in the wilderness, in which He prepared for His ministry. In the same way, the period of forty days following the resurrection, prepared the apostles for their respective ministries.**

III. The Promised Results of Pentecost

a. New ‘Day’ [Epoch]

- In Verse 7, Jesus rebukes His disciples, saying, ‘It is not for you to know the times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority...’ Christ, then, immediately states, **‘but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you...’**
 - It seems rather clear that Pentecost, then, will constitute one of these ‘fixed epochs,’ indeed, it is a **new epoch**.
 - As will be evident, it will be an epoch marked by a world-wide proclamation of the Gospel where the Kingdom of God is opened to all, without distinction of race or ethnicity.

b. Baptism *in or with* the Holy Spirit

- The next result of Pentecost will be the baptism [by the Son] *in or with* the Holy Spirit.
 - As Jesus told His disciples, ‘you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.’
 - Many professing Christians, however, believe that baptism in the Holy Spirit is a separate event from regeneration. It is as though some ‘Christians’ walk around regenerated, and ‘saved’, but have yet to receive the ‘baptism in the Holy Spirit.’
 - However, this view is fatally flawed.

- The Apostle Paul writes, in **1 Corinthians 12:13**: ‘For in one Spirit were we all baptized into one body.’
- As Donald Macleod states, in his article *Baptism in the Spirit*, ‘...baptism in the Spirit is an absolutely fundamental element in the Christian doctrine of salvation; that the experiences of it is what initiates a man into the Christian life, so that without it we are not Christians at all; and that to have had it is to have received the Spirit in His fullness, enabling us to say, ‘I can do all things in the One who strengthens me’ (Philippians 4:13).’

c. The Power of the Holy Spirit

- Jesus tells His disciples that they ‘will receive **power** when the Holy Spirit has come upon’ them.
- It was the **power of the Holy Spirit**, a power **external to themselves** that would enable them to fulfill the promise of Acts 1:8.
- Polhill writes, ‘During Jesus’ ministry, there is no reference to the Holy Spirit being upon anyone except Jesus. The Spirit descended upon him at his baptism (Luke 3:22), filled him as he returned from the Jordan (Luke 4:1), led him both in and out of the wilderness (Luke 4:1,14), and rested upon him in his programmatic sermon at Nazareth (Luke 4:18). The introduction of the Spirit in Acts 1:2 is probably not incidental for Luke. He emphasized that the same Spirit who rested upon Jesus in his ministry would empower the apostles for witness.’
- As the Holy Spirit is fully God; the power of the Holy Spirit is nothing short of the power of Almighty, Eternal God.

d. The Effectual Witness of Christ’s Disciples

- Jesus also states, in Verse 8, that ‘you **shall** be My witnesses.’
- F.F. Bruce writes, ‘An Old Testament prophet had called the people of Israel to be God’s witnesses in the world (Isaiah 43:10; 44:8); the task which Israel had not fulfilled was taken on by Jesus, the perfect Servant of the Lord, and shared by him with his disciples. The close relation between God’s call to Israel, ‘you are my witnesses,’ and the risen Lord’s commission to his apostles, ‘you will be my witnesses,’ can be appreciated the more if we consider the implications of Paul’s quotation of Isaiah 49:6 in Acts 13:47.’
- Also, the Greek word translated ‘shall’ in Acts 1:8 is in the future tense. The future tense, in this context, carries with it the imperative sense. In other words, it could be translated, ‘you will [must] receive power’; ‘you **will** be my witnesses.’

- ❑ In other words, the effectiveness and success of the witness of the apostles is assured.
- ❑ Jesus tells His disciples that they will be His witnesses in Jerusalem; in all Judea and Samaria; and even to the remotest part of the earth.
 - Acts 1:8 essentially gives an outline of the Book of Acts: Jerusalem (1-7); Judea and Samaria (8-12); the ends of the earth (13-28).
 - Polhill writes, ‘The story of Jesus led to Jerusalem; the story of the church led from Jerusalem.’
 - He continues, ‘Judea was understood in the sense of the Davidic kingdom, which would include the coastal territories and Galilee as well. Samaria would be included with Judea in this broader sense, but it is mentioned separately because of its non-Jewish constituency. The ‘ends of the earth’ are often taken as referring to Rome, since the story of Acts ends in that city.’
- ❑ Finally, it is important to know that the apostles were witnesses of Jesus, and, in the book of Acts, this is primarily referring to their witness to his resurrection (1:22; 2:32; 3:15; 5:32; 10:39, 41).

e. The Continuation of the Ministry of Christ

- ❑ Scholar and theologian John R. W. Stott wrote that the title of the Book of Acts could have been appropriately, ‘The Continuing Words and Deeds of Jesus by His Spirit through His Apostles.’
- ❑ Christianity is a historical religion, and the historic Christian faith cannot be separated from the historic [which is also ‘the biblical’] Jesus.

