

# OpenTheo

## Acts 1:1 - 1:8



### Acts - Steve Gregg

The book of Acts is a historical account that continues Jesus' teachings on Earth through the Church. The Holy Spirit, who was present in Jesus' earthly ministry, guides and empowers the Church according to Acts. The passage emphasizes the importance of perseverance in prayer and waiting on God's timing for answering prayers, while also discussing the concept of the kingdom of God and the distinction between water baptism and Holy Spirit baptism. Steve Gregg describes this transitional period in which the disciples of Jesus had to get used to not always physically seeing him, and the faithful remnant of Jews and Gentiles who responded to the call to believe were given the Great Commission to be witnesses of Christ's kingship and lordship to the ends of the earth.

### Transcript

We turn to Acts chapter 1, and we'll start this great book, the only book in the Bible that gives us a historical account of events after the time of the Gospels. Of course, the Gospels take us, in some cases, from the birth of Jesus. Matthew and Luke give us birth narratives of Jesus.

Mark and John do not. But they all take us up through the resurrection of Jesus, and in some cases, his ascension as well. Some of the Gospels record his ascension, some do not.

But the book of Acts, being a sequel to the book of Luke, written by the same author, carries on the narrative from where the book of Luke left off. And the book of Luke, of course, gave not only the birth narratives of Jesus, but the whole Gospel account up to the resurrection. Now, Acts 1 is going to overlap that by repeating the ascension of Christ and his ministry among his disciples after his resurrection.

But it's going to go beyond that to some of the earliest actions of the Church after his departure. At the beginning, Luke says, "...the former account I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, until the day in which he was taken up, after he through the Holy Spirit had given commandments to the apostles whom he had chosen, to whom he had also presented himself alive after his sufferings, by many

infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God." Now, this is just an introductory, this is introductory to the beginning of the Apostles' ministry and the end of Jesus' ministry. But he tells us something about this being a sequel to his earlier work.

His first words in verse 1 are, "...the former account I made, O Theophilus." Now, Theophilus is also the person to whom the book of Luke was addressed. If you look at Luke chapter 1 and verse 3, the author Luke addresses his reader as Most Noble Theophilus. Now, Most Noble Theophilus is a term that probably referred to some kind of a Roman official.

It's a Greek name, Theophilus. It means lover of God. And most noble was, or most honorable, is the way that they would address somebody who was a government official.

For example, Paul, when he was speaking to Felix, or Festus, the governors of the region where he was in Palestine, he called him Most Noble Festus, or whatever. This is a way to address somebody who's got an official title. So, Luke was addressed to Most Noble Theophilus.

However, when he writes the book of Acts, he simply says, O Theophilus. Much more familiar, much less formal. And there is a theory that perhaps, as a result of reading the book of Luke, Theophilus became a Christian.

That he was some government official. No one knows who he really was, but one theory is that he might have been a government official who was charged with looking into Paul's case, since these works were written while Paul was in prison, awaiting trial in Rome. And therefore, perhaps, Theophilus was somebody who had been assigned to investigate the case, to present some kind of brief to Nero before the prisoner was heard.

Something like that. So that Luke may have written to him for that reason. We don't know.

But it's interesting that he now addresses Theophilus more casually. He doesn't use the expression Most Noble Theophilus. He says, O Theophilus, like he would to any friend or brother.

And that may be because Theophilus had become a believer after reading the book of Luke, which is the first account he refers to here in the opening line. And this is now the second account. Luke wrote two works, or perhaps one work in two parts.

The part that leads us up to the end of the story of Jesus, and then the one that leads from the end of the story of Jesus on earth, all the way up to Paul's time in Rome, waiting for trial. And that's where the book of Acts will end. Now, it's the same recipient, and Luke mentions a previous work, which obviously was the book of Luke.

So this is a continuation or a sequel to the book of Luke. And he says, in both of these works, he says in verse 1, he recorded all that Jesus began, both to do and to teach. Now, that is in the first account.

He recorded what Jesus began to do and to teach. But it implies that this work is going to say what Jesus continued to do and teach. In fact, he says, the first book, Luke, only recorded what Jesus began to do and teach.

And yet the book takes us all the way through the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ, up to his ascension. And he's implying now this second book continues with what Jesus continued to do and teach. It's not just the beginning of his work, as the first account was, but this is now a continuation of Jesus' work.

And this is how Luke and the early church understood their own behavior. They were to continue the work of Christ. Paul, in particular, who was Luke's travel companion and mentor, had developed in his writings the idea that the church should be seen as the body of Christ.

When I say he developed it, we could say it was just revealed to him by God. But the point is, Paul is the only author in the Bible that speaks of the church as the body of Christ. And this came, no doubt, to Paul by revelation, that Christ, having ascended, has now become the head of a corporate body, and we are his flesh and his bones.

We are his members, his hands and his feet. And so Jesus continues to work on us. Jesus still has a footprint on this planet.

Even though he ascended to heaven, he is now simply the head of a body that transcends heaven and earth. The head is in heaven. Much of the body is right here on earth still.

Though now, as we sit here 2,000 years later, much of the body is in heaven too. The body of Christ, the church of Jesus Christ, is an immortal entity which embodies Christ on earth. And then, of course, when we're done here, we go to heaven.

The family is one family. We shouldn't think of it as every time a generation of Christians dies, there's a new church. It's the same church.

It's a continuing phenomenon. And Luke speaks of it as if the works of the church that he's about to record in this book are the continuing works of Jesus. As the book of Luke was the beginning of what Jesus began to do and teach, this is now the continuing of what Jesus began to do and teach, only through another kind of body.

Jesus was a singular human body when he was here before his ascension, but now he's a body that is big enough to cover the whole world because he has innumerable members all over the world. This is what his implier says that his first book was only what Jesus

began to do and teach. And he says, until the day in which he was taken up, that is how far into the ministry of Jesus his previous work had taken us, until the ascension of Christ.

It says, after he, through the Holy Spirit, had given commandments to the apostles whom he had chosen. Now this phrase, through the Holy Spirit, could modify the activity of teaching or giving instructions or commandments. That is, through the Holy Spirit he gave commandments.

