

THE JOURNEY BEGINS

(Acts 1 and 2:1-41)

Sermon Date: 11 April 2010

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(Note: underlined words designate fill-in-the-blanks on Eagle Sheet)

I. INTRO: The Book of Acts

- a. The book of Acts was written by Luke, a doctor and a Gentile. Acts is a sequel to Luke's Gospel.
- b. The book is written to Theophilus, a name meaning "one who loves God." Was Theophilus an individual or a symbolic name for all who love God? Was he a patron (major donor!) who financed Luke's writing? Was he a Roman acquaintance who was interested to learn more about this new Christian faith? Those are all possibilities.
- c. Luke probably wrote the book of Acts sometime between 63 and 70 AD, just 30-40 years after Jesus walked this earth.
- d. Part 1 (Chapters 1-12) talk about the establishment and expansion of the Church and the ministry of Peter,
- e. Part 2 (Chapters 13-28) is about the conversion and missionary journeys of Paul.
- f. Acts 29 - and this is a shameless plug - a TV show produced by CBN Siam (also the ongoing story of the Church through the ages!)

II. CHAPTER 1: Jesus' Ascension - Disciples Await the promised Gift (Read Acts 1:1-11)

- a. Acts 1:1-11 (Key verses: 4 and 8)
 - i. Luke begins his book referring to his previous book where he wrote about all that Jesus BEGAN to do and to teach. He continued to teach about the Kingdom of God after His resurrection. Key word is BEGAN! Because the doing and teaching continue through all those who believe - all of US. While on earth, Jesus was (intentionally) limited to his physical body and the small geographical area of ancient Israel. When he ascended to heaven, his Spirit was poured out on all of us so we could go into all the world. Acts tells about what Jesus continued to do and teach through the church.
 - ii. Before Jesus ascended into heaven, he told the disciples to WAIT for the promised Gift from the Father: that gift was the baptism of the Holy Spirit. They needed to be EMPOWERED and EQUIPPED to fulfill the Great Commission.
 - iii. It's interesting to note the disciples were still a bit "๓๓" (confused) about Jesus plan - their vision was so much more

narrow than God's plan. They were still asking if this was the time that the Lord would restore the kingdom to Israel...but God's plan was to restore the whole world THROUGH Israel! How often do we think "small" when God wants us to think BIG?! Note that Jesus didn't answer their question, and he doesn't always answer ours because— from God's perspective—they may not make sense. Jesus gently redirected them to what they needed to know.

- iv. Their confusion about what came next was also evident as they gazed upward after Jesus ascended to heaven. They weren't really sure what would come next or what the awaited Gift would mean....

b. Acts 1:12-26

- i. ...but WAIT they did. They WAITED TOGETHER. And they PRAYED TOGETHER. Obedience and Unity were the characteristics of this small group of 120 believers.
- ii. They also carried on with the business at hand, choosing a replacement for Judas. They appointed Matthias to take Judas' place. This was done in unity and prayer. Good leadership lesson here: The disciples chose two people based on their qualifications (with Jesus from his baptism by John through the ascension; first hand witnesses) ... and then they left the final decision to God, the only One who knows peoples' hearts. Note: God doesn't just tell us what to do as though we were robots; he allows us to participate in decision making!
- iii. Key Points: They WAITED and they PRAYED..TOGETHER in UNITY & OBEDIENCE. *Application: Do we wait for the leading/filling/guiding of the Holy Spirit or do we rush ahead on our own strength?

III. **CHAPTER 2: The Day of Pentecost, The Baptism of the Holy Spirit and Peter's Powerful Sermon! (Read Acts 2:1-6, 12-13)**

- a. Pentecost: One of 3 big yearly festivals that drew crowds from many places to Jerusalem. Also called the Feast of Weeks, it was a celebration of thanksgiving to God for the harvest. The Jews also celebrated the giving of the Law (10 Commandments) on this date because that was 50 days after the Exodus. Pentecost is 50 days after Passover. This particular Pentecost was 50 days after the Resurrection! And it was the Birthday of the Church...a time when the church reaped a huge harvest of new believers 25 times their number! (This year, Pentecost Sunday is May 23rd).
- b. The Baptism of the Holy Spirit happened SUDDENLY...The Spirit of God came as a Mighty Wind and Tongues of Fire. Two images/symbols of God. Power and Passion. Uncontrollable.

Scary?! Mysterious! Messy? Untamed ("Aslan is not a tame lion!")
Probably not what they expected! But this was how God gave birth to the Church!! How the church was established. Tongues of fire: speech/communication, purifying, igniting (passion); Wind: mystery of God's presence; His movement and power...we can't control but it's the air that moves us.