‘[The presence of the work ‘began’] may imply that the work is unfinished. The work and words of Jesus continue throughout Acts in the ministry of the apostles and other faithful witnesses. It still goes on in the work of the church today.’ John Polhill

- ❑ Jesus is the fulfillment [and serves as a continuity] of the Old Testament; the Apostles form the bridge of continuity between us and Christ.

f. The Restored Kingdom of God [the *true* Israel]

- ❑ In Verse 3, Luke writes, ‘...[Jesus appeared] to them over a period of forty days and speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God.’
- ❑ Then, in Verse 6, the disciples asked Jesus, ‘Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?’
 - All the way back to Exodus (Exodus 15:18), God was to be the king in Israel.

- Although His kingship is not restricted to political or geographic boundaries (Psalm 103:19), it was to be most clearly revealed in His covenant relationship with the nation of Israel (Psalm 147:20).
 - However, after the Israelites demanded a king [and God granted their wish], and the monarchy collapsed, and national independence was lost, many began anticipating the day when God would restore the earthly kingdom in the future [Daniel 2:44; 7:13-14].
 - It is this understanding that disciples still exhibit in Acts 1:6. They maintain their hope of seeing the kingdom of God manifested in the restoration of Israel's national independence and prosperity.
 - John Stott writes, 'The verb *restore* shows that they were expecting a political and territorial kingdom; the noun *Israel* that they were expecting a national kingdom; and the adverbial clause *at this time* that they were expecting its immediate establishment.'
 - The disciples, apparently, understood passages such as Joel 2:28-32 as references to the outpouring of the Spirit on national Israel that would lead to a political/nationalistic restoration of the nation and a return to the 'glory days' of David and Solomon.
 - Furthermore, they had even once seemed to believe that they would have positions of authority in the 'restored' kingdom (Matthew 20:21; Mark 10:35-45; Luke 22:24-27).
 - James Montgomery Boice wrote that they disciples expected a (1.) political; (2.) geographically restricted; and (3.) ethnically restricted kingdom. However, what Jesus came to usher in was a (1.) spiritual; (2.) powerful; and (3.) worldwide kingdom of Truth.
 - At this point in the Book, the disciples could not have had a more improper understanding of the kingdom of God.
- However, in God's plan, as revealed in the Book of Acts, the restoration of Israel involved the proclamation of the Gospel message to the 'ends of the earth' and the inclusion of Gentiles into the Kingdom of God.
 - John Calvin wrote, 'And hereby does he [Christ] briefly set down the end of the doctrine of the gospel; namely, that God may reign in us. Regeneration is the beginning of this kingdom, and the end thereof is blessed immortality...But ...we must first note, that we are born, and that we live aliens and strangers from the kingdom of God, until such time as God does fashion us again unto a new life.'
 - This was, in part, why Christ said, 'My kingdom is not of this world,' and 'you must be born again in order to see the kingdom of God.'

- ❑ F.F. Bruce writes, ‘From now on they [the disciples] devoted themselves to the proclamation and service of God’s spiritual kingdom, which men and women enter by repentance and faith, and in which chief honor belongs to those who most faithfully follow their Lord in the path of obedience, service, and suffering.’
- ❑ C.H. Dodd rightly states, ‘The kingdom of God is conceived as coming in the events of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, and to proclaim these facts, in their proper setting, is to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom of God.’

g. The Active Presence of the Triune God

- ❑ It is most certainly true that the Holy Spirit empowers all believers in the New Covenant Community.
- ❑ However, one must never forget or deny the active and sovereign presence of the **Triune God** throughout the Scriptures, to include the Book of Acts.
- ❑ In these eight short Verses, Luke reveals:
 - The Father has fixed, by His own authority, certain times and epochs (Verse 7).
 - The Father promised the Holy Spirit (Verse 4).
 - Jesus chose, taught, and commanded His disciples (Verse 1; 2; 4; 8).
 - Jesus did many things which are recorded (Verse 1).
 - Jesus suffered and died (Verse 3).
 - The resurrected Jesus revealed Himself to His disciples over a period of forty days and spoke to them concerning the kingdom of God (Verse 3).
 - Jesus is Lord (Verse 6).
 - The disciples are Jesus’ witnesses (Verse 8).
 - Jesus knows the future – ‘...you **shall** be My witnesses’ (Verse 8).
 - Jesus ascended [‘was taken up to heaven’] into heaven (Verse 2).
 - It was through the power/presence of the Holy Spirit that Jesus gave orders to His disciples (Verse 2).
 - The disciples will be baptized *with* the Holy Spirit [by Jesus] (Verse 5).
 - The Holy Spirit will come upon and empower the disciples to be Christ’s witness [in accordance with Christ’s finished work and the Father’s will] (Verse 8).