Or, in the Greek it is possible for that phrase, through the Holy Spirit, could modify the last clause, whom he had chosen. That is, whom he had chosen through the Holy Spirit. It's not clear which of these activities, the choosing of the twelve or the commanding of them after his resurrection, which of those are said to have been done through the Holy Spirit.

But the entire ministry of Jesus on earth was done through the Holy Spirit. Do you remember when he went into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil, according to Luke chapter 4, the temptation, well even before the temptation, Jesus was filled with the Holy Spirit at his baptism. Then it says he was led by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted.

And after the temptation it says he returned to Galilee in the power of the Holy Spirit. So Jesus was filled with the Holy Spirit at his baptism. After his temptation he was moving in the power of the Holy Spirit.

And on occasions he mentioned that the things he did were done through the Holy Spirit. For example, in Matthew 12, 28, I believe it is, Jesus said, if I, through the Holy Spirit, cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon me. So he indicated his ministry of casting out demons was through the Holy Spirit.

And later in the book of Acts, in chapter 10, Peter will be telling Cornelius and his household about Jesus' life. And they'll say that he was anointed with the Holy Spirit and he went around doing good and delivering those who were oppressed by the devil, he says. So, this is something we don't maybe hear about as much as we could.

And that is that the ministry of Jesus, subject to his Father while he was on earth, was conducted through the power of the Holy Spirit. And what we're going to see is that before he ascends, he tells his disciples, well, you're going to receive the power of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit's going to come upon you and you'll receive power and you'll be my witnesses.

And he says that in Acts 1.9, which we have not, or 1.8, excuse me, which we will come to shortly. And throughout the book of Acts, we find that, you know, the Holy Spirit is directing. We see that Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, stood up to speak.

Or Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, stood up to speak. Or they prayed for boldness and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit in boldness. Or, you know, Paul and his companions sought to go into Bithynia, but the Holy Spirit forbade them to go.

And they sought to go into Asia, and the Holy Spirit forbade them. Finally, they got a revelation through a dream that they should go to Macedonia before they went there. But it's made clear that the Holy Spirit was directing them, the Holy Spirit was empowering them, and that's what Jesus promised them in Acts 1.8. He'll say, you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you.

It's when the Holy Spirit came upon Jesus at his own baptism that he seems to have begun his spiritual ministry. But Jesus did no miracles before he was baptized and filled with the Spirit. And it would appear from some of these statements that what Jesus did while on earth was done through the power of the Holy Spirit, just as what the Church, his body does, is done through the power of the same Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is still operating. Now, the name of this book, we call it the Acts of the Apostles, but some people think it should be called the Acts of the Holy Spirit done through the Church, because that's a strong emphasis throughout the book of Acts. How the Holy Spirit is guiding, the Holy Spirit is empowering.

And so, in verse 2 here, he either says that the instructions he gave his disciples after he rose from the dead for 40 days were given through the Holy Spirit, or he's saying that he'd originally chosen these men during his earthly ministry, he chose these people through the Holy Spirit. That phrase, through the Holy Spirit, can modify either action, and it wouldn't matter because probably both are true. The important thing is that right from the beginning, Luke mentions the activity of the Holy Spirit in Jesus' life, and then, of course, he's going to have Jesus promising the same to his disciples within a few verses from here.

It says, to whom he also presented himself, that's to his apostles, his disciples, he presented himself alive after his suffering by many infallible proofs. Now, this book is going to be filled with many infallible proofs that the resurrected Jesus was still operating through his spirit in the church. But in the book of Acts, it only is continuing the same kind of thing, the infallible proofs that Jesus is who he said he was.

And specifically after his resurrection, it says he presented himself over a period of 40 days by many infallible proofs. That is, they touched his hands and his feet. Remember Thomas when he first heard that Jesus had risen, he said, I won't believe it, and I just put my fingers in the holes in his hands and put my hand in the hole in his side.

And when Jesus appeared to him, he said, go ahead, put him in there, you'll see, and don't be unbelieving. And Jesus offered others to touch him and see that he was not a spirit, as he said, touch me, feel me. He says, a spirit does not have flesh and bones as

you see me have.

And they saw him on many occasions. There could be no, they couldn't make a mistake. You see, some people might think, well, this story that Jesus rose from the dead, you know, maybe these people were mistaken.

Maybe they're just delirious. Maybe they were just, you know, having a dream or maybe it's, you know, who knows how they, whether they really saw Jesus or not. One person I said, I talked to said, well, maybe they just saw someone in the distance that looked like him.

And they said, oh, we've seen Jesus. He's risen from the dead. It wasn't that way.

He ate food with them afterwards in a small room. In the upper room, he was touched by them. So it looks as this, these are infallible groups.

These are not shaky evidences of the resurrection. Jesus made it very unmistakable that he had in fact risen from the dead. And this happened during 40 days.

There was a period of 40 days from the resurrection to the ascension of Christ. Now, Jesus was crucified at Passover. And on the Jewish festival calendar, 50 days after Passover was the Feast of Pentecost.

Now, the action is really going to begin in this book in chapter 2 on the day of Pentecost. That's 50 days after Jesus' death. But for of those 50 days, 40 of them, Jesus was still appearing to his disciples.

And then just about 10 days before Pentecost, he ascended and departed. And they didn't see him anymore. Now, what's interesting about those 40 days is that he was sometimes with them and sometimes apparently not.

They saw him and didn't see him. He'd come, he'd appear in a room where they were. And he'd talk to them, he'd eat with them.

They'd disappear. He'd be gone. You might remember the men on the road to Emmaus that Luke tells us about in Luke 24.

They walk with him on the road. They don't quite recognize him. Their hearts are burning in them as he expounds the scriptures to them.

They invite him to eat with them. They don't recognize him until he breaks bread. Then suddenly they recognize him and he vanishes.

