

Studies in the Book of Acts – Part 2

“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.’”** – Acts 1.4-8.

In our last study, Luke reminded brother Theophilus, and us as modern readers, of some of the principle truths discussed and established in his **“former account”** – the Gospel of Luke. We were reminded that Jesus of Nazareth spent his earthly ministry **doing and teaching** wonderful things by the power of the Holy Spirit, until He suffered, died, rose again, proved His resurrection to the apostles whom He had chosen and gave them commands to conquest the world and increase His kingdom by preaching the gospel and making disciples of every creature in all nations who would believe in Him, repent, be baptized for the remission of sins and follow His teachings. Luke said, that Jesus spent 40 days on earth between his resurrection and the time that he was **“taken up”** into heaven, and during these days he appeared to the apostles and spoke to them **“the things concerning the Kingdom of God.”** Now, in verses 4-8, we read about two of these meetings and see some of the things Jesus shared and spoke: **“And being assembled together with them** [the original language indicates that they were eating together, so this would have been one of the many occasions when Jesus was demonstrating to the Apostles that he was not a ghost or a hallucination, but a real living person with a flesh and

bone body], **He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem...**" The city of Jerusalem was a special and sacred place to the Children of God under the Old System, and not only because it housed the temple and served as the capitol of the United Empire in the glory days of the Davidic Kings, but it had great significance in the old prophecies of the Christ and *His Kingdom*.

Psalm 48.1-3 says, "**Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in His holy mountain. Beautiful in elevation, the joy of the whole earth, is Mount Zion [this is another name for Jerusalem] on the sides of the north, the city of the great King. God is in her palaces; He is known as her refuge.**"

In **Psalm 2.1-6** the Bible says, "**Why do the nations rage, and the people plot a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD and against His Anointed, saying, 'Let us break Their bonds in pieces and cast away Their cords from us.'** He who sits in the heavens shall laugh; the LORD shall hold them in derision. Then He shall speak to them in His wrath, and distress them in His deep displeasure: **'Yet I have set My King on My holy hill of Zion [that is, Jerusalem].'**"

Another passage from Psalm 132.13-18: "**For the LORD has chosen Zion [Jerusalem]; He has desired it for His dwelling place: 'This is My resting place forever; Here I will dwell, for I have desired it. I will abundantly bless her provision; I will satisfy her poor with bread. I will also clothe her priests with salvation, and her saints shall shout aloud for joy. There I will make the horn of David grow; I will prepare a lamp for My Anointed. His enemies I will clothe with shame, but upon Himself His crown shall flourish.'**"

Finally, Isaiah 2.1-3: "**The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. Now it shall come to pass in the last days that the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; And all**

nations shall flow to it. Many people shall come and say, ‘Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths.’ For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.”

In modern religion, these passages, and others like them are misunderstood to mean that God has special plans for Jerusalem and the land of Israel that are not yet accomplished. But if we would hear the words of Jesus, I think we would not look to the future for Jerusalem’s significant place in the plan of God. Now 2000 years ago, Jesus said to His apostles, “Do not depart from Jerusalem!” **Luke** 24.46-49 says it this way: **“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, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And you are witnesses of these things. 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.”**” The prophets said that God was going to establish the reign and rule of Christ in Mount Zion – in Jerusalem – and here Jesus, as he speaks to the Apostles about the “things concerning the Kingdom of God” says, “tarry in the city of Jerusalem” – “do not depart from Jerusalem” because it is necessary that repentance and remission of sins be preached in the name of Christ to all nations “beginning at Jerusalem” – it doesn’t seem that Jesus considered God’s fulfillment of the prophecies concerning Jerusalem to be something “far off” even in our future today! It seems that Jesus considered that the great things God had long promised to do in Jerusalem were just about to happen back then! So, Jesus, **“commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, ‘which,’ He said, ‘you have heard from Me...”** What is the Promise of the Father? According to Jesus, it is something that He told the Apostles about, and in the next few verses we get the idea that had something to do with the Holy Spirit. I believe the Apostles would have been immediately reminded of some statements Jesus made to them after the Passover meal and the institution of the Lord’s Supper, on the

night when He was betrayed. **John** 13.33, Jesus told the apostles that He was going to “**leave them**” and then He said, “**Where I am going, you cannot come.**” Of course, we know that Jesus was prophesying about His impending death and his ascension into heaven after He was raised from the dead, but He comforted the apostles with this message:

“If you love Me, keep My commandments. 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” (**John** 14.15-18)

Then in verses 25-26: “**These things I have spoken to you while being present with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.**”

