

Here we are a week after Easter, the summation of all we hope in, all that we believe in as Christians. Easter is so important to our faith and we do well to give that special day the respect and reverence it deserves. Christ has risen, He and He alone has conquered the grave and now we have a blessed assurance that Jesus is able to fulfill what He said He could do for our life here on earth and for our eternal security as well.

Easter had a special lesson in store for me this year. My father in law passed away on Good Friday after a long battle with illness. He was a Christian and was ready to go, so it was a sad and yet a sweet day as he left this temporary dwelling and received his eternal home. I was thinking about his passing and came to realize that Jerry got to do something that even Jesus Himself didn't get to do, pass from this life straight into eternal life. You see, Jesus bore the full punishment for our sins and therefore He had to die. That's the hard truth of the cross, Jesus died. He died with no hope of heaven, no future life that would be lived in peace, He suffered the ultimate death, so that we would not have to. Jesus took the full punishment for our sins and the reality of that punishment is death, eternal separation from God the father and all of the pain and darkness that accompanies that horrible consequence. I think that's why Jesus pleaded with God the Father so vehemently in the garden, if there was any other way, let this cup pass. The physical pain wasn't the real struggle(although real and horrific) the real struggle for Jesus was the knowledge that He was about to become separated from His God...that reality was simply too much to bear..The cross, as awful as it is, does have a great result for you and for me. ***Heb 2:8-9 But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone.***

Jesus didn't suffer all that He did to leave us stranded, it was the only way to bring us into the good with God the Father, the bible is not a story that ends with the tomb of a dead man, but rather an infallible, perfect record that brings into focus what Jesus came to this earth to do. The tomb was empty, Death no longer holds us in fear, ***Rev 1:17-19 "Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last. I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death.***

We are a strange people to a world that doesn't know Christ. On one hand we are exceeding sorrowful and we grieve for the loss of those who have passed. They are dear to our hearts and have filled us with so many good memories that it's difficult to imagine a life without the friends and family we love so much but in the same breath we rejoice in the fact that they are with Jesus, in fellowship with God the Father and eternally secure in the heaven that awaits each one of Gods kids. Jerry is not dead, he is more more alive now than he's ever been, That's such a crazy thing to think about but it's so true. ***John 8:51 Most assuredly, I say to you, if anyone keeps My word he shall never see death.***"

So here we are, just one week after the resurrection of Jesus. The trial, the cross, the burial and the empty tomb all happened just a week ago. What an emotional week that must have been, all of the hope that Jesus brought seemed to vanish on the cross. On that most precious of days that all seemed lost some simply gave up, some wept, some mocked but they all saw Jesus die. Here's where it gets good, when even His followers conceded the loss and tried to return to life as normal, God's plan for our salvation comes to full circle. what was never really expected to happen, happened. The Tomb is empty..Jesus is alive, He's alive!! That's the good news indeed! Here we are gathered a week later, seven days to process and let the events of last week soak in. Jesus has risen no doubt.... but what are we supposed to do now, should we be doing something? We have faith in the resurrection but how does this faith look in real life after Jesus left.

Enter, the book of Acts. What an important book this is for us to study. We have just finished the book of Luke on Sunday mornings, can you imagine how confusing the NT would be without the book of Acts. *Luke 24:46-53 Then He said to them, "Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And you are witnesses of these things. Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high."*

And He led them out as far as Bethany, and He lifted up His hands and blessed them. Now it came to pass, while He blessed them, that He was parted from them and carried up into heaven. And they worshiped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple praising and blessing God. Amen. Here in the final words of Jesus in the Gospel Luke we see some last minute reminders and instructions given to the disc. Don't forget, all of this is planned, you guys have seen the plan unfold, now get busy and preach this good news. Ill send you the promise of the Father upon you, wait in Jerusalem until I do..Cya later

Without the book of Acts we we jump strait into Rom 1:1-6 Paul, a bond servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated to the gospel of God which He promised before through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures, concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead. Through Him we have received grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith among all nations for His name, among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ;

Wait..what about this promise, did it ever come? Are the twelve still waiting in Jerusalem? and Who is this Paul guy, and why is talking like he is an apostle, how did that happen? Thank God for the book of acts to clear all of these questions up.

We can find all of the answers we need to these questions and more in the book of Acts. The fulfillment of the Promise that Jesus gave, speaking of the Holy Spirit, arrives in the book of Acts what an awesome day that was.

You can also read of Saul and how God finally got through to this dangerous man in a very powerful and profound way on the road to Damascus, changing him into Paul the great apostle. All of the Acts of the Apostles, the formation of the church, the way to propel the Gospel, and countless other foundational living and theological points can be found in this valuable book. *Dr. Martin Lloyd Jones writes, "live in that book, i exhort you. It is a tonic, the greatest tonic i know of in the realm of the spirit"* So without further delay lets jump right in.