You know, he's kind of sometimes there and sometimes he's not there. Why was he doing it that way? And how are we to understand this? Was he kind of going to heaven and coming to earth all the time? Well, that's possible, but it's not explained to us. It's

very possible that Jesus, having resurrected from the dead in a glorified body, had abilities in that body that he didn't have in a physical body when he was before he was resurrected.

This wasn't a physical resurrected body, but it was glorified. It's possible that the glorified body might be able to materialize and dematerialize. We're told angels, for example, are spirits, but they materialized at times when they met with Abraham and wrestled with Jacob or whatever.

Of course, that was God materializing, but the point is, spirit beings like God and angels are known in scripture to take on a material form, though they're essentially spirits. They're not material in nature. Jesus said a spirit does not have flesh and bones, as you've seen he had.

And yet, apparently some spiritual beings, at least God, angels can take on a physical form and then apparently abandon that physical form. Jesus in his resurrection might have, in his glorified state, had that quality. He might have been able to materialize or not.

But the thing is, even when he was invisible to them, he was still with them, and he wanted them to know that. Before he finally departed to see him no more, he wanted to get it through their head that he's going to be with them always, even to the end of the age, and that they will always see him. And one way he did that was, for example, on Resurrection Sunday, when Thomas was there and said, I won't believe until I put my finger in the holes in my hands, Jesus was not visibly there.

But eight days later, Jesus appeared to them while Thomas was with them, and he said, Peter, put your finger in my hands and put your hand in my side. The very things that Thomas had said when he thought Jesus wasn't there. I won't believe until I do this, and now Jesus appears to care, I have to do it.

And he made it very clear that he had overheard Thomas say that, that he was actually repeating Thomas' challenge back to him. And this, I think, was in order to say, you know, even though you didn't see me there, I was there. I heard you.

I was just not physically visible in the room, and I can repeat back what you said. And this may be the very reason for these 40 days. It was a transition time for the disciples.

When Jesus, before he died, he had been with them physically all the time for about three years or so. And they were accustomed to seeing him every time they were in his presence. After he ascended, they didn't see him anymore.

But there was a period of time where they kind of sometimes did and sometimes didn't. So I think it was a conditioning time for them to realize that, you know, a time's coming when you won't see me anymore, but during this 40 days, I'm going to kind of be there

and not be there at different times, just so you'll get used to the idea that when you can't see me, I'm still here. Then I will be gone, and you won't see me, but I'll still be here.

I'm with you always, even at the end of the age. So it seemed like those 40 days were transitional, just like the 40 years of the Jews or Israel wandering in the wilderness. They came out of Egypt, and they came out of Egypt, but Egypt didn't come out of them.

They still brought with them idolatry in their hearts and love for the diet of Egypt and things like that. They complained about missing that. And so it took about 40 years for that generation to transition from being more or less culturally Egyptian to being uniquely the people of God.

Similarly, when Jesus rose from the dead, there was 40 years from that point to the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem. Now, the temple of Jerusalem was already obsolete when Jesus died and rose again. No need for the sacrifices.

But the Jewish Christians who lived in Jerusalem didn't quite get that. They were sort of like the Israelites who came out of Egypt. There's a lot of Egypt still in the Israelites in the wilderness.

There's a lot of temple Judaism in the Jerusalem church for a while. They still went to the temple. They still took Nazareth vows that you find in Acts chapter 21.

James, who's heading up the church in Jerusalem decades after the resurrection of Christ, still tells Paul, you know, we have some men here who have to go to the temple and pay their vows. Would you pay it for them? Go there. And so Paul went to the temple and got himself arrested.

But he was there offering the fees for a Nazareth vow, which is an old covenant thing. What I'm saying is the new covenant was established when Jesus died and rose again. But the old covenant was still very much in the hearts of at least the Jewish believers, not the Gentile believers.

And until the temple was destroyed 40 years later, the Jewish believers were not really fully weaned of their temple worship, you know, orientation. So it's like God sometimes gives people transitional times. The Jews had to transition from being really kind of Egyptian to being purely Israelite in the 40 years after coming out of Egypt.

The Jewish Christians had to transition from being really Jews to being really just Christians during the 40 years after the resurrection until the temple was destroyed. And here the disciples have to transition. It's interesting that 40 is the number in these cases because, you know, Noah, it was 40 days and 40 nights that Noah was, that it was raining to destroy the old world so that Noah was starting to transition into a new, cleansed world.



There's a lot of 40 days and 40 nights. Moses was up on the mount receiving the law for 40 days and 40 nights. And he brought it down, broke the tablets because he saw the golden calf, later went back up for another 40 days and 40 nights.

This 40 days or 40 years obviously seems to be a common, you know, recurring number in the Bible. And many times it seems to be the transitional period, like these 40 days that Jesus was speaking with them. Sometimes there, sometimes not.

So that instead of being always there, or always not, as would later in the case, they're getting used to the idea that, okay, he's here even when we can't see him. He's here even when it doesn't seem like he's here. And that's something he had to get through their heads.

He also, during that time, was speaking to them of things pertaining to the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God was all that Jesus talked about when he was here, basically. His first message in Mark 1.15 was, For his ministry, he talked about the kingdom of God.

All the parables, or all the verses, all of them, they say, you know, the kingdom of God is like this, or the kingdom of God is like that. It's like a mustard seed, it's like a woman making bread dough. It's like a king making a marriage for his son.

That's what the kingdom of God is like. When he set out the 12 in Matthew 10, he said, Go to all the villages, two by two, and preach that the kingdom of God is near. When he set out the 70 in Luke chapter 10, again, set it up two by two, go to the villages and say the kingdom of God is here.

When the Pharisees asked Jesus in Luke 17.20, when the kingdom of God would appear, he said, The kingdom of God does not come observably. Men will not be able to say, Lord, here it is or there it is, but the kingdom of God is already in your midst. It's already among you.

So Jesus' ministry was about, and his teaching was about the kingdom of God. John the Baptist had preached the kingdom was at hand before Jesus started preaching. And Jesus did.

So the whole Gospels are the message of the kingdom of God. And now Jesus has risen, he spends his last 40 days speaking about the same subject, the kingdom of God. It's like we really need to understand what the kingdom of God is.