Again, **John** 15.26-27: “**But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me. And you also will bear witness, because you have been with Me from the beginning.**”

Finally, **John** 16.1-15: “**These things I have spoken to you, that you should not be made to stumble. They will put you out of the synagogues; yes, the time is coming that whoever kills you will think that he offers God service. And these things they will do to you because they have not known the Father nor Me. But these things I have told you, that when the time comes, you may remember that I told you of them. And these things I did not say to you at the beginning, because I was with you. But now I go away to Him who sent Me, and none of you asks Me, ‘Where are You going?’ But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart. **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. And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they do not believe in Me; of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more; of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged. I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. **However**, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you. All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare it to you.”

I want to point out several things from these **passages**: 1) Jesus, several times, declared that “the Father” was going to send the Holy Spirit to the Apostles in Jesus’ name. He said that the Holy Spirit “proceeds from the Father” – so I think we are right in connecting these statements with “**the Promise of the Father**” mentioned in Acts 1.4. 2) According to Jesus, the Holy Spirit is a person. Jesus calls the Spirit “He” not “it” and describes the Spirit as doing things that require intelligence and personality like speaking, leading, guiding, declaring, assisting – in another place we learn that it possible to “**grieve the Holy Spirit.**” So the Holy Spirit is not merely an energy, or a power, or a feeling, or a disposition – the Holy Spirit is a person, just like God the Father and Jesus Christ our Lord. 3) the Holy Spirit is a part of the Godhead. In these statements, Jesus describes the Holy Spirit as being in co-operation with He and the Father. Of course, in Matthew’s account of the Great Commission, Jesus stated that baptism is “into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” And all through the Bible, the Holy Spirit is described as possessing all the attributes and doing all the works of Deity. 4) the Holy Spirit, like Jesus, has taken a subordinate role for our benefit in the scheme of redemption. I do not understand all of this, and I will not speak beyond what I know, but the Bible tells us that Jesus and the Holy Spirit, who in their nature are just like God the Father – with the same knowledge and the same abilities – have entered into a subordinate role for us! “**He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears, He will**

speak...” They have done this to work out our salvation! Because of our sin and God’s marvelous grace! And even if we do not understand all of the complexities of that idea, it should cause us to joyfully exclaim: “Praise God from whom all blessings flow! Praise Him all creatures here below! Praise Him above ye heavenly host! Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost!”

5) the Promise of the Father was particularly for the Apostles, to help them in their special ministry. In fact, you will note that in this role, the Spirit is called “the Helper” – some translations say, “the assistant” – the Old KJV says “comforter” for the modern understanding, Helper is a much better translation. Literally, the word is Paraclete and it can mean an advocate or an intercessor, someone who is called alongside to aid in a difficult task or situation. It is true that all Christians often need a helper! And the Bible says that in our weakness and sin, when we fail and fall short, **“we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous”** (1 John 2.1). That word *advocate*, in Greek, is the same word. So, in our sin, Jesus is our helper. The Psalmist said, **“God is our refuge and strength, A very present [abundantly available] help in [times of need and] trouble”** (Psalm 46.1). But in the context of Jesus’ discussion in John 14-16, He was speaking to the Apostles about their mission and promising a special help to them, from the Holy Spirit. I believe it is very important for us to realize this, because many of the things Jesus says the Spirit would do for the Apostles are *not* general blessings for all Christians – the Spirit does not, and will not do these things for you and me, in fact it would not be possible! For **example**, in John 14.26, Jesus said, **“But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.”** Jesus tells the Apostles that the Holy Spirit would help them to perfectly remember everything Jesus said to them during the time they spent together. That was important because they were going to be writing it down, for everyone else, in the Bible! But you see that promise cannot apply to me, because Jesus and I have never had a conversation like that. I never knew Him on earth or actually heard Him speak! Jesus tells the Apostles that they are going to be persecuted, and the Spirit will be present with them in those dark hours to assist them in knowing what to say on God’s behalf. He said the same thing to them in

