



You Will Receive Power... Acts 1:1-1:12 (Lesson #2)



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Last week we looked at a number of key background elements in the book of Acts. I would like to add one additional item to that list, namely the **historical and archeological accuracy of the books of Acts**.

Roman historian, A.N. Sherwin-White, said: *“For Acts the confirmation of historicity is overwhelming. . . . Any attempt to reject its basic historicity must now appear absurd. Roman historians have long taken it for granted.”*

Classical scholar and historian **Colin Hemer** chronicles Luke’s accuracy in the Book of Acts verse by verse. With painstaking detail, Hemer identified 84 facts in the last 16 chapters of Acts that have all been confirmed by historical and archaeological research.

Although today, the accuracy of Acts is almost universally accepted that was not always the case. Let me briefly share with you the story of one of the greatest archaeologists to ever live, his name is **Sir William Ramsey (1851-1939)**.

Ramsay was a British scholar, who initially rejected the historicity of Acts, but whose opinion would be changed after years of literally digging up the evidence in archaeological explorations. In ***The Bearing of Recent Discovery on the Trustworthiness of the New Testament, pp. 37-38***, Ramsay wrote:
“I had read a good deal of modern criticism about the book, and dutifully accepted the current opinion that it was written during the second half of the second century by an author who wished to influence the minds of people in his own time by a highly wrought and imaginative description of the early Church. His object was not to present a trustworthy picture of facts in the period about A.D. 50, but to produce a certain effect on his own time by setting forth a carefully coloured account of events and persons of that older period. He wrote for his contemporaries, not for truth”

Further in the same book Ramsay wrote: *“The present writer takes the view that Luke’s history is unsurpassed in respect of its trustworthiness. At this point we are describing what reasons and arguments changed the mind of one who began under the impression that the history was written long after the events and that it was untrustworthy as a whole.”*

In the same book Ramsey goes on to write: *“Luke is a historian of the first rank; not merely are his statements of fact trustworthy, he is possessed of the true historic sense ... in short, this author should be placed along with the greatest of historians.”*

What we are studying was brought together by a Gentile Physician who had an amazing understanding of the Greek language and who carefully pulled his account together based on eye-witness accounts (in some cases the eyes were his) and it has proven to be both **accurate and reliable** in its history and geography.

As you consider all this, although Luke likely did not know it, we should never forget:

“All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness,” (2Ti 3:16 ESV)

1:1 In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach, 2 until the day when he was taken up, after he had given commands through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. 3 He presented himself alive to them after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God.

Vs 1 - The **first book**, as we have discussed is the **gospel of Luke**. Here Luke is again writing to **Theophilus**. This is the man who he wrote the gospel to and he is the recipient of this second letter.

By way of reminder Theophilus means “**lover of God.**”

Here he briefly outlines the contents of his first letter.

Notice the intro of Luke seems much more formal:

“1 ¶ Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us, 2 just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have delivered them to us, 3 it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, 4 that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught.” (Lu 1:1-4 ESV)

Some speculate that this less formal and more friendly introduction is because Theophilus became a believer along the way.

I suppose that is possible, but I suspect he was a believer the whole time, but he was **having doubts** and the gospel of Luke and even Acts are both written to **asway his concerns**.

You may be wondering about Luke **writing a “book”** in the first century. The Greek word used here is **λόγος (logos)**. It is the **first word** I sent to you; it is the **first account** I sent to you. It likely came in the **form of a scroll**.

But in that **first communication**, the gospel of Luke, I **conveyed to you all that Jesus began to do and to teach**.

The fourth gospel principally focused and recorded all that Jesus began to do and teach. For 3 ½ years, but then He **ascended and He is continuing that ministry through His apostles, then the church, now through you and I**.

The work of the church is the **continuing ministry** of the Lord Jesus, through His people.

BEFORE we leave verse 1. You should have the sense that Luke plans to pick up the story where he left it in the gospel according to Luke:

“44 Then he said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.” 45 Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, 46 and said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, 47 and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. 48 You are witnesses of these things. 49 And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high (Lu 24:44-49 ESV)

A few things to highlight:

- 1) Vs 44 - All that happened was planned, in fact it was prophesized in the Old Testament!
- 2) Vs 45 – Jesus opened their minds, He did something to change their perspective, how they read and understood the Scriptures.
- 3) Vs 46 - Thus it is “written” that Christ would die and rise on the third day!
- 4) Vs 47 - Repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name **to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem**.
- 5) Vs 48 - You are my witnesses of all this!
- 6) Vs 49 - And I am the promise of the Father upon you!
- 7) Vs 49 - But, you must stay in the city (Jerusalem) until you are “**clothed with power from on high.**” We wonder what they made of this?

