

## Waiting for the Promise of the Father (Acts 1:4-8)

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### Review: Introduction to Acts

#### 1. Answer the "W" Questions: Who? When? Why? What?

##### A. Who wrote it?

- Luke, a Gentile physician, co-laborer and traveler with the apostle Paul.

##### B. When written?

- After the events recorded therein (spans about 25 years).
- Before the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.
- A.D. 60-61

##### C. Why written?

- Part 2 of Luke/Acts.
- A continuation of the purpose of Luke, "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, **that you may know the certainty of those things in which you were instructed.**" (Luke 1:3-4)

##### D. What is the historic span of the events recorded within the book?

- Pentecost (*ca.* A.D. 33).
- Paul's voyage to Rome (*ca.* A.D. 58).
- Spanning approximately 25 years of early church activity.

##### E. What is it about?

- Placed between the gospels and the epistles for a reason.
- Transition: kingdom presentation to Israel now becomes general gospel message to all nations.
- Kingdom presentation focused on Israel
  - "These twelve Jesus sent out and commanded them, saying: 'Do not go into the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter a city of the Samaritans. But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel'" (Matthew 10:5-6)
  - "And behold, a woman of Canaan came from that region and cried out to Him, saying, 'Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David! My daughter is severely demon-possessed.' But He answered her not a word. And His disciples came and urged Him, saying, 'Send her away, for she cries out

after us.’ But He answered and said, ‘I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.’” (Matthew [15:22-24](#))

- This focus, found in the gospels, is also connected with the question of the apostles concerning the restoration of the kingdom to Israel found in verse 6 of our passage — but more on that next time.
- Global evangelization
  - “And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, ‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.’ Amen.” (Matthew [28:18-20](#))

## Today's passage (Acts [1:4-9](#))

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; for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.’ Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, ‘Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?’ And He said to them, ‘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.’<sup>1</sup>

## Two sessions on this passage due to its importance.

1. Today: focus on the historical uniqueness of the Church, the Body of Christ.
2. Next time: focus on the continued expectations of the disciples concerning the restoration of the kingdom to Israel (v. 6).

## Wait for the Promise of the Father

1. **Prerequisite for global evangelization: ‘On your mark . . . get set . . . WAIT!’**
2. **Apparently lacking power until the Holy Spirit “has come upon you” (v. 8).**
3. **The need of the new ministry of the Spirit for effective evangelization.**
4. **The coming new ministry of the Spirit is associated with a shift in the program of God — a shift having to do with the Great Commission.**

“you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth” (Acts [1:8](#))

- This could be considered the theme verse for the book of Acts. Consider the verse in

three parts:

1. Next to *Jerusalem and Judea* write [Acts 2, Jews].
2. Next to *Samaria* write [Acts 8, Samaritans].
3. Next to *end of the earth* write [Acts 10, Gentiles].

## What is this “Promise of the Father?”

### 1. Old Testament Basis

#### A. Moses and the seventy elders (Num. 11:24-28).

- God took the Spirit which was upon Moses and placed it on seventy elders.
- Two elders were not present at the tabernacle, but prophesied in the camp.
- Joshua was concerned that they not do so since they were absent.
- Moses responds, “Are you zealous for my sake? Oh, that all the Lord’s people were prophets and that the Lord would put His Spirit upon them!” (Num. 11:28)
- Moses’ desire was that God would *put His spirit upon people*.

#### B. Prophecy of Isaiah (Isa. 44:1-4)

“Yet hear now, O Jacob My servant, And Israel whom I have chosen. Thus says the LORD who made you And formed you from the womb, who will help you: ‘Fear not, O Jacob My servant; And you, Jeshurun, whom I have chosen. For I will pour water on him who is thirsty, And floods on the dry ground; *I will pour My Spirit on your descendants, And My blessing on your offspring;* They will spring up among the grass Like willows by the watercourses.’” (Isaiah 44:1-4)

#### C. OT: Spirit being poured out upon people, which happened from time-to-time.

### 2. Jesus’ words in Acts also gives us hints regarding the Promise.

- Jesus identified the promise as something: “which you have heard from me.”
- The promise pertains to baptism with the Holy Spirit: “John truly baptized [past tense] with *water*, but you shall be [future tense] baptized with *the Holy Spirit*.”

