

Session #1

WAITING FOR THE SPIRIT

Acts 1

David's Mighty Men VI aims to study both **revival** and the book of **Acts**. One will help us to better understand the other.

I. Introduction to the Book of Acts

A. Like a mighty wind! (Acts 2:2).

Acts is the story of how God's Spirit (wind, breath, fire) transformed a small group of individuals who then transformed the world. Dry bones came to life (Ezekiel 37) and became the holy army of God.

Acts is to the New Testament what the book of **Joshua** is to the Old Testament. It tells the story of how God's people began to move out of spiritual mediocrity and possess their inheritance. It recounts the expansion of the work of God both in the souls of men and in the world. Acts introduces us to both the **depth** and the **breadth** of the ministry of the Spirit. What we see occurring spiritually in Acts is what we see any time God's Spirit moves in revival power.

B. The Author. (Acts 1:1-2; Luke 1:1-4).

It is clear that the author of the 3rd Gospel is also the author of Acts. In fact, Acts should be considered as "**Volume II**" of his Gospel. Though the author is never named in the text, there is strong evidence to believe that the writer is Luke.

- Probably a Greek.
- The only non-Jewish writer in the NT.
- A physician (Col. 4:14).
- A very close friend of Paul through thick and thin (II Tim. 4:11).

C. The Purpose.

Luke "carefully investigated" the historical evidence and wrote "an orderly account" of Jesus' life and the early church so that we can "know the certainty" of the things we have been taught." (Luke 1:1-4).

Luke is, therefore, inviting us to **verify** whether or not his account is accurate. The claims of the Gospel should not be blindly accepted. Check it out for yourself! The Gospel of Jesus is far more than noble ideas and pious sentiments. It is rooted in **time and space**. History is the stage on which God has worked out His purposes. Other religions are rooted in philosophy or experience. But the Gospel of Jesus stands or falls on the **historicity** of its foundational events!

D. The Name of the Book.

The title “Acts” is not part of the original text and was applied to this book in the second century. But the acts of whom?

- The **apostles**? (But Peter and John are the only “apostles” really discussed and their role is minimal.)
- **Jesus Christ**? (see Acts 1:1)
- The **Holy Spirit**? (He is mentioned 51 times)

E. The recipient(s).

Who is **Theophilus** (Luke 1:3; Acts 1:1)? Several ideas have been suggested:

- A close friend of Luke.
- The lawyer charged to defend Paul before Caesar in Rome.
- Not a real person, but a generic Christian reader (Theos = God. Philos = brotherly love). Thus, Luke writes to the “lover of God”, or “friend of God.”

F. The Meaning of History.

Luke writes as a careful **historian**. (Luke 1:1-4). He has done careful research. Much of the book was written as an eye witness to the events. Note especially the “we” passages: 16:8-17; 20:5-15; 21:1-18; 27:1 - 28:16.

But is the book of Acts “just” history? Is Luke merely recording events? Or is he also seeking to teach theological truth through these events? The real question is this: Can we use the book of Acts as a **theology** book? Are the events described normative in any way for us today? Or should we just receive it as a record of historical events that have little or no implications for Christians of other centuries?

Howard Marshall offers what is, I believe, the right answer when he says:

*Luke is **both** historian **and** theologian, and...the best term to describe him is “evangelist”, a term which, we believe, includes both of the others.... As a theologian Luke was concerned that his message about Jesus and the early church should be based upon reliable history.... He used his history in the service of his theology. (Quoted in Stott, pages 29-30).*

In our study of Acts, we will not just be seeking to understand what happened long ago (i.e. history). Rather, we will be looking for **patterns** and **models** of Christian experience that Luke intends to be repeated throughout the coming ages.

G. Acts 29?

The book ends abruptly. It leaves us hanging. Paul is a prisoner under house arrest in Rome (28:30-31). But what next? Was he executed? Was he released? We want to know the rest of the story.

Many believe that Luke **intended** his account of the early church to have a feeling of incompleteness. The history of the church is **still being written**. You and I are characters in the story.