Matthew 10.17-20: “**But beware of men, for they will deliver you up to councils and scourge you in their synagogues. You will be brought before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles. But when they deliver you up, do not worry about how or what you should speak. For it will be given to you in that hour what you should speak; for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you.**” This was a promise for the Apostles but not for me or you or Christians in general! And as we study further in Acts, we’ll find that they average Christian in the early Church did not expect the Holy Spirit to directly teach or guide him or her into all truth, but the Christians would go to the Apostles, and “**continue steadfastly in the apostles’ teaching**” to learn to the will of God, because the Apostles received the special help of the Holy Spirit in this way as “the Promise of the Father.” Jesus told them to wait in Jerusalem for the Promise of the Father, “**for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now**” (Acts 1.5). We won’t dwell on these words for the time being. Jesus told the Apostles that the “**baptism with [or literally “in”] the Holy Spirit**” would happen in “**not many days**” and when we get to the event as it is recorded in the Book of Acts we will come back and re-examine these words, but I will say that I don’t think the baptism in the Holy Spirit is the same thing as the Promise of the Father, but they are going to happen together, simultaneously, and we will explore that more later. As you can imagine, these announcements would make the Apostles anxious, they know that all these wonderful things are about to happen, soon, in not many days, “**Therefore,**” verse 6 says, “**when they had come together [again, presumably a few days later], they asked Him, saying, ‘Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?’**” I want to say something about this question, because for many years I accused the Apostles in this place of dullness and of having an incorrect understanding of the nature of the Kingdom of God. I thought that the statement “restore the kingdom to Israel” meant that they thought the kingdom of Christ would be physical and earthly and perhaps something like what people today imagine about the “Millennium,” and many great Bible scholars understand that to be the case, they accuse the Apostles of asking an ignorant question. But maybe

not! In fact, I think likely not! The idea of the restoration of the kingdom to Israel comes from the Old Testament prophets. We already noted, from some Prophetic passages the great things God had formerly said about His intentions for Jerusalem and the royal line of King David. But after Solomon, the glory of the Israelite Empire faded, and the People of God became weak and eventually they were conquered, captivated, enslaved and utterly humiliated by unbelieving and wicked enemies. All through this time, the Prophets foretold that glory was coming **back** – there would be a time a reformation (Hebrews 9.10), regeneration (Matthew 19.28), restoration (Isaiah 49.6)! Listen to **this** passage from Zechariah 8.20-23: **“Thus says the LORD of hosts: ‘Peoples shall yet come, inhabitants of many cities; The inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, “Let us continue to go and pray before the LORD, and seek the LORD of hosts. I myself will go also.” Yes, many peoples and strong nations shall come to seek the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the LORD.’ Thus says the LORD of hosts: ‘In those days ten men from every language of the nations shall grasp the sleeve of a Jewish man, saying, “Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.””**” Listen to **the** words of the Angel Gabriel to Joseph concerning Jesus, **“He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end”** (Luke 1.32-33). Listen to **the** words of Jesus Himself in Matthew 19.28: **“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.”** So the language of the Apostles was very scriptural, but as we read through the New Testament, we learn that the restored **“Israel”** would not be ethnic, but spiritual. The new Jew could be from any nationality – the Apostle Paul calls the church of **Christ**, **“the Israel of God”** (Galatians 6.16). The **“House of Jacob”** would not be a kingdom like those of **“this world”** (John 18.36), it would be a colony of heaven on earth (Matthew 6.10). The **“throne of David”** would not be a physical chair in Jerusalem, but it would be a symbol of authority over the People of God. And I think it is likely that the Apostles

understood that by this time, at least in some respect, because when they ask this question, Jesus does not respond as He did to the doubting disciples on the Emmaus Road, “Oh foolish ones! And slow of heart to believe all that the prophets had spoken!” Instead, **“He said to them, ‘It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority.’**” Remember, there question was not about what the Kingdom was, but when the kingdom would come. They were asking, “Is it today? Is it right now?” And Jesus told them that God would not give them a time, but He would give them a sign! And that will be meaningful many years later. **“But you shall receive power** [the authority and the Helper to accomplish your mission] **when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me** [that is witnesses of the resurrection, the foundation of gospel faith, and of the heavenly truths that the Holy Spirit would reveal to them] **in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end** [or the remotest parts] **of the earth** [Here Jesus confirms our understanding of the Kingdom – it is not for the ethnic Jews only. It is to begin in Jerusalem and extend into the whole world].” I think that the minds of the apostles must have **rushed** back to moment when Jesus, just before climbing up the mountain to be transfigured and meet with Moses and Elijah, said, **“Assuredly, I say to you that there are some standing here who will not taste death till they see the kingdom of God present with power”** (Mark 9.1). And listen carefully – if the Kingdom of God was present in their day, I know that it is present in the world today, because the **Prophet** Daniel said, “[in those days] **the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms** [do you hear that? It will consume all kingdoms – it will spread to the uttermost parts of the earth], **and it shall stand forever”** (Daniel 2.44).