## Which you have heard from Me

### 1. Luke 11:11-13

“If a son asks for bread *from any father* among you, will he give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent instead of a fish? Or if he asks for an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your *heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!*” (Luke 11:11-13)

- Asking the Father for the Holy Spirit.
- This is the promise of [from] the Father.
- Context: this is prior to Pentecost.

## 2. Promises in the upper room

### A. Another (comparable) Helper

“*And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever—the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you. A little while longer and the world will see Me no more, but you will see Me. Because I live, you will live also. At that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you.*” (John [14:16-20](#))

#### I. Sent by the *Father*

#### II. Change in location

- He dwells [present tense] *with* you
- Will be [future tense] *in* you
- In the original, the spacial relation of the Helper is emphasized by appearing first in the phrase: *παρ’ ὑμῖν μένει καὶ ἐν ὑμῖν ἔσται* [*par hymin menei kai en hymin estai*], “*alongside you all He is abiding and in you all He shall be*”

#### III. A substitute during Jesus’ absence

- “I will not leave you orphans”, *ὀφθαλμῶν* [*ophanous*]: *abandoned, helpless, unprotected ones*
- “I will come to you”
- The departure of Jesus in one form (the literal body of Christ)
- The arrival of Jesus in another form (the spiritual body of Christ)
- NOTE: This does not happen over and over throughout the church age!

### B. Can’t come until Jesus departs

“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.*” (John [16:7](#))

#### I. The helper has *not yet come* at the time of the upper room!

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## A new ministry of the Spirit

## 1. Spirit has always ministered on Earth

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.” (Genesis [1:1-2](#))

## 2. John predicts this new ministry

“On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. “He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.” But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him *would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.*” (John [7:37-39](#))

- This new ministry of the Spirit was dependent upon the glorification of Jesus
- It never occurred in the Old Testament nor during the gospels
- As we shall see: it began in history on the day of Pentecost
- This is an important transition which believers must grasp!
- John [7:37-39](#) is the first of two important “safety-net” verses we’ll touch on today.

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## John baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit

### 1. John the baptizer vs. Jesus the baptizer

- “Then Jerusalem, all Judea, and all the region around the Jordan went out to him and were baptized by him in the Jordan, confessing their sins. But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, ‘Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, and do not think to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones. And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather His wheat into the barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.’” (Matthew [3:5-12](#))
- Different baptisms: water (by John), Holy Spirit and fire (Jesus)
- Holy Spirit - those who repent, exercising faith in God
- Fire - those who do not
  - Pharisees and Sadducees . . . “brood of vipers!”
  - Flee from the wrath to come
  - Barren trees cut down and thrown into the *fire*
  - Threshing floor - speaks of judgment/separation
  - Chaff is burnt with unquenchable *fire*
- The importance of context!

- Two baptisms by Jesus: either Holy Spirit or fire<sup>2</sup>

## 2. Peter connects Spirit baptism with the Father's promise on the Day of Pentecost

- “Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.’ Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, ‘Men and brethren, what shall we do?’ Then Peter said to them, ‘Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and *you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit*. For *the promise* is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.’” (Acts 2:36-39)
- Two baptisms in this verse: physical baptism (water) and spiritual baptism (receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit)
- Mentions “the promise”
- Reference to the previously-mentioned prediction of Joel (Joel 2:28-29).<sup>3</sup>
- “But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: ‘And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, That *I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh*; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your young men shall see visions, Your old men shall dream dreams.’” (Acts 2:16-17)

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## Final words prior to His departure

### 1. In verse 9 (next time), Jesus ascends to the Father no more to be seen on earth

- The (literal) body of Christ is removed from the earth
- A change of form of the body of Christ from the literal, physical, body of Jesus to the personal, spiritual indwelling of all believers by the Spirit of Jesus (John 14:17; Rom. 8:9-10).

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## How do believers *before* Pentecost differ from believers *after* Pentecost?<sup>4</sup>

### 1. Before Pentecost

1. Spirit *poured upon, fills* ( Num. 24:2; Jdg. 3:10; 6:34; 1S. 10:6; 19:20; 2Chr. 15:1; 20:14; Luke 1:67).
2. Spiritual endowment was temporary: the Spirit could depart (1S. 16:13-14; Ps. 51:11).