Because Jesus said, Seek first the kingdom of God. So it's a high priority. And it's righteousness and all these things to be added to.

He said, When you pray, pray, your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. That's the first petition in the prayer that he taught us to pray.

And he said, in Matthew 24.14, This gospel of the kingdom must be preached in all the world, as a witness to all nations, and then the end shall come. So the gospel of the kingdom has got to be universally preached. Now, what is the kingdom of God? Jesus is talking about it all the time, even up to the day he ascended.

The disciples even brought it up, the last day they were with him, as we shall see, in verse 4, 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? So they're talking about the kingdom, still want more information.

And he said to them, It is not for you to know the times or the 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 all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth. Now, this is the last time he was gathered with them, and we see immediately after that, he ascends into heaven.

They, of course, had no idea he was about to ascend into heaven. They didn't know this was the last conversation they'd have with him on earth. And the question that's on their minds is going to be about the kingdom of God.

But before they ask it, he tells them to wait in Jerusalem until they receive power from on high. And this command that he gave them was also found at the end of Luke's gospel by the same author. Luke 24, let me just show you how Luke closes his gospel with some overlap of this particular conversation in Luke and in Acts.

In Luke 24, and verse 44, it says, Then he said to them, These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses and the prophets and in the Psalms concerning me. And he opened their understanding that they might comprehend the scripture, the Old Testament scripture. Then he said to them, Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for 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, or wait, in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high.

Now this is just kind of this, apparently a paraphrase, of what he, this is what's recorded, he said here. Talks about waiting in Jerusalem, they're going to receive power, and there'll be witnesses, all those features are there in these final words to them at the end of Luke. And now the same author kind of picks up that conversation again, though he

relates it in slightly different words, perhaps as a paraphrase or a summary.

He told them to wait in Jerusalem for the promise of the Father. Now, waiting. I wonder why they had to wait.

When Jesus ascended, it seems like he could have just poured out the Spirit that evening, or the next day. But he had them wait. And we do see they gathered together and they waited and they prayed for ten days before the Spirit came down on Pentecost.

And it's possible that their hearts needed to be prepared for it. We don't know, I mean we're not told. But, I mean, if he could have poured out the Spirit immediately upon his ascension, there's no obvious reason why they had to wait ten days.

But I suppose it was just to get themselves focused. They were praying those ten days and so forth. And after those ten days the Spirit came down.

And I wonder sometimes if we need to spend more time waiting on God and praying. You know, it says in Isaiah chapter 40, in verse 31, it says, Those who wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength. They say wait for power here from on high.

Those that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength, Isaiah said. They shall mount up with wings as eagles. They shall run and not be weary.

They will walk and not faint. And so, maybe it's not just them that had to wait. Maybe those who wait on the Lord refers to everyone who would be strengthened by the Lord.

It's like, when you go to a prayer, we want instant answers. We want instant gratification. You know, when you go to a fast food place, because we don't want to wait for our food in order to get it real quick.

We have all kinds of modern conveniences that make things that women used to have to work hard for all day, like to make bread, and you can just put it in a bread maker now and it'll make it for you. We don't have the patience that people in the past have had, but in former times, waiting on God, both in the Old Testament and the New, was something that was just expected. It's not like God doesn't have to come as soon as you snap your fingers.

He's God, you're not. And so, sometimes He's waiting for us to really adjust our hearts and our thinking so that we can actually be receptive to that. And maybe also just, it's a way of our recognizing our dependence on Him.

If we just asked for something and it came right away, and it always happened that way, then we feel like we're in charge. We'd be like Aladdin rubbing the lamp, and the genie's saying, your wish is my command, and we just, you know, God's our genie. We just say, oh yeah, I need some of this now.

Okay, thanks, right away. I mean, the fact that we have to wait on God's timing reminds us that we're not in charge. He is.

If we were in charge, we'd get it right away, because we don't like to wait. But He says, well, just wait. When I think it's the right time, I'll give it to you, you know.

I'm the one in charge here. And it's clear that God wanted them to have the Spirit, but He wanted them to have it in His time. He's going to determine that.

I guess that just means we have to, we should continue to wait. Now, the fact that we have to wait is a test of our faith, in a way, because we don't know how long the wait is. They didn't know how long it would be.

It would turn out to be ten days for them. But I mean, imagine you came to church, and let's say we're praying for God to, you know, turn this country around and make it a better place, or to eliminate the wicked from power, or whatever, you know, make a better society. We're praying for that.

Well, God is capable of doing that. I think there have been revivals throughout history where society was improved, changed through the revival. But revival almost never comes just the first day, you know, a church decides to ask for it.

Often people have been praying for weeks, even years, before the outpouring and the revival comes. And I think it's, I think it may be because God is checking to see if we're really serious about this. He's serious.

Are we as serious as He is? You know, if I say, yeah, I'd like that revival, I'll pray for two days for it, you know. If it doesn't come, then I'll just forget it and do something else with my life, you know. No, if you persevere in waiting on God and continuing to lay your request beforehand and say, listen, I'm not going away until this happens.

I won't let you go until you bless me, like Jacob said to the man wrestling with him. Then God says, okay, I see you really mean it. That's good, you know.

You need to mean it or else I'm not going to give you something that's not really of value to you or that you don't value. So maybe that's why they had to wait, because they had this building anticipation. God has made a wonderful promise to us.

It hasn't happened yet. We don't know how long it'll be. We're just going to sit here and pray and wait.

And, you know, we're not going to go back to our jobs. We're not going to make meals. They probably are fasting.

We don't know. 120 of them in a room praying for that period of time, and then the Holy Spirit fell on them. But this waiting may have actually, it may have spiritual impact.

Wait. It may have a very positive spiritual impact. And it's also probably a test of our faith.

Will we still be believing if he doesn't answer today or tomorrow or this week? Will we still say, okay, I still believe God for this? Or will we say, well, I guess God's not into it, so I'll stop praying for it. I'll stop expecting it. For God to say, focus on this and wait for this and pray for this, and don't give them how Jesus said it in one of the parables of Luke.