Acts 1: 1-26 Most agree this book was penned by Luke. Where as his gospel describes the beginning of the ministry of Jesus, the book of Acts is the continuation of that ministry basically Luke, part 2 Notice that the book is addressed to Theophilus. This raises an obvious question, just who was this Theophilus? Opinions vary greatly, some think that maybe he was just like you and me, a believer wanting to find out all there is to know about Jesus. Others believe that maybe he was a high ranking Roman official. Some speculate this letter might be some kind of defense briefing for Paul's trial in Rome, a way to show that Paul and this faith in Jesus was in no way a harm to the empire of Rome. Still others believe that maybe this was merely a symbolic name for any believers who may read this letter, Theophilus simply means "God lover"

Doesn't really matter much, pick one and go, maybe one day you can ask Luke for yourself. We may not know a lot about the intended recipient of this book, but what we do know about this book is important. We know that Luke had served along side Paul, starting in Acts 21 and continued with him, keeping this account for us for two years until around Acts 27. The letter was penned somewhere around 60 AD the same time Paul was in prison in Rome under the Caesar Nero. In just 3-4 short years this same Nero would begin an extremely hostile persecution on Christians all through out Rome so this letter would no doubt be used to stabilize and calm the hearts of the persecuted church. This isn't just a guess of the things that happened i the early stages of the the church, it is a first person testimony of all the things that took place in this powerful book that land us in the seats we are in to day. Acts never really ended, we, the modern day church are simply the continuation of the churches that were planted all throughout this book. The torch has been passed to us and we do well to study the right way to represent Jesus.

1-3 Luke begins to paint a picture for us on how to live on this earth without the physical presence of Jesus leading the way. Notice how Luke mentions the "former account" referring to his Gospel record. Luke also mentions here the Jesus began to do and to teach, sort of implying that the past three years under Jesus and His teachings were only the start of something great, there is so much more to come Jesus had made Luke aware of this a long time ago. *John 14:12-13 "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father.*

Jesus always kept in mind that one day His time on this earth was going to end, it was a very limited engagement. He wasted no time in setting the stage for things to come.

Belief in Jesus allows us to do the same works, that really just blows me away and to add even more, He tells us that we are going to do even greater works. What does that mean? Greater works? move bigger mountains, more awesome miracles, possibly, but most likely, greater works for you and I lay in volume, the number of those works.

Jesus was only around for three years, He is simply stating the obvious, I'm going to be with My Father, you are going to stay here and carry on the work. Should the Lord delay His return you and I should just keep going and going, easily surpassing in number the works of Jesus. How awesome is that!!! Kind of makes you think about how many years we have all been following Christ, and in comparison how much we have witnessed about the Lord and discipled those around us who desire to follow the Lord. I've been a Christian for 14-15 years, 5 times the length of Jesus and as I recall, the world hasn't been turned upside down because of my testimony. In just three years Jesus changes the course of man for ever, we need to get busy.

So Luke starts off with a quick catch up of sorts, Jesus was here, He taught us what to do, and before He left He left them with detailed instructions on how this new era was going to go down. Notice the phrase there in *Acts 1:3 being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God*. Jesus didn't waste time with endless detail, when He had the chance He spoke things that centered around the kingdom of God, what a lesson there is for us in that one simple vs.

Seize the windows of opportunity that God gives you, if you have a chance share those things that really important, speak into someones life and equip them with the tools that it takes to navigate the world. Does God expect you to speak perfect words, no, but He does expect you to try. He will do the work, our job is not to worry about the result,

4-8 The big plans of Jesus unfolds...no huge army, no rushing around to get things done, planning this and doing that, Jesus says to wait...Wait for what? are you going to topple the empire, is now the time we get control, what exactly are we waiting on?

Answer: The empowering of the Holy Spirit. Just what does that mean? No one can explain to us the ministry of the Holy Spirit better than Jesus. *John 16:5-15*

But now I go away to Him who sent Me, and none of you asks Me, 'Where are You going?' But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart. 7 Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you. And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they do not believe in Me; of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more; of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged. "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you. All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare it to you.

Praise the Lord for this powerful promise, without the Holy Spirit we are lost and left alone. The HS guides us, He speaks to us, Through the HS He gives us those precious words of encouragement when we are facing troubles and the voice of discipline when we are out of line. I have learned, and I'm sure you have to, that the path that Jesus would have us walk is not all lit up with monster neon billboards and things like that. Quite frankly, here sometimes isn't a clear path, sometimes our circumstance seems so chaotic and out of control that we get confused and begin to spin out, looking everywhere for some sort of direction and losing our foundation. In these moments the ministry of the HS demands that we respond much like the 12 here in Acts.. Wait..stop moving about...wait...settle yourself and wait...trust what that the Lord said it, it will happen, calm down and wait...***1 Kings 19:11-12 Then He said, "Go out, and stand on the mountain before the LORD." And behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind tore into the mountains and broke the rocks in pieces before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire; and after the fire a still small voice.***

Thank God that He speaks to us in the quiet. Just a calm voice and a genuine reassurance can bring about real peace and stability. God doesn't need to yell to get our attention, we need to learn to stop and pray and then wait for the HS to give to us what we ask..ask in His name and He said it will happen..that's truth.

