

Acts 1:1-11
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A. Overview

1. Structure

- a) 1:1-2:4 is the prolog to the entire book; anticipates what is to come.
- b) It has two parts, both of which zoom in from a general view to more specific events:
 - 1) 1-11, the end of the Lord's earthly ministry.
 - a> 1-3 gives an overview of the Lord's entire ministry, culminating with his commission of the apostles, v.2.
 - b> 4-11 gives two events at that climax:
 - 1> their commission;
 - 2> his ascension.
 - 2) 1:12-2:4, the initial life of the church
 - a> 12-14, overview
 - b> 1:15-2:4, two events
 - 1> the election of Matthias
 - 2> the coming of the Holy Spirit

2. Lessons from 1-11

- a) Our Commission--to bear witness in the power of the HS. (Be careful not to miss either half. Any witness apart from the Spirit will be hollow and ineffective; any true manifestation of the Spirit will show itself through glorifying Christ rather than the believer or the Spirit.)
- b) Our Hope--the Lord's return. We must never lose sight of it.

B. 1-3, Summary

The three verses of this paragraph direct our attention to three periods or episodes in the life of our Lord. All of them are covered in the gospel acc. to Luke.

- 1. v.1 includes his entire ministry, as recorded in the gospel. Notice that his life is described as both *deeds* and *words*. Neither one by itself is sufficient. Orthodoxy ("right teaching") and orthopraxy ("right doing") always go together, otherwise they show themselves to be not right.
- 2. v.3 looks just at the last 40 days, after his resurrection. Two things happened during this period:
 - a) He was seen by the apostles, with irrefutable evidence of his resurrection. Key thought for Acts. Every gospel presentation in the book highlights the resurrection. This is what proves that our sins are gone.
 - b) He spoke with them about the kingdom of God.
 - 1) Aspects of this kingdom refer to the present gospel age:

this is the burden of Paul's preaching, Acts 20:25; 28:31. Compare Rom. 14:17.

- 2) But some is still to come. Compare their question (motivated no doubt by the subject of the 40 days' discussion) in 1:6 with the Lord's answer in 1:7. He corrects them, not on their understanding of the *nature* of the kingdom, but concerning its *timing*. The promises of Jer. and the other prophets still stand.

3. v.2 focuses in on the most significant two events of that 40 day period. These are amplified in the sequel:
 - a) the commission he gave the apostles;
 - b) his ascension.

C. 4-8, Commissioning of the Apostles

Here Luke amplifies the latter part of v.2, "after that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen."

1. v.2 "through the Holy Ghost." cf. 10:38. The Lord conducted every aspect of his ministry through the same resource that is available to us, that of the Holy Spirit. The Lord's single earthly act narrated in Acts is to issue this command; Luke wants us to observe that this act, like all his others, is "through the Holy Ghost," as are to be all the acts of his followers.
2. Review of gospel evidence about the Great Commission. More than one! Thus, though the Gk of Acts 1:2 has only the verb "commanded" and no noun for "commandment," the AV plural is appropriate.
 - a) We can identify at least three.
 - 1) Matt. 28:19,20, on a mountain in Galilee.
 - 2) Mark 16:14-18, Luke 24:36ff, in a closed room in Jerusalem, eating with them.
 - 3) Acts 1:7-8, on the Mount of Olives (cf. v.12).
 - b) The contents have different emphases, and lead us to see two things as essential to the growth of the church: preaching and power.
 - 1) Matt. and Mark emphasize the command, "Go." Matt. states as a fact, "I am with you."
 - 2) Luke and Acts state that the witness will happen, but emphasize, "Wait for the Spirit."
 - 3) *Application*: We have the same two obligations today: to bear witness to Christ, and to do so in the power and under the direction of the Holy Spirit. Our situation is slightly different from that of the apostles; at this point they did

not have the Spirit yet, but all believers in the church age do (Rom. 8:9). Nevertheless, it is possible for us to grieve the Spirit and seek to function in the strength of the flesh, and any attempt on our part to witness to Christ in such a state is useless.

3. The conversation.

Note the circumstantial participles: Luke brings together things that were said on different occasions.

a) 4-5, The initial command.

