

Quiet on the set...Take 2...ACTION!!

WE HAVE SPENT THE PAST 3+ WEEKS LEARNING ABOUT GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT.

We did this in preparation for our study of the Book of Acts. Why? Because **while** the Book was written about the birth of the Church in the 1st Century AD with its many persons, places and events, **it is also a Book** about the Holy Spirit of God and how He was intimately involved with **this** birth as He was involved with the birth of the Savior of the world.

As with any study of Scripture, we need to understand the context and the reasons for it being written. For that context, I'd like look at an earlier writing from the author of Acts, namely, Luke and his Gospel.

Luke 1:1-4 NKJV Inasmuch as many have taken in hand to set in order a narrative of those things which have been fulfilled among us, (2) just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word delivered them to us, (3) it seemed good to me also, having had **perfect** understanding of all things from the very first, to write to you an orderly account, most excellent Theophilus, (4) that you may know the certainty of those things in which you were instructed.

The name 'Theophilus' means 'friend of God'; There are no external references to him. Some believe that he was a Roman official from the way he addressed. Some believe that he may not be a real person at all, but just a literary device where 'Theophilus' represents all 'friends of God'. While I like this idea for its literary value, most scholars believe that Theophilus was a real person and perhaps a government official.

One other note: "perfect" understanding doesn't mean perfection, but implies "being diligent" in obtaining the understanding, the facts and insights into the Savior's life.

However, since Acts starts where the Gospels ended, it would be to our advantage to begin at the end. The end, in this case, is the last chapter of Luke – 24.

(Luke 24:1 NKJV) Now on the first *day* of the week, very early in the morning, they, and certain *other women* with them, came to the tomb bringing the spices which they had prepared.

Spices were used in the burial processes to mainly mask the odor of decay but also a way of anointing the body. One of these was myrrh, which you remember was one of the gifts of the wise men presented to the child Jesus.

(Luke 24:2 NKJV) But they found the stone rolled away from the tomb. **(Luke 24:3 NKJV)** Then they went in and did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. **(Luke 24:4 NKJV)** And it happened, as they were greatly perplexed about this, that behold, two men stood by them in shining garments. **(Luke 24:5**

NKJV) Then, as they were afraid and bowed *their* faces to the earth, they said to them, "Why do you seek the living among the dead? (6) He is not here, but is risen! Remember how He spoke to you when He was still in Galilee, (7) saying, '**The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.**' "

(Luke 24:8 NKJV) And they remembered His words. (9) Then they returned from the tomb and told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest. (10) It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary *the mother* of James, and the other *women* with them, who told these things to the apostles. (11) And their words seemed to them like idle tales, and they did not believe them. **(this is important!)**

So, they went back to where they were all staying and told the rest what had happened but they did not believe them. Peter runs to the tomb and was also stunned to see it empty. John records that he went with Peter and actually beat him to the tomb (braggart).

Luke takes a bunny trail down to Emmaus. There were 2 disciples who had an encounter with the resurrected Jesus but their eyes were constrained so that they did not recognize Him.

They tell Him of the crucifixion and how sad the whole affair is.

Jesus, without revealing who He is, mildly rebukes them.

(Luke 24:25 NKJV) Then He said to them, "**O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! (26) Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?**"

So, He lays out the entire plan of redemption as recorded in the Torah (the 5 Books of Moses) and in the Prophets. They arrive at their destination and ask Him to stay a while longer.

(Luke 24:30 NKJV) Now it came to pass, as He sat at the table with them, that He took bread, blessed and broke *it*, and gave it to them. (31) **Then their eyes were opened and they knew Him;** and He vanished from their sight.

They go back to Jerusalem and tell them that they have seen Jesus and, evidently, they met Peter who had also seen Him. His appearance to Peter was not recorded by the other gospel writers. Paul makes mention of it in 1 Cor 15:5. It seems that Jesus made himself known to Peter after the women were at the tomb but just before Jesus showed Himself to the disciples.

(Luke 24:36 NKJV) Now as they said these things, Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them, and said to them, "**Peace to you.**"

(Luke 24:37 NKJV) **But they were terrified and frightened, and supposed they had seen a spirit.** (38) And He said to them, "**Why are you troubled? And why do doubts arise in your hearts? (39) Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. Handle Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have.**"

He then asks for some food as a way of proving that He was not a spirit.

(Luke 24:43 NKJV) And He took *it* and ate in their presence. (44) Then He said to them, "**These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me.**" (45) And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures.

(Luke 24:46 NKJV) 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, (47) and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. (48) And you are witnesses of these things. (49) 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.**"

He takes them for a walk to the place, it is believed, from which He made His final entry into the City, near the Mt of Olives. He blessed them and then Ascended.