9-14 These are the snapshots of the NT that i love so much. Jesus has just laid this bombshell on His kids and then leaves the scene. He could have just vanished from among them, He had done that sort of thing before. The big exit is something that God loves to do from time to time..***2 Kings 2:11 Then it happened, as they continued on and talked, that suddenly a chariot of fire appeared with horses of fire, and separated the two of them; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.*** This time He decides to add some special flare to the day by ascending into the clouds. I have a feeling our reaction would be exactly the same as we just read. Stares..mouth open...Did we really just see that?

These two men here are most likely another set of angels sent to get things back on track. God knows we are human and have a rel hard time comprehending things, we know what we saw but we can be unsure what to do next , We can find a similar moment earlier in ***Matt 28:1-7 Now after the Sabbath, as the first day of the week began to dawn, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to see the tomb. And behold, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat on it. His countenance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow. And the guards shook for fear of him, and became like dead men. But the angel answered and said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. And go quickly and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead, and indeed He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him. Behold, I have told you."***

In both of these cases God uses angelic means to bring clarity to things that have happened and also to propel us into action, In *Matthew Matt 28:8 So they went out quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to bring His disciples word.* and here in Acts *Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey. And when they had entered, they went up into the upper room where they were staying: Peter, James, John, and Andrew; Philip and Thomas; Bartholomew and Matthew; James the son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot; and Judas the son of James. These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.*

No guess work, no doubting, Just do what the Lord said to do, get to Jerusalem and wait until further instructions. After the group blew apart because of the Cross and all of the confusion that came with it, it's a different story now. Everyone is on the same page, they are gathered together with one specific purpose, Patience, prayer and requests unto God. About 120 or so responding to the commands of Jesus. This is not an overnight deal, They were going to have to remain in prayer for a few days , it's not until the day of pentecost that the HS would arrive in Acts Chapter 2. That festival is 50 days from the Passover and we just read that for 40 days Jesus showed Himself to witnesses and then was taken up. Given they took a Sabbaths days journey to get to Jerusalem, we are left without somewhere around 10 days that this upper room was filled with prayers and supplications, what a spirit that must have been in that meeting!!

The point is not how many days they prayed, the focus should be on that they did what they were commanded to do. Jesus said earlier, *It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority. But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."*

We get so guilty of placing a time frame on what we want God to do. The fact of the matter is that God may wait to move not because He doesn't hear but rather that might be His plan to allow us to spend time with Him, seeking His face and fellowshiping with our Heavenly Father. If we prayed and God answered, every time, with no delay..can u imagine what kind of Christian brats we would become. God said He would answer, and He will but not necessarily in our time frame.

It's either all God's or it's not..we can't decide on what we will allow God to do and what we will choose to do on our own *2 Cor 6:4-10 But in all things we commend ourselves as ministers of God: in much patience, in tribulations, in needs, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in sleeplessness, in fastings; by purity, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Spirit, by sincere love, by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, by honor and dishonor, by evil report and good report; as deceivers, and yet true; as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold we live; as chastened, and yet not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.*

15-26 If anything we know that Peter had learned his lesson. He is seeing things through different eyes now. Gone is the loud and proud Peter who spoke in stupidity and pride, now we see a humbled man, speaking in wisdom and truth concerning the things of God.

Peter returns to what he knows is fact, the Word of God. These things had to take place to fulfill God's plan but he also shows a mature, knowledge of the word..here's what the word says. now someone needs to take the place of Judas. Peter takes on the leadership that is needed at this moment and Matthias is chosen.

The point here is that the spirit had not yet descended, that's later on, but the believers in that room are not left without direction. God's word still stands. The boldness to follow what God has to say through His word is a beautiful thing.

Sometimes we may not feel the spirit, sometimes we may not feel anything at all, feelings aren't all that important. God's word doesn't return void, it will always speak to us. In our time of waiting, the example given here is key, spend those moments in fellowship, in prayer and in God's word. When He decides to speak, whether by divine guidance of the HS, through counsel of fellow believers or through His word, However and whatever He says, we will be ready.

Acts chapter one holds the keys to a faith filled life..There are some big things on the way, You can read ahead for yourself and find out, but trust me incredible things happen in the book of Acts. Those things happen because God's kids were equipped, they knew how to listen, they had a grasp of God's word, they surrounded themselves with others who were like minded but most important they were willing to wait on God

God will give us the answers, His HS will speak those truths into our lives, the book of Acts is alive and well, the church still growing, God is still moving and we are gathered here today, in His word learning about Him, seeking His face and waiting patiently, anticipating a great work in our own lives..