

Waiting for the Holy Spirit - part 1

1. Review
2. Overlap with the ending of Luke
3. Waiting for the Holy Spirit
4. The take-away for us

Review

1. From two weeks ago...
 - a. Who wrote Acts?
 - b. What do we know about Luke?
 - c. When was it written? (62-70, 80-95)
 - d. How much time does it cover?
 - e. What's a good or better title for Acts?
 - f. Which apostles does it mainly cover?
 - g. Why was it written?
2. From last week...
 - a. Another term for a thought-unit (pericope)
 - b. Luke was doing two things with **Acts 1:1-5**. What were they?
 - i. Making the connection with the Gospel of Luke
 - ii. Showing how the apostles are the foundation of the church
 - c. According to Luke, what were the two main topics or themes of Jesus teaching during the forty days after his resurrection.
 - i. The kingdom of God
 - ii. The Spirit of God
 - d. How many disciples were there?
 - e. What distinguishes apostles from the other disciples?
 - i. Jesus chose them, showed himself to them, commanded them, and promised the Holy Spirit to them.
 - f. Why is Pentecost called Pentecost?

Overlap with the ending of Luke

1. Why did Luke include the ascension twice? (**Luke 24:50-53, Acts 1:6-11**)
 - a. The ascension is a logical ending for the Gospel of Luke, as it marks the end of Jesus' earthly ministry.
 - b. The ascension is a logical beginning for Acts, since the Holy Spirit would not come until Jesus had left and gone back to the Father.
2. Any issues here? Why do the accounts seem different in some respects?
 - a. One example: **Luke 24:50** says that Jesus "led them out as far as Bethany," while **Acts 1:12** says "they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey way." [SLIDE]

- i. A Sabbath day's journey = 2,000 cubits, or three-quarters of a mile
 - ii. Bethany was located two or three miles away, on the other side of the mount of Olives from Jerusalem.
 - iii. How to reconcile these two? The Luke account is more vague, saying that Jesus led them in the direction or vicinity of Bethany, which would include the mount of Olives.
- b. The Acts account is simply an expanded version, written by the same author.

Waiting for the Holy Spirit

1. Acts 1:6-11 [SLIDE]
2. How long of a wait?
 - a. 50 days, more or less
 - b. 40 days with Jesus, 10 more days until Pentecost
3. Four things needed to happen while they were waiting for the Holy Spirit [SLIDE]
 - a. Receive their commission from Jesus (6-8)
 - b. See (witness) Jesus' ascension into heaven (9-11)
 - c. Persevering in prayer (12-14)
 - i. We'll discuss this more next week, but why was this significant?
 1. Perhaps they had a learning curve in their prayers, since Jesus was no longer with them physically.
 - d. Replace Judas with Matthias (15-26)
 - e. How was Jesus involved in these four events?
4. The apostles receive their commission from Jesus (6-8) [SLIDE]
 - a. "So when they had come together..." (6)
 - i. Where are they? Mount of Olives (12) [SLIDES]
 - b. "...they asked him, 'Lord will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?'" (6) [SLIDE]
 - i. Is this question out of place? Odd? Seems like it, but not if we remember that the kingdom of God was a major topic of Jesus during the past forty days.
 - c. What was wrong with their question, if anything, and what do we make of Jesus' answer?
 - i. (SURVEY)
 - d. How we understand Jesus' answer depends on our biblical hermeneutic, or, how we interpret and understand Scripture.

- i. There are two main and opposing views on this question, and the commentators seem to take one side or the other. Of the four commentaries I read on this passage, two went one way, and two went the other. I won't tell you what these views are called or labeled as until we finish with this section. :)
- ii. One perspective teaches that "the Old Testament promises relating to the Jewish occupation of the land will be ([and] in fact, are already being) fulfilled literally..." (Stott, 41)
 - 1. If this is true, then the apostles were correct in asking about the kingdom being restored to Israel, and Jesus was correcting them in their concern about "times and seasons," and possibly correcting them for their lack of concern about the rest of the world.
- iii. The other perspective teaches that "the New Testament authors understood the Old Testament prophecies concerning the seed of Abraham, the promised land and the kingdom as having been fulfilled in Christ. Although Paul does predict a widespread turning of Jews to Christ before the end (**Rom. 11:25ff**), he does not link it with the land. Indeed, the New Testament contains no clear promise of a Jewish return to the land."
 - 1. If this is true then the apostles were mistaken in their understanding of what the kingdom of God is, and how it is connected with the Spirit. I will be taking this perspective for the remainder of this section.
 - 2. I do think it's notable, and a point in favor of this view, that throughout the rest of Acts what Luke describes is not a restoration of an Israelite kingdom, but the growth of a global, spiritual kingdom.
- e. Back to their question, the apostles were expecting three things: **[SLIDE]**
 - i. a political and territorial kingdom ("restore")
 - ii. a national kingdom ("Israel")
 - iii. its immediate reestablishment ("at this time")
- f. According to John Stott, Jesus answers and corrects them on the **nature, extent, and timing** of the kingdom.
 - i. **The kingdom of God is spiritual, not political or territorial.** **[SLIDE]**
 - 1. All earthly kingdoms can be located on a map of the earth. God's kingdom is not, and cannot, be located on a map.
 - 2. The apostles were confusing the kingdom of God with the kingdom of Israel.
 - 3. They were not alone in this view - see **Luke 2:25, 38; 24:21**
[SLIDES]