((Having finally "got it")), they worshiped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple praising and blessing God. Amen. (Luke 24:52-53).

Beloved, don't be too envious of these men and women who learned at His feet and saw the proof of His resurrection! What did Jesus say to Thomas:

John 20:29 NKJV Jesus said to him, "**Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.**"

These men and women were no different than us.

Before the crucifixion all but 1 (John) abandoned Him. And, of course, we know that Peter denied Him three times.

Jesus even told them they would run away the night He was taken captive.

Matthew 26:31-32 NKJV Then Jesus said to them, "**All of you will be made to stumble because of Me this night, for it is written: 'I WILL STRIKE THE SHEPHERD, AND THE SHEEP OF THE FLOCK WILL BE SCATTERED.'** (32) **But after I have been raised, I will go before you to Galilee.**"

And sure enough, when Judas betrayed Him, and brought the Temple guards to take Him to the Sanhedrin, Matthew wrote "**Then all the disciples forsook Him and fled**" Matthew 26:56b.

Aren't we all familiar with all of the passages in the four gospels that portray His disciples as prideful, unbelieving, lacking faith even in the face of all His miracles? While Peter seems to be singled out as the loud-mouth who constantly tasted shoe-leather, all of them had their fair share of issues, like fretting over who would be the greatest --- when we all know that Muhammed Ali was the greatest.

Yes, after the resurrection, they received the Holy Spirit when Jesus appeared to them where the disciples were all staying. John writes about in in Chapter 20.

John 20:19-23 NKJV Then, the same day at evening, being the first *day* of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them, "**Peace be with you.**" (20) When He had said this, He showed them *His* hands and His side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. (21) So Jesus said to them again, "**Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you.**" (22) And when He had said this, He breathed on *them*, and said to them, "**Receive the Holy Spirit. (23) If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.**"

The Holy Spirit was called the ‘Comforter’ or ‘Helper’. The Greek word used here, **paraklētos**, means an **intercessor, consoler: - advocate, comforter.**

But they did not receive the full power of the Holy Spirit! And while they could praise and worship Him with great joy there was much more for them to do.

Have we not learned over the past several weeks, that the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, the Teacher and God, abides in our hearts? Yes, He is the promised Gift of God, given to us who believe, so that we no longer have to feel abandoned, powerless and alone!

Have we not learned that He comes with gifts? Do we not know that through our submission and surrender He can produce the Fruit of Love in us so that we can Love God and others? We submit when we no longer ‘resist the Holy Spirit’; we surrender when we finally acknowledge that we cannot win when we resist!

And how did the disciples learn? The same way as us: prayer, faith and obedience!

The book of Acts is recorded history by Luke. It was his second “volume”, the first being his Gospel of the birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus. And since he begins “Volume II” with

Acts 1:1-3 NKJV The former account I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, (2) until the day in which He was taken up, after He through the Holy Spirit had given commandments to the apostles whom He had chosen, (3) to whom He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.

we need to understand a small portion of the Gospel of Luke to see why and how the events recorded in Acts took place.

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apostles whom He had chosen,

This seems to refer back to what Jesus said to them when He appeared to them after the Resurrection:

[Luke 24:44-45](#) Then He said to them, "These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me." (45) And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures.

[\(Acts 1:3 NKJV\)](#) to whom He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.

Adam Clarke lists the following "proofs" in his commentary:

1. Appearing to several different persons at different times.
2. His eating and drinking with them.
3. His meeting them in Galilee according to his own appointment.
4. His subjecting his body to be touched and handled by them.
5. His instructing them in the nature and doctrines of his kingdom.
6. His appearing to upwards of five hundred persons at once, [1Co 15:6](#). And,
7. Continuing these public manifestations of himself for forty days.

[\(Acts 1:4 NKJV\)](#) And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, "which," He said, "you have heard from Me; (5) for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

Note: Jesus doesn't say "with the Holy Spirit and fire". That was said by John the Baptist (see Matthew 3) where he was confronting the Pharisees and Sadducees. The baptism he was warning them about was a baptism of judgment for their hypocriticalness, unbelief and pride.

The word baptized in the Greek is "baptidzo" which means "fully wet"; The English word "whelmed" is used in Strong's to describe the Greek; it means "engulf, submerge, or bury".

[\(Acts 1:6 NKJV\)](#) Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, "Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" (7) And He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority."

Again, before the Holy Spirit was poured out, their focus was temporal. They wanted to know if Jesus was going to rid Israel of their enemies (Rome) and reestablish the Kingdom! This was the Messianic Hope for which the Jews were looking. They wanted King Messiah! But Jesus knew that they required

a “change of heart” before their circumstances could be changed (read Jeremiah 31 and Ezekiel 36). The King must reign in our hearts before He can reign in our lives!