- 1) Circumstances: "being assembled together." Note the margin, "eating together." Probably refers to the episode of Mark 16:14-18 and Luke 24, when the Lord ate with the apostles.
- 2) The point here is the same as Luke 24:49, "tarry." The Lord has told them to go, but they must not leave their Helper behind. One might say of the HS what they say about the American Express card--"Don't leave home without Him."

b) 6, Their response.

- 1) Circumstances: "when they were come together." Another occasion. v.12 shows that they are on the Mt. of Olives. We can visualize Luke 24:50. The Lord leads the disciples out of Jerusalem and up the mountain, with him at the lead and the others following behind (except for Peter, whom we can easily imagine running ahead of the group, only to look back from time to time and find he's taken the wrong turn). No group discussion is possible with twelve men along the road. Finally the Lord pauses, the disciples gather around him, and "when they were come together," he delivers this charge.
- 2) Their question. The emphasis of the sentence (sentence-initial temporal clause) assumes that God will restore the kingdom; the only question is when. "Is it now that you will restore the kingdom to Israel?" Two things lead them to this question.
 - a> v.3 tells that he has been teaching them about God's kingdom. This question naturally suggests that part of this teaching has concerned the restoration of Israel. "Lord, you've said that one day the kingdom will be restored. Is now the time?"
 - b> v.4, the promise of the Spirit. Recall from Jer. 33 that the Spirit is the seal of the New Covenant, which in its fulness also includes the restoration of the nation Israel. "Lord, you've said that the kingdom is coming, and you've told us we'll receive the Spirit 'not many days hence.' Doesn't that mean that the kingdom is also 'not many days hence'?"

c) 7-8, The Resolution.

Circumstances this time are the same as in v.6. The Lord's answer has two parts.

1) He settles the matter of the kingdom. NB: He does not deny that the kingdom will be restored to Israel--only that they should expect to know ahead of time when. The restoration will happen, but it's up to God when it happens. It might be now, when the Spirit comes; it might not.

2) He reiterates what they can expect in the near future. NB: No command here at all! Just a promise of what will happen.

a> The Holy Spirit will come on them.

b> They will receive power.

c> They will be witnesses, in an ever-expanding geographic region.

4. *Application*: Preachers often try to stimulate guilt in their hearers over the matter of bearing witness for Christ. With the emphasis in this chapter, they ought to be urging people to be full of the HS. "Wait for the Spirit." Direct your attention toward being yielded to him and open to his control. The more you try to minister in your own energies, the more frustrated you will be. The more we devote our attention to matters of spiritual devotion, prayer, Bible meditation, and simple obedience, seeing to it that we are not grieving or quenching the Spirit, the more we will experience God's power working through us.

D. **9-11, The Lord's Ascension**

Now we return to the first part of v.2, "until the day in which he was taken up". This is marked by two supernatural appearances: a cloud, and two angels.

1. The Cloud. Cf. Luke 1:35 ("overshadow," cf. 9:34; the conception of Christ); 9:34 (the cloud at the transfiguration); Mark 13:26; 14:62 (his return). The Shekinah Glory of God, seen in the OT leading the Israelites through the wilderness (Exod. 13:21; 14:24) and in the tabernacle (Exod. 40:38) and temple (1 Kings 8:10,11). This is the answer to the Lord's prayer of John 17:1,5, "glorify thy Son."

2. The Angelic Exhortation. Compare the two angels who met the women at the tomb and asked them also, "Why?" (Luke 24:4,5). In both cases, the gentle rebuke meets perplexity with a precious truth: the Lord's resurrection, and his promised return.

Here, the point is to recall them from their other-worldly focus. They have a job to do on earth; they must not spend all their attention on heaven.

Summary

The Lord leaves us where he left the apostles:

1. With the *Promise* of his return. We must never lose sight of it.
2. With the *Privilege* of making him known. He does not send angels to evangelize. Instead, he sends us to be witnesses of what we have learned of him.
3. With the *Power* of his Spirit. We are not alone in our work, nor should we proceed, stirred to anxious labor by fear and carnal energy. Our first responsibility is to wait--to tarry--to be receptive to the Holy Spirit, and he will then work his witness through us.

Hymn: Lo, He Comes.