- c. The Baptism of the Holy Spirit was the Fulfillment of Prophecy:
 - i. John the Baptist (Luke 3:16 "He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.")
 - ii. OT Prophet Joel (Joel 2:28-29 "And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days.")
- d. Holy Spirit Baptism is both crucial and controversial! The church cannot be the church without it...but we can't seem to agree on just what/when/how it happens. But we are all Pentecostal Christians - The Church's DNA is Pentecostal!
 - i. Some believe Baptism in the Holy Spirit happens immediately when we are first born again. All Christians do agree that the Holy Spirit dwells in every believer.
 - ii. Some believe it is a "second blessing" .. separate from salvation. Some believe the evidence is speaking in tongues; some don't.
 - iii. Some believe in ongoing filling of the Spirit. Not just once, but many times..
 - iv. C.S. Lewis, when he came to Christ as a student at Cambridge, described his experience this way: "*There was just the room, with its shabby furniture and the fire burning in the grate, and the red shaded lamp on the table. But the room was filled by a presence that in a strange way was both about me and within me like a light or warmth. I was overwhelmingly possessed by someone who was not myself. And yet, I felt more myself than ever before. I was filled with intense happiness and almost unbearable joy as I had never known before or never known since. And overall, there was a deep sense of peace and security and certainty.*"
 - v. My own experience was similar to C.S. Lewis' experience when I first received the baptism of the Holy Spirit. I remember joy and warmth, driving in my car from Quakertown to Morrisville (PA). First time I prayed for someone's healing; a small thing perhaps but I've never forgotten. My sister had a headache. We prayed and God healed her. There have been many other "fillings" and

experiences since then...healing, special words of knowledge or direction that were confirmed. Another recent experience happened just the week before last. Our production team were ready to shoot 5 episodes of FROM HEART TO HEART, including the Easter episode. We always pray but I think this time we prayed more intentionally for the Holy Spirit to be poured out on our program hosts. It was amazing to me how bold and powerful their presentation, ministry and praying were that day! And on the way home I felt so full of joy (and wondered why since I had been very sad about the death of my cat)...then I realized that the Holy Spirit had visited us that day!

- vi. To me there are several important points to remember, no matter where you stand...
 1. The Bible says that we-the Church-have become the Temple of the Holy Spirit. When Jesus died the curtain in the Jerusalem temple was torn in two. N.T. Wright says in his book SIMPLY CHRISTIAN, *"Somehow, God's dimension and our dimension - heaven and earth - overlap and interlock"* (in the Spirit). *"..those in whom the Spirit comes to live are God's new Temple. They are, individually and corporately, places where heaven and earth meet."* He also says, and I agree, that this fact *"ought to make us shiver in our shoes."*
 2. What you do/how you live a life empowered by the Baptism of the Holy Spirit is more important than how you receive the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. (just like your marriage is more important than how you get married...big wedding, small wedding, elopement). In truth, we are ill-equipped to do anything in our own strength;
 3. We should not be afraid of the Holy Spirit. Sometimes we do because we are afraid of being "out of control" or looking "undignified" ... The Holy Spirit is a Gift to be received with joy and gladness.
 4. Don't quench or limit the work of the Holy Spirit. God works in many different ways, uniquely in each of our lives. Allow Him to work in our own lives and the lives of others the way He chooses. He may surprise you and do something different from your expectations! He might come as a violent wind or a gentle breeze... If a flame sits on top of you...don't blow it out!

5. Bottom line (for me...in an organization, CBN, much like our diverse congregation): Be open to what the Holy Spirit wants to do in your life! And listen to Him. If we are living with an intentional awareness we will hear Him speak! We **MUST** have the ENERGY, the EQUIPPING and the EMPOWERMENT of the Holy Spirit in order to "Embrace our World with the Heart of God."
- e. Peter's Powerful Sermon: WOW!! (Read Acts 2: 22-24, 36-41)
 - i. WOW!! Is this the same man who, less than two months earlier, denied Christ 3 times? This impetuous apostle who often spoke or acted before thinking? Obviously there was a big change in his life!
 - ii. WOW!! Everyone is hearing the Gospel in their own language. This is the first International Evangelistic Event and it bore much fruit. A great start to going into all the world, preaching the Gospel to all nations!
 - iii. WOW!! Peter was very bold. His Gospel message was powerful, clear and fruitful.
 - iv. WOW!! The response was incredible. There were more than 3,000 people who came to the Lord that day. The community of believers - THE CHURCH - grew to 25 times their original number in one day. From 120 to more than 3,000 people!! What did that mean for the community? ...find out next week!

IV. **CONCLUSION. ACTS 29: THE JOURNEY CONTINUES** (Read Acts 1:8 - key verse for the book of Acts)

- a. These first 2 chapters of the book of Acts represent a MAJOR PARADIGM SHIFT for the people of God. There is so much information here that it is impossible to do it justice in one sermon! Please go back and read and re-read these chapters and ask God to show you what He has for you.
- b. The Baptism of the Holy Spirit: Don't leave home without it! To embrace our world with the Heart of God we **MUST** rely on the baptism and filling of the Holy Spirit. If we try to serve the Lord in our own strength it will lead to arrogance or burnout, or both! Don't be afraid, don't quench, be ready to be surprised (in a good way!) and always be open to the work of the Holy Spirit in your life.