Vs 2 - Here Luke provides the **timeframe associated with the first writing**, with the gospel of Luke. It catalogued **what Jesus did and what he taught up to a point**. That point was when he was **taken away, or lifted up ἀναλαμβάνω (analamano)** when Jesus' **earthly in-person ministry ended**.

By way of reminder, we then read this towards the end of the gospel of Luke:

“50 ¶ Then he (Jesus) led them out as far as Bethany, and lifting up his hands he blessed them. 51 While he blessed them, he parted from them and was carried up into heaven. (Lu 24:50-51 ESV)

But, Luke now wants us to know something else. Following his resurrection, Jesus was seen by his **followers a number of times (I believe 12 are catalogued)** and during this time he **gave commands** to the **apostles who he had chosen**. He gave commands **through the Holy Spirit**.

Now of course we would expect that Jesus gave **various commands** to his apostles during the time **following his resurrection and his ascension**, but we are a little surprised to see that he was giving these commands **through the power of the Holy Spirit**.

APPLICATION: If the Son of God, Jesus, the Second person of the God-head operated in the power of the Holy Spirit, which He did. **What is the lesson for you and I?**

Even though the Spirit had not yet been poured out, these commands were **coming (through or by) the Holy Spirit**.

These commands were given to the Apostles, The definite article is in place in the Greek. These are the 12, whose number has recently been diminished to 11.

This is that inner core of followers, the foundation of the early church, the apostles. These are the ones Jesus uniquely chose, uniquely gifted and uniquely sent.

They are often referred to as “the twelve”, examples (Mat 10:2-4; Mar 3:14-19; 4:10; 6:7; 9:35; 14:10; 14:17; 14:20; Luk 6:13; 9:1; 22:14; Joh 6:17; Acts 6:2; ICor 15:5). I would like to say a couple of things:

- 1) **The Greek word translated apostles is: ἀπόστολος (apostolos)**. First the word itself means a **messenger, one that is sent forth with orders, a delegate**.

The word is used in **81 verses** in the New Testament and in **most cases** is referring to the inner group of immediate followers of Jesus Christ. The ones whom Jesus chose here on earth.

We could say it normally refers to **the twelve, those who were members of a unique and transitory office of an apostle** (of which there are clear qualifications).

We will also see it is occasionally used to describe those in the New Testament who had been sent (minority usage) and we could say it generically describes all believers who in various ways are sent forth as ambassadors of King Jesus. But the most common use of the word is to refer to the inner 12.

There were clear qualifications to be part of this inner 12, let me show them to you. First, the New Testament in different places lays out the qualifications for the office of an apostle, before we look at those, I want you to see the timelessness of the 12 apostles.

FIRST, we see the uniqueness of their office in the Revelation. Here John (in the Spirit) is shown the holy city, here is what we read:

“10 And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great, high mountain, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, 11 having the glory of God, its radiance like a most rare jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal. 12 It had a great, high wall, with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and on the gates the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel were inscribed — 13 on the east three gates, on the north three gates, on the south three gates, and on

the west three gates. 14 And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.” (Re 21:10-14 ESV)

Clearly, these foundations represent the twelve apostles, those who were placed into that office. The **“twelve”** are referenced in many texts: (Mat 10:2-4; Mar 3:14-19; 4:10; 6:7; 9:35; 14:10; 14:17; 14:20; Luk 6:13; 9:1; 22:14; Joh 6:17; Acts 6:2; ICor 15:5). It is almost like **“the twelve”** became shorthand for how Jesus and the church referred to the original apostles, those who served “officially” if you will as apostles.

As there were 12 tribes there were 12 apostles. These men were the original messengers of the gospel, it was these who were the foundation of the church.

This is an example of a transition in Acts and not something that continues on. Other than Judas, as the apostles died, we have no indication that they were being replaced. This **office was very transitory**.

SECOND, we see the qualifications of the office of apostle:

- 1) To serve in the office of apostle, you had to have been a **witness of the resurrected Christ** (ICor 6:1):

“1 ¶ Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are not you my workmanship in the Lord? 2 If to others I am not an apostle, at least I am to you, for you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord.” (1Co 9:1-2 ESV)

- 2) You had to have been explicitly chosen by Jesus (Acts 9:15):

“13 But Ananias answered, “Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much evil he has done to your saints at Jerusalem. 14 And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on your name.” 15 But the Lord said to him, “Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel.” (Ac 9:13-15 ESV)

Like the surviving eleven, Paul was uniquely chosen by Jesus.

- 3) Apostles had the ability to perform signs and wonders (Acts 2:43): *“And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles.” (Ac 2:43 ESV)*

“The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with utmost patience, with signs and wonders and mighty works.” (2Co 12:12 ESV)

Those who served in the office of an Apostle had a **unique transitory role**. Along with Jesus, they laid the foundation of the gospel for the church. The foundation thus being laid there is no longer a need for those to serve in the office of an apostle.