### 2. After Pentecost

1. Spirit *baptism* - a new ministry of the Spirit.
2. Spiritual immersion which results in *indwelling*.
3. Spiritual immersion which results in *permanence*—sealing. (John 14:16; 2Cor. 1:22; Eph. 1:13.)

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## Guiding "safety net" passages for interpreting Acts

## 1. Scripture interprets scripture - provides a 'safety net' much like trapeze artists.

## 2. Two key concepts to underline in our study of Acts:

### A. **FIRST: Acts records a unique, historical transition marking the start of the Church.**

- “On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, ‘If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’ But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him *would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.*” (John [7:37-39](#))
- The ones waiting in Jerusalem are in a context *prior* to the coming of the Spirit.
- We live in a historical context *after* the coming of the Spirit.
- Experiences and events connected with the arrival of the Spirit are not to be sought (or found) in our age.

### B. **SECOND: Spirit Baptism *defines* membership in the Body of Christ.**

- **1 Corinthians 12:12-13**, “For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. For *by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body*—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit.”
- Paul equates Spirit baptism with the means by which individuals are joined to Christ.
- Scripture tells us that the body of Christ == the Church
  - “And He [God] put all things under His [Jesus] feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to *the church, which is His body*, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.” (Ephesians [1:22-23](#))
  - “And He is the head of *the body, the church*, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.” (Colossians [1:18](#))

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## Application

1. The importance of understanding the uniqueness of the body of Christ, the Church
  - A new spiritual organism which never existed prior to Pentecost.
  - Having been established in the events of the book of Acts, the body of Christ is not being reestablished repeatedly.
  - Since the body of Christ is, by definition, the Church — the Church never existed in the Old Testament.<sup>5</sup>
2. The importance of understanding the uniqueness of this age, the Church age
  - Understanding who we are in Christ: our unique relationship to the Holy Spirit. We

occupy a position and function which is historically unique: not existing or revealed in the Old Testament. Among the saints of all ages, we alone are His body and joined to Him as His Bride.

- Understanding the rapture: an appreciation of the unique ministry of the Spirit in this age.
- In a similar way to how the Spirit ministered on earth prior to Pentecost, yet began a new ministry on the Day of Pentecost, so too will the Spirit continue to minister on earth after ending His present baptizing ministry at the removal of the Church, the Body of Christ, at the rapture.

### 3. The importance of understanding the context of events related in the book of Acts

- The promise of the Father was a historically new ministry of the Spirit connected with the departure of Jesus.
- Jesus is not departing over and over: the manifestations associated with the initial coming of the Spirit are not to be found today because the Spirit *has already come*.
- Baptism by the Holy Spirit *defines* the body of Christ and is not something to be sought as a second experience after salvation.

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#### Endnotes:

1. [NKJV, Acts 1:4-8](#)
2. Compare with Luke [3:16-17](#).
3. "The promise (hê epangelia). The promise made by Jesus (Acts [1:4](#)) and foretold by Joel (verse Acts [2:18](#))." [Ref-0546, Acts 2:18](#)
4. For a helpful chart summarizing differences between believers on opposite sides of the Day of Pentecost, see [Does Dispensationalism Teach Two Ways of Salvation?](#)<sup>c</sup>.
5. In Acts [7:38](#), Steven refers to the 'church [ecclesia] in the wilderness' (KJV). The term [ἐκκλησία](#) [*ekklesia*] is not a technical term for the Church. It is a generic term which describes a gathering of individuals. In some settings, it describes a gathering of unbelievers (Acts [19:32,39,41](#); Heb. [2:12](#)). In those settings, it is better translated as *congregation* which the NKJV translators favored in Acts [7:38](#).

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#### Sources:

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**Ref-** Robertson, A. T., *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1933).

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**Links Mentioned Above**

a - See <http://www.spiritandtruth.org/id/tg.htm>.

b - See <http://www.spiritandtruth.org>.

c - See <http://www.spiritandtruth.org/teaching/documents/articles/index.htm#4>.