Luke says that Jesus told a parable that men are always to pray and not to think or not to lose heart. That's, I believe, I think it's Luke 18. And he told the parable of the woman with the unjust judgment she prevailed on until he finally delivered what she was praying for.

He taught that sometimes you have to persevere in prayer. And although he will answer prayers, he doesn't just do it on our schedule. He does it on his schedule.

He doesn't just do it, you know, like he's a genie that we give commands to and he has to answer. He's the one who's the Lord and the King. And we are his petitioners.

We're the children coming to our Father, asking for something that we think is something he'll approve of. And, you know, I guess content to wait until he's ready to grant it. That's the attitude of people who are faithful children, faithful petitioners of God.

And so they had to wait. He says in verse 5, It's a curious thing that he made a distinction between two kinds of baptisms, but he didn't originate it. John did.

He's actually kind of quoting John the Baptist. Not an exact quote, but he's using the language John the Baptist used when the Pharisees came to him and said, Well, why are you baptizing? He said, Well, I baptize with water. But he that comes after me is greater than I am.

And he, I'm not worthy to carry a sandal, but he'll baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire. So John made this distinction between baptizing in water and baptizing in, as he put it, in the Holy Spirit and fire. Now, there's many things in the Bible that are referred to as baptism.

Baptism in water done by John was one thing. Baptism in water done by Jesus or by the early church was another thing. Because Paul, in Acts 19, encountered several people who had received water baptism, which they referred to as John's baptism.

They knew about John the Baptist. They knew he was calling people to repent and be baptized, so they did. But they hadn't heard the gospel.

And Paul comes to them and says, Oh, well, John's baptism was a baptism of repentance. But he said that people should believe on him who was coming after him. And he told

them about Jesus.

And in Acts 19, it says, When they heard about Jesus, they got baptized again. This time, Christian baptism. Obviously, they assumed, once they heard the gospel, that John's baptism had not been really the same thing as Christian baptism.

Or else they wouldn't have redone it. If John's baptism in water and Jesus' baptism in water were the same thing, then they wouldn't have to be rebaptized. They'd just, they'd done that.

They'd never done that. But it's a different thing. Because the baptism, water baptism, in Christ's name, is a depiction of dying and resurrecting.

Being buried and being resurrected. It's not just when I say, I repent, I'm going to be washed in kind of this envelope of cleansing like John the Baptist was. It's more than that.

It's more of an identifying with Jesus in his death and resurrection. And as Paul put it in 1 Corinthians 10, he said the children of Israel who came out of Egypt with Moses, they were baptized into Moses in the sea and in the cloud, he said. In the opening verses of 1 Corinthians 10.

Now, being baptized into Moses meant they were passing through the sea in order to put their old life behind them and to now have a life where Moses was the leader. Now, we're baptized into Christ. We put our old life behind us.

We bury it in the water. We're risen with Christ in baptism, Paul said in Romans 6, 4. And also Colossians 2. And we are baptized into Christ because as the Israelites were baptized into Moses, their new leader, we're baptized into Christ. He's our new leader.

We have a new life when we're regenerated and when we believe in Christ. So we bury that old life. We come back up out of the water.

And now we've testified that Jesus is our leader. And that's different than what John the Baptist did. John's baptism didn't have all that meaning.

Now, Jesus doesn't mention all the different baptisms. He doesn't even talk about Christian water baptism. He just says, John baptized with water, you'll be baptized with the Holy Spirit and with fire.

There's other things called baptism too. Because on one occasion, James and John said to Jesus, can we sit at your right hand and your left hand in the kingdom? And he said, well, can you be baptized with the baptism I have to be baptized with? And they said, well, yeah, we can. And he said, well, you will be baptized with the baptism I've been baptized with.

But sitting at the right hand and the left hand, that's my father's church. I can't give that one away. But the interesting thing is that Jesus and his disciples had already been water baptized.

He talked about another baptism that they would have to endure. And I think the context would suggest strongly that it's a baptism in suffering. You see the word baptism, which in the Greek just means immersion.

Baptizo is to be immersed. And it was an ordinary word. Actually, the English Bible should never have had the word baptism.

Because that's just taking a Greek word and giving it kind of an English sound. If they had translated the word baptism, they would have translated it as immersed. Because that was the meaning of baptizo.

Baptizo is a normal word for like if a woman is washing her clothes and she's dipping them in a pot of water. That's baptizing them. If you put a ladle into a larger pot of water and draw some out, you're baptizing or immersing the ladle.

This is, baptism is the ordinary word in the Greek language for immersing something. And so John should have been called John the Immerser. When he said, when Jesus said, John came baptizing in water, but you'll be baptized in the Spirit.

That should be translated, John came immersing in water. But you will be immersed in the Holy Spirit. Not many days from now, he says in verse 5. Now John the Baptist again is the one who first made that contradiction.

He said, I baptize with water, I immerse in water, but he comes after me and will immerse in the Holy Spirit of fire. What's interesting is that Jesus is practically quoting John's words. And John was the only person previous to this.

And as far as we know, these are the only two places that we read of baptized in the Holy Spirit. John said it, Jesus quoted it, and then you really don't have that expression used anymore in the Book of Acts. But being immersed in the Holy Spirit and in fire, John said, was what Jesus would do.

But Jesus doesn't say to his disciples, you'll be baptized in the Spirit and in fire. He just says, you'll be baptized in the Holy Spirit. But where's the baptism in fire? If you're curious about that, we can answer that reasonably well by looking at Matthew chapter 3. Because in Matthew chapter 3, John's preaching is given here.

And in verses 10 through 12, you'll read that each of these verses has something in common with the other two. In Matthew 3.10, John the Baptist says, even now the axe 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 purge his threshing floor and gather his wheat into the barn, but he will burn the chaff with unquenchable fire.

Now, you may have noticed what these three verses have in common. They all end with the word fire. They all make a contrast between two destinies.

The wheat has one destiny, the chaff has another. The fruitful trees have one destiny, the fruitless trees have another. Now, we have to understand, when John the Baptist came, he's preaching to the Israelites.