It seems evident from the qualifications and the fact that there is no indication that the apostles were replaced when they were martyred that this office was transitory and has ultimately ceased to be. Paul does not encourage people to seek to be apostles nor explain to the church how to choose apostles.

THIRD, we also see the word used in a generic sense, you could think of this as having the of the “gift” of an apostle, this use extends beyond the 12. We see others not numbered among the twelve, yet called apostles, this includes James (Lord’s half-brother) (Gal 1:18-19), Barnabus (Acts 14:13-14), Timothy and Silvanus (I Thes 1:1/2:6), Epaphroditus (Php 2:25), Andronicus and Junia (Rom 16:7).

So, it seems that there were those who did not serve in the “office” of an apostle, but were people who were **“sent”**.

FOURTH, there is a generic sense, in which all followers of Jesus Christ are called to be apostles, they are ambassadors (II Cor 5:18-20).

Vs 3 - During **this time** between his **resurrection** and his **ascension** (Jesus) **presented himself alive**, this was **following his death by crucifixion**, he showed himself alive to his apostles and He did so with **many “proofs.”**

Let both those words (many and proofs) sorta settle into your mind. Jesus, following his passion, showed himself alive with **many πολὺς (polus), proofs τεκμήριον (tekmerion).**

The word translated by the ESV “**proofs**” is a **Hapax Legomenon**.

APPLICATION: For a person to rise from the dead is an **obvious miracle**. One that the natural world rejects. Here Luke is telling us that **Jesus presented Himself alive**, following his suffering (crucifixion) and **He did so with or by many infallible (convincing) proofs.**

What? Luke believed there were proofs of the resurrection? The ESV described them as “proofs” the KJV and NKJV describe them as “infallible proofs” while the Holman and the NASB describe them as “convincing proofs.”

Next we read that Jesus appeared to them for **forty days** and he spoke to them **things about the Kingdom of God.**

*** It is worth noting that only the book of Acts tells us that this period when Jesus was appearing to his apostles was **40 days**. ***

*** Also, the phrase **Kingdom of God appears six times** in Acts (1:3; 8:12; 14:22; 19:8; 28:22, 31).

This is a critical discussion for Rome is still ruling over Israel. This is a critical discussion for the Israelites had just rejected King Jesus.

Jesus had to unravel their understanding of the King and His Kingdom.

So during this 40 days, the apostles received commands and were taught by the resurrected King Jesus. **Can you imagine what this was like?**

4 And while staying with them he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, "you heard from me; 5 for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

Vs 4-5 - So Jesus, during the 40 days when he was with them, following his resurrection, but prior to his ascension, during this time **Jesus taught them**, Jesus **gave them various commands** b Jesus gave them a very specific command. **Jesus ordered the apostles not to depart from Jerusalem.**

Jesus ordered them to stay in Jerusalem and to **wait for the promise that was made by the Father**, a promise that the apostles had also heard from Jesus.

During this time he gave them **additional details** about the **promise of the Father: *for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.***

BUT WHAT DID THAT MEAN?

In the upper room Jesus had said much about the Holy Spirit. But what did he mean that they would be baptized by the Holy Spirit, I suspect they were a little miffed.

Following the events on the road to Emmaus when the two disciples met Jesus, they came back to Jerusalem and shared how that Jesus was alive and all that happened on the road to Emmaus:

We read this in Luke:

"As they were talking about these things, Jesus himself stood among them, and said to them, "Peace to you!" (Lu 24:36 ESV)

They were obviously startled, he calmed them down, they touched his body and he showed them his hands and his feet, then we read:

*"44 Then he said to them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled."
45 Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, 46 and said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, 47 and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.
48 You are witnesses of these things. 49 And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are **clothed with power from on high.**" (Lu 24:44-49 ESV)*

So, in his gospel, **Luke records the command by Jesus for his apostles to stay in Jerusalem** until they are **"clothed with power from on high."**

Somewhere in those **last forty days** he further explained they would be **baptized by the Holy Spirit**, but what did that look like and what did it even mean?

So in **front of the disciples, at some time in their future** is this **baptism of the Holy Spirit**, this is a different kind of baptism, it is not through water, but by the Spirit.

One more thing... Imagine Jesus gave them a "honey do" list and on that list was **one check box**, one item: **WAIT until God clothes you with power**, wait until you are baptized by the Person of the Holy Spirit! **Wait!**

6 ¶ So when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" 7 He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. 8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

Vs 6 - So during their time together, during this **40 day period of teaching**, at some point they were together, and they asked him what no doubt was kicking around their minds.

We can imagine this question.

Let's be honest, in spite of being told (over and over), the final week of Jesus' life had turned out in a **way they could never have imagined**. Even though he had told them multiple times that he was going to Jerusalem, to be crucified, **they were expecting something different**.