Jesus mildly rebukes them saying, in effect,

“So, you’re worrying about Kingdoms when there’s real work to be done? Kingdom details are for those who are way above your pay-scale”

(Acts 1:8 NKJV) 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."

Yes, they would receive power but not for their “personal use and fulfillment”, but for witnessing of the Truth of the gospel and more specifically, of Jesus himself! The task would take them into ever widening circles.

(Acts 1:9 NKJV) Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. (10) And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel,(11) who also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This *same* Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven." (12) Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey.

There was no fanfare; no apparent celebration; no falling down on their faces to worship. I think that the things that Jesus said to them and then He was taken away sobered them.

(Acts 1:13 NKJV) 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. (14) These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.

I love how they did the most important thing while they waited for the Holy Spirit. Pray! They prayed together in full agreement. And note that something radical had changed: women were included in those times of prayer along with Jesus’s half-brothers who once thought He was out of His mind.

(Acts 1:15 NKJV) And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples (altogether the number of names was about a hundred and twenty), and said, (16) "Men *and* brethren, this Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke before by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus;

Psalms 41:9 NKJV Even my own familiar friend in whom I trusted, Who ate my bread, Has lifted up *his* heel against me.

(Acts 1:17 NKJV) for he was numbered with us and obtained a part in this ministry." (18) (Now this man purchased a field with the wages of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst open in the middle and all his entrails gushed out.

We know that Judas hung himself. This adds to that part of the story. Evidently, something happened to cause his body to fall to the ground and, well... burst open...".

(Acts 1:19 NKJV) And it became known to all those dwelling in Jerusalem; so that field is called in their own language, Akel Dama, that is, Field of Blood.)

(Acts 1:20 NKJV) "For it is written in the Book of Psalms: 'LET HIS DWELLING PLACE BE DESOLATE, AND LET NO ONE LIVE IN IT'; and, 'LET ANOTHER TAKE HIS OFFICE.'

Psalms 69:25 NKJV Let their dwelling place be desolate; Let no one live in their tents.

Psalms 109:8 NKJV Let his days be few, *And* let another take his office.

(Acts 1:21 NKJV) **"Therefore, of these men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us,**

(Acts 1:22 NKJV) **beginning from the baptism of John to that day when He was taken up from us, one of these must become a witness with us of His resurrection."**

Commentators think that because of the fulfillment of the prophecies in the 2 Psalms, there was an urgency to get another man appointed who was mostly likely one of the other 70 disciples Jesus called.

Matthew Henry thinks also that this may be because they were ordained as the 12. Perhaps, they remembered what Jesus told them:

Matthew 19:28 NKJV So Jesus said to them, "Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

"one of these must become a witness with us of His resurrection"

In the current circumstances, the resurrection was critical to their testimony of Jesus. Without it, His birth, His Life, His miracles, His teachings, His suffering and death were all meaningless.

(Acts 1:23 NKJV) And they proposed two: Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias. (24) **And they prayed** and said, "You, O Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which of these two You have chosen (25) to take part in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place." (26) **And they cast their lots**, and the lot fell on Matthias. And he was numbered with the eleven apostles.

There were several ways that casting lots was performed. It may have been that they took 2 stones and wrote 'apostle' on one and the other was blank. They were put into a vessel and shook up. The men would each choose a stone and the one that chose the 'apostle' stone was chosen. The believed that

God would ensure the lot was taken by the one He chose.

Casting lots was part of their culture. Even on the most solemn day of the year, the Day of Atonement, when the sins of Israel were judged, the priests used 2 goats in the ceremony. The cast lots to determine which goat would be sacrificed on the altar and which goat would “carry the sins of the people far from camp and die in the wilderness”. This was called the “scapegoat”.

I think we’ll find that they abandoned this practice when the Holy Spirit was poured out on them.

Some might be thinking “Man, this is a boring way to start a book. Shouldn’t there have been some big event that would cause people to keep on reading...you know, ‘I tried but I just couldn’t put the scroll down’!

But it’s just like God to make us wait; the disciples waited 10 more days. You see, all things need to be done in their appointed time.

The appointed time, in the case, is the fulfillment of the Jewish Feast of Shavuot (the Feast of Weeks). After all, Jesus fulfilled the Spring Feasts of Passover, Unleavened Bread and Firstfruits...Shavuot was next on the Prophetic calendar!

Now, did that whet your appetite for Acts Chapter 2? Hang loose, we’re going to take a small break to celebrate the Birth of our Messiah!