And in Israel, in his day, as in all times in history, most of Israel were apostates. Most of Israel were unfaithful to God, but there's always a faithful remnant in Israel that were keeping God's laws, keeping his commandments, and they were loyal to him. He saw them as his true people, the faithful remnant.

But they were in an Israel, in a nation full of people who didn't really take God very seriously at all. And so, what John is saying is, Jesus is coming to divide among you Jews. Between those of you who are fruitful trees, that'd be a faithful remnant.

And those of you who are just trees, you don't have any fruit at all, that'd be the apostate majority. He says the fruitful trees he's going to preserve, the trees that don't bear fruit are going to be cut down and put in the fire. Now, you have to realize that John was preaching this at a time just 40 years before the most horrendous holocaust was coming upon the Jews.

In 70 AD, the Romans came and it was a terrible, terrible slaughter. The siege was horrendous. Josephus wrote a whole long book about it.

He was there. He was a witness of it. Josephus was a Jewish historian who experienced that war and that siege and that conquest.

And he wrote a very detailed history, which makes it very clear as you read it, that this is one of the ugliest scenes in history, what the Romans did to the Jews. This was coming and God knew it. Jesus knew it.

Jesus predicted it too. John and Jesus came to warn Israel that if they're not part of the faithful remnant, then this horrible, fiery holocaust was going to come upon them. And this is what John is referring to.

He's saying, some of you Jews are faithful, like fruitful trees. Worth keeping around. Those are the ones who are going to come to Christ and follow him and become his body, his church.



The rest of the Jews are going to reject Christ and they'd face this horrible judgment within a generation's time. Jesus said this generation will not pass before these things happen. Now, verse 12 also talks the same way.

He's talking about a winnowing fan in his hand, which is winnowing is, of course, separate from chat. He says he will thoroughly purge his threshing floor, he'll gather the wheat into the barn. That's the faithful remnant among Israel.

But the apostate majority says the chaff he'll burn with unquenchable fire. So you've got both the fruitless trees and the chaff are burned up with fire. Now, the verse between those is verse 11.

He says, I indeed baptize with water unto repentance, but he who is coming after me, he says, I'm not worthy to carry sandals. He will baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire. Now, these three statements are all, I think, making the same point.

Jesus is coming to separate the wheat and the chaff, the fruitful trees and the unfruitful trees, the faithful remnant and the unfaithful in Israel. One group will receive salvation and will be baptized in the Holy Spirit. The other group will be sent to the fire.

The fruitless trees, the chaff, and those that are not of the faithful remnant who are not baptized in the Holy Spirit. You see, on the day of Pentecost, the faithful in Israel were gathered in Ephraim and were baptized in the Holy Spirit. Now, more could join them, and some did.

Obviously, on the day of Pentecost, 3,000 more Jews were added to the number, and more and more Jews came in. But there was a finite number of Jews that came to Christ. The rest were rejecting him.

The majority of Jews still persecuted the Christians and hated Christ. And they were the ones who got stuck in the Holocaust of 70 A.D. And John is warning of this, and notice that when he says, Jesus will be baptized with the Holy Spirit and fire, he's making a distinction. Some will be baptized in the Holy Spirit.

The rest will be consigned to judgment and fire. And that is why when Jesus, in Acts 1-5, said to the disciples, John baptized with water, you'll be baptized in the Holy Spirit, he didn't say, and fire. Because these were the ones who would be baptized in the Holy Spirit.

The others would be baptized in fire. He's not talking to the ones who are the apostates, he's talking to the ones who are the faithful. And so they would receive the baptism, he said, in the Holy Spirit.

They'd be immersed in the Holy Spirit. Now, it says in verse 6, they asked him, when they came out to the place where he was about to ascend, though they didn't realize he

was, they said, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel? Now, I mentioned the kingdom, that's the big subject. That's a big subject in the Gospels.

It was the subject he was talking about these 40 days, he was talking about the kingdom of God. And, by the way, you'll find that throughout the book of Acts, the apostles are talking about the kingdom of God, so that in the very last verse of the book of Acts, the very last verse in this book, in chapter 28, in verse 31, it says that Paul was preaching the kingdom of God and teaching things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, knowing, for it is. That's how the book of Acts ends, Paul's preaching the kingdom of God.

The kingdom of God preached by John the Baptist, by Jesus, by the apostles, by Paul. This is the subject of, frankly, the New Testament. And it's mentioned also about 15 times in the epistles of the New Testament and in Revelation.

So, they're wondering about the kingdom. Will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel? This question, will you restore the kingdom to Israel, is very helpful for us to understand what the term kingdom meant to the average Jew who heard Jesus preach, including his disciples. We sometimes have a very hazy idea of what is meant by the kingdom of God.

Some people think it's heaven. Some people think it's the millennial kingdom. Some people think it's different things like that.

If you ask the average Christian, could you define for me the kingdom of God? Now, I'm pausing a moment just to see, let you get a chance to think, yeah, I could, or no, I couldn't. Can you? What is the kingdom of God? It's the first thing of importance in your prayers. It's the thing you're supposed to seek first.

It's the thing that has to be preached in all the world as a witness on all nations. Do you even know what it is? Many Christians don't. And if we think of it differently than Jesus did, then we'll be preaching a different gospel than Jesus preached, because he preached the gospel of the kingdom of God.

So what is the kingdom of God? Well, in a nutshell, the kingdom of God began, the first mention of the kingdom of God was in Exodus 19, 5 and 6. And when God brought Israel out of Egypt to Mount Sinai, he said, if you'll obey my voice and keep my covenant, you'll be to me a kingdom, a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. See, a kingdom is a nation. A kingdom is a political society with a king.

In his day, in Jesus' day, all the nations had kings. If you have a king and he's got subjects and he's ruling, that's a kingdom right there. Now, God was saying to Israel, you can be my kingdom, you obey my voice, you keep my covenant, and you'll be a kingdom to me, a kingdom of priests, and you'll be a holy nation.