H. Outline and Structure.

See page 10 for a chart of the entire book. Luke structures his material according to:

- 1) Geography (See Acts 1:8).
 - Jerusalem. (Chap.1-7).
 - Judea and Samaria (Chap. 8-12).
 - The ends of the earth: Asia Minor, Greece, Rome, etc. (Chap. 13-28).
- 2) Key personalities.
 - Peter (Chap. 1-12).
 - Paul (Chap. 13-28).
- 3) Central churches.
 - Jerusalem (Chap. 1-12).
 - Antioch (Chap. 13-28).

I. Key verse: Acts 1:8.

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

- 1) These are the **last words** of Jesus.
- 2) The word “**but**” establishes a sharp contrast between what followers of Jesus are not to know and what they are to know.
 - It is not for you to know “**times and dates**” (v. 7) as they relate to the End Times.
 - But it is for you to know and **experience** the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit.

3) The geographical growth of the Gospel that Jesus envisions is basically one of **expanding concentric circles**:

- a. Jerusalem **Home**
My immediate family and friends. Witnessing to these people is “easy.” Culturally, they are a lot like me.
- b. Judea and Samaria..... **Near Neighbors**
To reach these people requires a measure of cross-cultural sensitivity. Culturally, these people are both similar and different.
- c. The ends of the earth..... **Foreigners**
To reach these people requires major life adjustments. Culturally, these people inhabit other planets and live by a totally different world view.

Jesus expects us to reach **all three circles**!

4) The word “witness” comes from the Greek MARTUS.

Note it well: the command is not to **“do”** witnessing but to **“be”** witnesses.

In the early church, a witness was someone ready to **lay down his life** for what he believed. Stephen is the model witness (Acts 22:20). Not everyone is called to be a missionary or preacher. But we are all called to be **martyrs**.

5) Power. (Greek DUNAMIS).

Laying down our lives, giving up our rights, surrendering our wills... we cannot do these things in our own strength. We need help. We need power. We need the **infilling of the Holy Spirit**.

The mark of the Spirit’s infilling is not necessarily miracles, signs and wonders. Sometimes these phenomena are present. Sometimes they are not. (See Matthew 7:21-23). Rather, Acts shows us that the mark of the Spirit’s indwelling fullness is twofold:

- a. **Power** (Acts 1:8).

The spirit gives supernatural help that enables me to lay down my life, to surrender my will, to give up my rights... to be a **martyr**.

b. **Purity of heart** (Acts 15:6-9).

The Spirit is called the **Holy** Spirit. The adjective describes not only who He is. It also describes what He does. The Spirit's presence renders things holy. He is the **sanctifying** Spirit.

For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life. Therefore, he who rejects this instruction does not reject man but God, who gives you his Holy Spirit. (1 Thessalonians 4:7-8).

TABLE TALK

Read Acts 1:8 again noting the key elements we have been examining (pages 3-4).

1. Which of the elements mentioned in pages 3-4 is most challenging to me? Why?
2. As we study revival and the book of Acts, what do I think is the primary thing that God wants to do in my life? in our church?

II. Acts 1: Waiting for the Spirit.

A. Acts 1 outlines the primary pre-conditions that are necessary before the Spirit of God is able to come in power.

1. The Death and Resurrection of Jesus.

In his "former book" (Acts 1:1) Luke had told how Jesus died on a cross and rose from the dead. The death and resurrection of Jesus make possible "repentance and forgiveness of sins" (Luke 24:47).

The prior work of Christ (dying to forgive us, rising to justify us) is the only foundation on which Spirit-filled living is possible. The Spirit can fill only that which has been **cleansed**. The blood of the Lamb makes this cleansing possible.

2. Obedience to a Command.

Not once, but twice, Jesus gave a clear command to **wait** for the coming of the Holy Spirit.

I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high. (Luke 24:49).

On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. (Acts 1:4).

We will never live in the power of the Spirit until we realize that this is not an option. It is a clear command of God. To settle for anything less than Spirit-filled living is to live in **blatant disobedience**.

3. Faith in a Promise.

The fullness of the Spirit is not something we earn or deserve. We don't become full by gradual growth into maturity. We are filled when we **believe** that God can do what He has promised He would do! This was the promise of God!

See Luke 24:49 and Acts 1:4 above.

The promise is this:

And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. (Ezekiel 36:27).

If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!" (Luke 11:13).

4. Jesus Exalted As Lord Over All.

The ascension (Acts 1:9-11) is the cosmic recognition that **Jesus is Lord**. Now, at the right hand of God, he reigns as Lord over all.