4. But wait, wasn't there a kingdom of Israel at this time? What needed to be restored? [SLIDE]
 5. How does Jesus respond to this part of their question?
 - a. "But you will receive **power** when the Holy Spirit has come upon you..." (1:8)
 - b. All kingdoms have power to some extent, some more and some less. The power in God's kingdom is spiritual, not earthly.
 - c. As John Stott says: "The reference to the Holy Spirit defines [the kingdom's] nature. The kingdom of God is his rule set up in the lives of his people by the Holy Spirit. It is spread by witnesses, not by soldiers, through a gospel of peace, not a declaration of war, and by the work of the Holy Spirit, not by force of arms, political intrigue, or revolutionary violence." (Stott, 42)
- ii. **The kingdom of God is international, not national.** [SLIDE]
1. "...and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." (1:8) [SLIDE]
 2. The apostles were still focused on Israel; Jesus expanded their view to include every nation.
 3. **Acts 1:8** provides a "Table of Contents" or a "road map" of the rest of the book of Acts, and the expansion of the kingdom of God through the Gospel. [SLIDE]
 - a. "in Jerusalem" - **Acts 1-7**
 - b. "in all Judea and Samaria" - **Acts 8:1**
 - c. "to the end of the earth." - **Acts 9-28**
 4. **Revelation 7:9-10** describes what God's kingdom will look like when it is complete. [SLIDE]
 - a. "our God," not just Israel's God
 5. This specifically was their commission from Jesus - this was to be their primary focus and mission for the duration of their remaining lifetimes.
- iii. **The kingdom of God is gradual, not immediate.** [SLIDE]
1. Many of Jesus' followers had expected him to restore the kingdom to Israel during his public ministry. At one point, starting in **Luke 19:11**, he told a parable because they were expecting the kingdom of God to appear immediately. [SLIDE]
 2. "He said to them, 'It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority.'" (1:7) [SLIDE]
 3. "times or seasons"

- a. It may be worth knowing that commentators make a distinction between these two words. [SLIDE]
- b. “times” (χρόνος)
 - i. “time, extension, or period of time”
 - ii. “duration, time viewed in its extension”
- c. “seasons” (καιρός)
 - i. “viewed as an occasion rather than an extent”
 - ii. “a definite space of time, time with reference both to its extent and character”
- d. Jesus isn’t the only one to make this distinction. See **1 Thessalonians 5:1; Titus 1:2-3** [SLIDE]
- e. Putting aside the distinction between the two words, what is important for the apostles, and for us, to know is that their concern should not be for when things are going to happen. That’s God’s concern. Their concern, and ours, is for the mission itself - the spreading of God’s kingdom.

- g. So what do you think of the apostles’ question and Jesus’ answer? Which kingdom was Jesus referring to? And what were the two views I referred to earlier?
 - i. The so-called “dispensational” view
 - ii. The so-called “reformed” view

5. The apostles see Jesus ascend into heaven

- a. **Acts 1:9-11** [SLIDE]
- b. Does this account remind you of anything else in Scripture?
 - i. Enoch (**Genesis 5:21-24**)
 - ii. Elijah (**2 Kings 2:1-14**)
 - iii. The Transfiguration (**Matthew 17:1-8; Mark 9:2-8; Luke 9:28-36**)
- c. How do we know that Jesus ascended into heaven?
 - i. So-called critical scholars doubt that Jesus actually ascended into heaven. They are somewhat sparse in the details about what happened to him otherwise, but doubting things like this is what they do.
 - ii. Look at the passage for the specific details about what they saw...
 - iii. The rest of the New Testament assumes or implies that Jesus ascended into heaven and is there now, reigning with the Father.
- d. Why is it important that they witness this event?
 - i. It completed Jesus’ earthly ministry, and signaled the coming of the Holy Spirit.
 - ii. They needed to know that he was “gone,” in heaven with the Father and not still walking the earth, possibly reappearing to them at any time.

- iii. Peter makes a distinction in **1:22** that an apostle must have seen Jesus ascend from the earth into heaven. This implies that it wasn't just the apostles who witnessed the ascension.
- e. Who are the two men in white robes? (**1:11**)
 - i. Luke doesn't say specifically, but almost everyone agrees that they are angels.
 - ii. What was their message to the apostles?
 - 1. Possibly a light rebuke, that they should not spend their time gazing into heaven waiting for Jesus to return.
- f. What modern cult contradicts this event?
 - i. Mormonism

The take-away for us

1. The kingdom of God is a spiritual kingdom, not an earthly or national kingdom. Not only is it not the kingdom of Israel, it is also not the kingdom of the United States of America.
2. Through the Holy Spirit we are a part of that spiritual kingdom, and the commission that the apostles received to be Jesus' witnesses applies to us as well.
3. The angels message implies that like the apostles, we should not spend our time gazing into the sky waiting for Jesus to return. We have work to do, while we are waiting expectantly for him to return.

Resources

1. *The Message of Acts*, John Stott
2. *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, Ben Witherington III
3. *Commentary on the Book of the Acts*, F. F. Bruce
4. *Acts*, Darrell L. Bock