I'll be the king. You'll be my kingdom. So, in other words, the kingdom of God, when it's first mentioned in the Bible, is Israel.

God says to Israel, you do this and you'll be my kingdom. The trouble is, they didn't. They didn't do, they didn't keep his covenant.

They made a golden calf pretty shortly after this. They worshipped other gods. They broke his laws.

Eventually, they said to Samuel, we don't want to have this kingdom relation with God. Make us an ordinary king like all the nations have. And God didn't like it, and Samuel didn't like it.

This is in 1 Samuel 8, where God spoke to Samuel and said, go ahead and give them what they want. They haven't rejected you, Samuel, they've rejected me. But I should not reign over them.

So, the Israelites had rejected their high calling to be God's kingdom among the nations of the earth, a holy nation on earth, separate from the other nations with God, ruling them directly. They didn't have that anymore. But the prophets after that time would come and say, God is going to restore that.

God is going to come and be your king. He's going to send the Messiah as his own agent to rule over you. He's going to set up the kingdom under the Messiah.

All the prophets, although they didn't use the term kingdom of God, they spoke of the coming king. They spoke of restoration of the remnant of Israel to be God's people and his nation and so forth. And this was understood, I think, correctly by the Jews to mean that as God had given Israel at one time the opportunity to be his kingdom, they had rejected it, but he would take the remnant of Israel and make them his kingdom again.

Someday, when the Messiah comes, he'll be the king. And he'll reign over you and he's God. Now, interestingly, if you turn to Matthew chapter 21, remember when Jesus came, he came preaching the kingdom of God is at hand, the Jews thought, and even the disciples obviously thought, that this meant that the nation of Israel was going to be God's kingdom again.

But, in Matthew 21, Jesus told this parable about the kingdom. And he said, in Matthew 21, 33, Here, another parable. There was a certain landowner who planted a vineyard and set a hedge around it and dug a winepress in it, built a tower, and he leased it out to vine dressers and went to a far country.

Now, when vintage time drew near, he sent his servants to the vine dressers that they might receive its fruit. And the vine dressers took his servants, beat one, killed one, stoned another. Again, he sent other servants, more than the first, and they did likewise

to them.

Now, this is a reference to God sending his prophets to Israel. The idea of God having a vineyard and wanting fruit comes actually from Isaiah, Isaiah 5, 1-7, there's a parable where Israel is God's vineyard, he's looking for fruit, the fruit he's longing for, he says in Isaiah 5-7, is righteousness and justice. He's looking for Israel to be a people who keep his laws and become a society characterized by justice and righteousness, unlike the pagan nations.

They never did it, they became as unjust and unrighteous as the pagan nations did. And so, he never got the fruit. And here, Jesus resets that same parable.

Okay, God has a vineyard, it's Israel, and he wants fruit from it. And he sends his messengers, that's when he sent the prophets. The prophets' messengers were the justice, were the righteousness, were the fruit God's looking for.

And they were beat up and killed, the prophets were badly abused. And then it says in verse 37, then last of all, he sent his son to them. So this brings us through the Old Testament period of the prophets to the time when Jesus came and was sent to them.

He was the last messenger they would have. He was their last chance to be the kingdom of God. So if they want to be God's kingdom and produce the fruit he's looking for, they've had chances, they've wasted those chances by killing the messengers.

Now here's the last messenger they're going to have. Last of all, he sent his son. They'll surely respect my son, he said.

But when the vine dressers saw the son, they said among themselves, this is the heir, come let us kill him and seize his inheritance. The Jews didn't want Jesus to be the king. They wanted to own the vineyard themselves, and he was a threat to them, so they said let's kill him.

And they caught him and cast him out of the vineyard and killed him. Now this brings us right up to the crucifixion, which had not yet happened when Jesus told his people what was about to happen in a few days. He saw it coming.

Therefore, Jesus says, when the owner of that vineyard comes, what will he do to those vine dressers? The answer that they gave him was he will destroy those wicked men miserably and lease his vineyard to other vine dressers who will render to him the fruits of their seasons. Now look at verse 43. Jesus said, therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it.

Now Israel had been the only nation to whom God had made the offer that they could be his kingdom. But now because they killed his son, he says, okay, that was your last chance. The kingdom of God is now taken from you and given to another nation.

Who's that nation? Well, Peter in 1 Peter 2-9 is writing to the church. And he says, you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people. Those are all terms that God used of Israel in the Old Testament.

If they were faithful, they would be a peculiar people. They would be a holy nation. They would be the kingdom of priests.

Peter says, no, that's us now. That's the faithful. That's the new nation.

You're a holy nation. And a kingdom is a nation. So the people who are faithful to Christ are his kingdom.

He's their king and lord. He's the head, which means we're his body. So the body of Christ is comprised of those who are meeting the conditions for being the kingdom of God.

He's their king. And so he established his kingdom among the remnants of Israel who came to him, which are the disciples. Eventually, Gentiles were allowed to come in, too.

But they came into the same phenomenon. Initially, the first hundreds of thousands of converts were Jewish. They were the faithful remnant.

They were God's kingdom restored among Israel. But then Gentiles were allowed to come in just as the prophets had predicted would be the case. And we call it the church today.

But it's the same phenomenon, the same entity. It's the kingdom that was established among the remnants of Israel. Now, when the disciples said, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel, they had all this history in mind and this anticipation.

But they were thinking, no doubt, that the whole nation of Israel was going to be the kingdom of God. And what they weren't saying is, no, God's going to only take the faithful remnant of Israel, and they will be a new nation to whom the kingdom will be given. The kingdom of God is taken from the rebellious and given to a nation that will bring forth the fruits.

It's made of the faithful from the earlier nation and any Gentiles who may be brought in to be with them. The point here is, these disciples didn't fully understand that yet, even though Jesus had spoken a great deal about the kingdom of God. They still weren't sure.

I think they were reflecting some of the Jews' hope that the whole nation of Israel would be God's kingdom. But Jesus answered and said to them, it's not for you to know the times or the 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 ends of the earth. Now, Jesus did not,

you know, correct their notion of the kingdom.