(Jesus)... has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand—with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him. (I Peter 3:22).

In putting everything under him, God left nothing that is not subject to him. Yet at present we do not see everything subject to him. But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honor.... (Hebrews 2:8-9).

We know that for the disciples, the exaltation of Jesus as Lord was far more than an abstract conception of the cosmic reign of Christ. No. To exalt Jesus as Lord was to **surrender their will** to His will.

We see this illustrated in the way they chose a replacement for Judas (Acts 1:15-26). No one was pushing their own agenda. No one was jockeying for position. No one was lobbying for votes. Rather, they cast lots, leaving the decision to the Lord.

To exalt Jesus as Lord is to make him the supreme ruler in my life, to surrender my will, to give up my rights, and to lay down my all so that His Kingdom purposes can be done in me and through me.

It is only when Christ is **lifted up** that the Spirit can be **sent down!** Because Jesus is Lord seated on the throne, He now pours out His Spirit on those who put their trust in Him.

Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear. (Acts 2:38).

On the last and greatest day of the Feast, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him." By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified. (John 7:37-39).

5. United Prayer.

These all with one mind were continually devoting themselves to prayer, along with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers. (Acts 1:14 NASB).

See Acts 4:23-31 for another prayer meeting when God answered by again sending His Spirit.

Notice the characteristics of this prayer meeting:

a. **Unified** prayer.

They did not pray as individuals. They came together in unison, in harmony. They prayed with **“one mind”**. They were in agreement about what they were asking God to do: fulfill His promise and send the Spirit.

b. **Unceasing** prayer.

They prayed “continually”. They used the PUSH method of prayer: P_____ U_____ S_____ H_____

c. **Bold** prayer.

These men and women were desperate for God to move in their midst. They boldly prayed that God would simply do what He had said He would do! (see Hebrews 4:14-16)

d. **Passionate** prayer.

These men and women were not just “saying prayers.” They were pleading with God to move in their midst. They were **pouring out** their hearts to God. (see I Samuel 1:15; Psalm 42:4; 62:8)

- B. The preconditions that were necessary for the coming of the Spirit 2,000 years ago are the very same preconditions that need to be met today if we expect to see God move in revival power.

1. The death and resurrection of Jesus.

Have I trusted in the finished work of Jesus, Lamb of God, on the cross? Until I know my sins are forgiven and I am His child by grace through faith, I have no right to seek anything from Him.

2. Obedience to a Command.

Am I conscious of His voice, telling me to wait? Do I really believe that without Him I can do nothing (John 15:5)? Have I fully understood the implications of refusing to obey God in this area of my life?

3. Faith in a Promise.

No one will be filled with the Spirit until he believes that this is the Father's promise for us! Do I believe this?

4. Jesus exalted as Lord over all.

Although Jesus is already Lord, "yet at present we do not see everything subject to him" (Hebrews 2:8). Is Jesus Lord in my life? Is there any area where I have not yet surrendered my will to His will and given Him full and complete dominion?

5. United Prayer.

It will take more than isolated individuals praying isolated prayers to see a movement of God in our day. God wants His people to come together in unified, heart-felt prayer.

If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land. (II Chronicles 7:14).

TABLE TALK

Look again at the characteristics of the prayer meeting that preceded the coming of the Spirit (pages 7-8).

1. Compare the prayer meeting in Acts 1 with prayer meetings you have attended. Do our prayer meetings resemble those in the early church? If not, why?
2. How do people learn to pray like they did in Acts 1? What would it take to cause us to pray like that?
3. Can we expect to see God move in us and through us in revival power if we don't know how to pray?

The Acts of the Holy Spirit

Jesus Ascends	Holy Spirit Descends	The church is born and the gospel is spread							
I N T R O D U C T I O N	Jerusalem	Judea and Samaria	First Missionary Journey		Second Missionary Journey		Third Missionary Journey		On to Rome
			13 15:35	15:36 18:22	18:23 21:16	21:17 28			
	1:12 7 8 12	The ends of the earth							
	The acts of Peter and associates based in Jerusalem	The acts of Paul and associates based in Antioch							
1:1 - 11	1:12	12	13					28	

Key verse: Acts 1:8