The two on the road to Emmaus sum this up:

"15 While they were talking and discussing together, Jesus himself drew near and went with them. 16 But their eyes were kept from recognizing him. 17 And he said to them, "What is this conversation that you are holding with each other as you walk?" And they stood still, looking sad. 18 Then one of them, named Cleopas, answered him, "Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?" 19 And he said to them, "What things?" And they said to him, "Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, a man who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, 20 and how our chief priests and rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death, and crucified him. 21 But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things happened." (Lu 24:15-21 ESV)

His death, made no sense to them, they expected him to establish his earthly kingdom and to redeem Israel from the Roman yoke of oppression.

So, during these 40 days, having absorbed the blow that he did not redeem them from Roman as they expected, but instead died for their sins.

They asked, Lord will you at that time: “restore the kingdom to Israel?”

Jesus chooses not to answer their question and instead deals with a much more immediate matter.

Vs 7 – Look at his response to their question:

- 1) It is not your business to know the times or the seasons that the Father has fixed...

Instead, Jesus deals with a **much more immediate and much more important topic** that will be developed across the book of Acts.

Vs 8 - So let's pull apart what Jesus is saying:

- 1) Do not worry about the restoration of the kingdom to Israel, it is **not your business to know the timing**.
- 2) BUT, you will **received power**. The Greek word is **δύναμις (dunamis)**, it is where we get the English word dynamite. You will receive power.
- 3) When the **Holy Spirit has come upon you**.
- 4) **This** power, that you will receive after the Holy Spirit has come upon you, will enable to you **be my witnesses**:
 - a. In Jerusalem
 - b. In Judea
 - c. In Samaria
 - d. To the end of the earth!

This highlights a couple of points worthy of discussion:

- 1) The apostles **in one sense** had already received the Holy Spirit:
“19 ¶ On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, “Peace be with you.” 20 When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. 21 Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.” 22 And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit.” (Joh 20:19-22 ESV)
- 2) In another sense, the Holy Spirit could not be poured out until Jesus had returned to heaven, thus although we can believe that the apostles had been saved (born again) (believed on the resurrected Jesus), they had placed faith in the risen Jesus. **They needed to wait for this important and indeed pivotal event!**

During this **transitory time**, the Spirit was not yet made available to live within believers full time. **At Pentecost, this changed.**

So being **saved** in the **New Testament economy** and being **given the Spirit** are synonyms (Rom 8:7-9).

Now as a believer our behavior can **quench the Spirit** (I Thes 5:16-19) and **grieve the Spirit** (Eph 4:30), but the moment a person places faith in Jesus they are born again and given the down payment of the Holy Spirit.

But the moment we believed in the Lord Jesus, we were given the Holy Spirit.

9 And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. 10 And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in

white robes, 11 and said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven." 12 Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey away.

Vs 9 - As they watched, he was lifted up, and up and up and to their vision, from their perspective he got smaller and smaller and smaller until a cloud took him out of their sight!

It is possible that this cloud was the very Shekinah glory of God, we do not know.

Vs 10 – So, they are still gazing into the heaven and then behold, suddenly, two men, in white robes (we would assume these are angels). Two angels were standing there with the eleven.

Vs 11 - Then the two angels spoke and asked a **rhetorical question** and provided a **conclusion**:

Why are you standing here gazing into the heavens? This Jesus, who was just taken up to heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go. **He is coming back!**

Now we can disagree on the details of his return, we can disagree on the timing of his return, we can disagree on matters around the tribulation period as it relates to his return, but surely we all agree that the Lord Jesus Christ is coming back (IThes 4:16-18; ICor 15:51-54; IIPet 3:8-10)!

Stop gazing in the heavens and get on with your assigned mission!

Vs 12 - So they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, it is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey.

They went back to Jerusalem to wait for the promise from the Father.

Can you imagine what this must have been like?

Let me show you how Luke ends:

"52 And they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, 53 and were continually in the temple blessing God." (Lu 24:52-53 ESV)

They **worshipped him** (we can imagine), and they returned to Jerusalem (with great joy). Can you imagine what they felt like, can you imagine the Spiritual high they are on?

And they spent most of their time (they were continually) in the temple blessing God and waiting for the promise of God!

WOW! Imagine the discussions, imagine the spiritual high, all the while waiting for the promise from the Father that they would be clothed with power from on high, all the while waiting (whatever it meant) that they would be baptized by the Holy Spirit.

We leave the apostles here, we leave the 12 (minus 1) here, they are back in Jerusalem, brimming with **excitement and expectation**.

I hope this is a good picture of us! They were waiting for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. We are waiting for the return of Christ, the only difference is our waiting should be **extremely active** as we share the gospel with all those around us!