He didn't say, you know, you're still thinking in Old Testament patterns. You're still thinking it's the whole nation of Israel. It's actually going to be different.

He didn't correct them. He just deflected their question. Why? Well, because they were not ready to receive the answer.

Just a few days earlier, Jesus had been in the upper room with His disciples, and in John 16, 12, and 13, He said to them, I have many things to say to you, but you're not able to bear them yet. But when the Holy Spirit has come, He will teach you all things. He'll guide you to all truth.

Their frame of reference was not such that they could understand that it wouldn't be the whole nation of Israel. It was going to be just the remnant. But they'd be more open to it when the Holy Spirit would be given.

And He'd guide them to all truth. They didn't even know Gentiles would be part of it. Remember, it wasn't until Cornelius, God save him, you know, the Jewish church would go away with it.

I guess God has granted repentance to the Gentiles too. You see, they were not ready for this yet. Jesus knew they were.

They had all their Jewish prejudices and their Old Testament ideas in their head. And He said, you're not ready for this yet, so let's just, I'll tell you what to do. Instead of answering this question, you just don't worry about that.

It's not for you to know the times or the seasons that God has decided about such things. But when you receive the Holy Spirit, you go out and be my witnesses to the whole world, to the outermost parts of the earth. And I'll take care of when the kingdom is given to Israel.

Well, I think that the disciples came to understand this gradually after the Holy Spirit was given. That the kingdom was not going to include every Jew, as the Jews in the Old Testament mostly hoped. But it would be just them and other Jews who would believe in Christ.

Those who believe in Christ are the true kingdom of God. And He said, you'll go out and be my witnesses. Witnesses to what? Well, witnesses that He's the King.

Witnesses that He's the Lord. That He's the one who's enthroned at the right hand of God. And the nations need to hear this.

And when they hear it, they'll either respond or, one way or the other, they'll submit and become part of His kingdom. Or they'll reject His kingship and be lost. And a lot of those

who would be lost would be Jews.

A lot of them would be part of the old Israel. That Israel that had formerly been God's kingdom were now excluded. It was given to a nation that would bear the fruit of it.

The fruitful, faithful remnant. Now, this statement in verse 7, it's not for you to know the times and seasons in which the Father put His own authority is applicable to us. We're not asking the same questions they were asking.

We are asking, when is Jesus going to come back? But that too is a time or a season that the Father has put in His own authority. It's not for us to know. I really think it's a mistake that many Christians make when they try to speculate, when is Jesus coming back? Sometimes they try to find clues in the Bible, secret codes and keys that will let them know that Jesus is coming on such and such a date.

And there's actually whole ministries on the radio and publishing ministries that do nothing else but speculate about the second coming of Christ and when it's going to be. What a waste of time. Jesus said, it's not for you to know such things as only God knows.

Earlier, of course, Jesus had said in Matthew 24, no man knows the day or the hour, not even the angels or even the Son, meaning Himself. Only the Father knows that. So obviously, the matter of when Jesus comes back is the Father's to know and ours to find out when He does it, not beforehand.

It's not for us to know in advance. So why waste time worrying about it? Just occupy until I come, Jesus says. And so He says, don't worry about this particular question you're asking about.

God will take care of this. This is God's business. Your business is to faithfully carry out your commission.

What is the commission? Well, here He says, be my witnesses. He doesn't say what they're witnessing to specifically, but Matthew chapter 28, the message of the apostles is given in the Great Commission there, Matthew 28, 19 through 21, or actually 18 through 20, excuse me. And He says, all authority in heaven and earth has been given to me.

That's Matthew 28, 18. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to observe all things I have commanded you. Now what is that commission? It starts out by Jesus saying, I have all authority in heaven and earth.

I'm the king. I'm the ruler. I'm the one in charge.

I have all the authority now. God has given me all authority in heaven and earth.

Therefore, go out and tell the nations about it because they don't know.

And you have to baptize them, obviously, into the kingdom in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. And then, when you baptize them, you need to teach them to observe everything I have commanded. Why? Because He's the king.

That's why. You bring people into a kingdom, you have to tell them what you command them to do. So, the task of the church is to bring people to faith, baptize them, and then, after they've been baptized and are part of the body of Christ, then you teach them.

It's the rest of their life they're being taught to obey, to observe all things Jesus commanded. That's what He said. It's the curriculum.

So, a lot of times we're happy enough just to get them to believe and be baptized. It makes the church bigger. And we figure now they're going to heaven, thankfully.

But we forget that the commission isn't just get people converted, just get people baptized, just get them into the church. It's now, it's time to disciple them. Now it's time to teach them to observe all things what's over Christ commanded.

And we'll find in the book of Acts that on the day of Pentecost, 3,000 people get, believe and are baptized. And what do they do? It says they sit daily under the apostles, teaching. Well, what are they teaching? Probably what Jesus said to teach them.

Teaching them to observe everything Jesus commanded. Teaching them to be obedient, you know, subjects of King Jesus in His kingdom. So, that's the commission as it's fleshed out in Matthew's version.

Here it's just, you know, it's kind of abbreviated. Just be my witnesses. Now, He says you'll be my witnesses to the end of the earth.

Which is a phrase of importance because in Psalm 2, which is a psalm about the Messiah, the Messiah says in Psalm 2, 8, He says, God has said to me, I mean the Father has spoken to Jesus and said this, ask of me and I will give you the heathen for your inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for your possession. God has made Jesus king and He's going to give Him the whole earth. The uttermost parts of the earth, the ends of the earth.

And Jesus said, you go be my witnesses about my kingdom to the ends of the earth. This is how God gives Jesus the ends of the earth, by us preaching His kingdom. We preach His kingship, His lordship to the ends of the earth.

And when people hear it and respond as they should and believe and are baptized, then they are now in the kingdom too. And they can go out once they're trained and bring others in as well. So this is how the kingdom comes.



This is how the kingdom is given to the faithful. Now, I'm going to take a break here pretty quick. In fact, I'll take a break right now.

And we'll take the rest of the chapter when we come back.