Analysis

- A. 1-3, comment p
1. text: 1 To\n me\n prw^ton lo/gon e)poihsa/mhn peri\ pa/ntwn, w)^
Qeo/file,
 2. comment <pantwn>: temporal p. Distinguishes three periods:
general ministry (1b); post-resurrection appearances (3); final
commissioning (2).
a) text: w(^n h)/rcato o()Ihsou^s poiei^n te kai\ dida/skein
b) time: comment p
 - 1) text: 2 a)/xri h(^s h(me/ras e)n teila/menos toi^s
a)postolois dia\ pneu/matos a(gi/ou ou(\s e)cele/cato
a)nelh/mfgh:
 - 2) comment <apostolois>: ampl p
a> text: 3 oi(^s kai\ pare/sthsen e(auto\n zw^nta meta\
to\ paqei^n au)to\n e)n polloi^s teknhri/ois,
b> ampl: di' h(merw^nn tessera/konta
1> o)ptano/menos au)toi^s
2> kai\ le/gwn ta\ peri\ th^s basilei/as tou^ qeou^.
- B. 4-8, interchange p. Amplifies the final commissioning of the
previous p. NB: this conversation spans two meetings. Point: their
Work and their Power.
1. IU (Jesus): quote p: command to stay in Jerusalem
a) quote f: 4 kai\ sunalizo/menos parh/ggeilen au)toi^s
b) quote:
 - 1) a)po\ (Ierosolu/mwn mh\ xwri/zesqai,
 - 2) comment p
a> text: a)lla\ perime/nein th\n e)paggeli/an tou^ patro\s
b> comment <epaggelian>: h(\n h)kou/sate/ mou:
 - 3) reason: 5 o(/ti
a>)Iwa/nnhs me\n e)ba/ptisen u(/dati,
b> u(meis de\ e)n pneu/mati baptisqh/sesqe a(gi/w| ou)
meta\ polla\s tau/tas h(me/ras.
 2. CU (disciples): quote p: Why?

- a) quote f: 6 Oi(me\n ou)^n sunelqo/ntes h)rw/twn au)to\n le/gontes,
- b) quote: Ku/rie, ei) e)n tw^| xro/nw| tou/tw| a)pokaqista/neis th\n basilei/an tw^|)Israh/l;

3. RU (Jesus): quote p:

- a) quote f: 7 ei)^pen de\ pro\s au)tou/s,
- b) quote: contrast p
 - 1) comment p:
 - a> text: Ou)x u(mw^n e)stin gnw^nai xro/nous h)\ kairou\s
 - b> comment <xronous>: ou(\s o(path\r e)/qeto e)n th^| i)di/a| e)cousi/a|:
 - 2) 8 a)lla\ lh/myesqe du/namin e)pelqo/ntos tou^ a(gi/ou pneu/matos e)f' u(ma^s,
 - 3) kai\ e)/sesqe/ mou ma/rtures e)/n te)Ierousalh\m kai\ [e)n] pa/sh| th^|)Ioudai/a| kai\ Samarei/a| kai\ e(/ws e)sa/tou th^s gh^s.

C. 9-11, The ascension. Point: His Return.

- 1. 9 kai\ tau^ta ei)pw\n blepo/ntwn au)tw^n e)ph/rqh,
- 2. kai\ nefel\h u(pe/labon au)to\n a)po\ tw^n o)fqalmw^n au)tw^n.
- 3. temporal p
 - a) time: 10 kai\ w(s a)teni/zontes h)^san ei)s to\n ou)rano\n poreuome/nou au)tou^,
 - b) text: comment p
 - 1) text: kai\ i)dou\ a)/ndres du/o pareisth/keisan au)toi^s e)n e)sqh/sesi leukai^s,
 - 2) comment <andres>: quote p
 - a> quote f: 11 oi(\ kai\ ei)^pan,
 - b> quote:
 - 1>)/Andres Galilai^oi, ti/ e(sth/kate [e)m]ble/pontes ei)s to\n ou)rano/n;
 - 2> ou(^tos o()Ihsou^s o(a)nalhmfqei\s a)f' u(mw^n ei)s to\n ou)rano\n ou(/tw s e)leu/setai o(\n tro/pon e)qea/sasqe au)to\n poreuomenon ei)s to\n ou)rano/n.