

(Through the Bible) Acts 1-2

by Chuck Smith

The sermon explores the significance of the Book of Acts, the ministry of Jesus Christ, and the importance of human instruments in accomplishing God's work.

Duration: 1:31:02

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Luke 24:49, Acts 1:14-15, Acts 2:16-17, Acts 2:21, Acts 2:38

Topics: "Faith And Witness", "Resurrection Of Christ"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the importance of multiple witnesses in determining the guilt of a person accused of a crime. He emphasizes the significance of truthful testimony and the impact it can have on a person's judgment. The speaker then shifts to the topic of God's use of imperfect individuals to reveal Himself to the world. He highlights the chosen role of believers in sharing God's message despite their own limitations. The sermon concludes with a reference to the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the infallible proofs of His resurrection, challenging the notion that faith in religious theories requires more faith than accepting scientific facts.

Transcript

Shall we turn to the Book of Acts, chapter 1, as we begin our study in the history of the early church. Luke, the author of the Book of Acts, a companion of Paul the Apostle, who was author also of the Gospel according to Luke, wrote these two treatises to a friend, Theophilus. Theophilus is a Greek name.

It's a name that has a beautiful meaning. The name means lover of God. There are some who believe that it was not a man at all, but just the epistle, I mean the Gospel and the Book of Acts were just addressed to the lovers of God, whoever you may be.

There are other traditions that say that Theophilus was actually Luke's master, that in those days physicians were slaves and usually the slave of a wealthy patron, so that Luke's master was Theophilus and he released Luke to be with Paul in the missionary journeys and thus Luke is writing back to his former master. That is an early tradition of the church, but it is of course impossible to prove like so many of the traditions. There are also those who believe that when Paul was in Troas and he received a vision of a man calling unto him saying, come over to Macedonia and help us, that that man in Paul's vision was none other than Luke.

For the first one that Paul really met when he came to Macedonia was Luke. And as we are in the Book of Acts, you find that when we get to that portion of the Book of Acts, Luke begins to write more in the first person rather than the third person. So it is evidently at this particular point in the Acts of the Apostles that Luke became a companion of Paul and began the journey with him and he began to use the pronouns we and us instead of they and them and so forth.

So that this is no doubt where Luke became a participant and an eyewitness of those things that were happening from this point on. And we will point that out to you when we get to that point. So he begins the Acts of the Apostles by tying it with the Gospel according to Luke.

And it is interesting that the very last thing that Luke records in his Gospel is the very first thing he records in the Acts of the Apostles. We find the Gospel of Luke closing as Jesus is telling his disciples to wait in Jerusalem until they be endued with power from on high. And then Jesus ascended up into heaven.

And so he closes the Gospel. So in opening the Acts of the Apostles, he writes the former treatise that is the Gospel according to Luke. Have I written unto you, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach.

And the key word is began. The Gospel according to Luke is not the full story of the ministry of Jesus Christ. It's only the beginning of the ministry of Jesus Christ.

Jesus continues to minister to the needs of people. Jesus continues to heal the sick. Jesus continues to raise the dead.

Jesus continues to minister his love and his Gospel to the world. Only now he is ministering through those disciples who have been anointed with his Holy Spirit. But the ministry of Christ is continuing basically is the premise that Luke takes in the Acts of the Apostles.

So the former treatise of all that Jesus began both to do and to teach. Now, because of that, the Acts of the Apostles is an unfinished book in that the Lord today continues to work through the lives of those who have dedicated themselves to be the instruments of God. To be led and guided and anointed by his Holy Spirit to continue the ministry of Jesus in the world today.

Now, God has ordained that his work should be accomplished through human instruments. I do not say that it must be accomplished. God can use angelic beings for his work and there will come a time during the book of Revelation when God will use angels to proclaim his Gospel to people all over the world.

Revelation chapter 14, the first angel flying through the midst of heaven, having the everlasting Gospel. But at the present time, God has chosen to use human instruments as imperfect as they may be. Yet that's what God has ordained to use.

And the exciting thing about that is that God will use me and God will use you. So many times we're begging off, oh Lord, I can't speak. I've never been able to speak before or even now, Lord, as Moses tried to beg off of the call of God.

Jeremiah said, Lord, I'm just a kid. No one's going to listen to me. And we all have our excuses why we can't be used, don't we? We all know the reasons why God couldn't use us.

One time as the Lord was calling a prophet to do his work, he said, Lord, send whoever you want. Lord said, yeah, I've called you. Lord, good idea, send whoever you want.

And so often we're in that position. Lord, send by the hand of whomsoever you will. Anybody but me, Lord.

And yet God has ordained to use us. Now each of us can show our own imperfections. Each of us can point out our own inabilities.

And all of us can find an excuse why God wouldn't want to use me. But yet God has chosen to use you. That through your life, he might reveal himself to a needy world.

You wonder when God has such instruments to use, how he ever got the job done, don't you? Until the day in which he was taken up after that he, through the Holy Spirit, had given commandments to the apostles whom he had chosen. So that is what he ended the Gospel of Luke with, the day that Jesus was taken up after he had told the apostles to wait for the endowment of power. To whom he also, that is the apostles, he also showed himself alive to them after his passion or death by many infallible proofs.

It is difficult to deny the fact of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. I was amused as well as annoyed and irritated by an article I read in the Santa Ana Register this last Saturday of the creation science and evolutionary theories being presented in the county schools. How that this one professor said that he teaches a science class and thus they deal only in facts and they don't have any place for theories because science is based upon fact and creation is based upon religious superstitions and it takes a lot of faith to believe the religious theories where when you are dealing with facts you can just accept them.

And I thought very interesting. In that science class they taught me it was a fact that the world was four billion years old and now today they are teaching it's a fact that the world is 12 billion years old and it wasn't that long ago that I went to school. It is interesting to me that the Bible has never needed to be revised and updated to meet the current data that men have discovered.

And yet if you would take my high school science textbooks today and try to teach a science class from them, you would find that many of the things that were taught as scientific fact when I was in high school are no longer recognized as scientific fact. The simple cell protoplasm is no longer a simple cell but extremely complex. So if there is any fact that can be attested to in history, it is the fact of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

We have a jurisprudence system that is based upon the testimony of witnesses. And if a man is accused of a crime and there are people who witnessed that crime while it was being committed and they are brought to the stand and they swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, nothing but the truth, so help them God. And in their questioning, their being questioned, they affirm that I saw that man in the bank on May the 23rd.

I saw him pull out a gun from his coat. I heard him demand that all of the money be given to him. I saw him as he left the bank.

I saw him as the officer apprehended him outside. And if you can get three or four witnesses to point to that man and will keep their testimony under cross-examination, that man is a judge to be guilty. He is the one that did it.

We have two or three witnesses that are testifying the same story about that man. And he is then accepted as fact that he is the one who perpetrated the crime and is guilty. You've got witnesses who have sworn to tell the truth that are verifying.

Now, after the death of Jesus, when he rose again, he appeared unto many different people who gave sworn testimony that they saw him, that they talked to him, that he appeared to them in various places under different circumstances and for a period of 40 days was visiting with them. And at one time, up to as many as 500 people who were gathered at one place, he appeared. Now, it's difficult to just cast aside or deny the witness of these people.

To do so is to discredit our whole jurisprudence system. But not only that, these men who testified that they saw the risen Lord, that they talked with him, that they ate with him, they, all of them with the exception of one, met violent deaths at the hands of other people because of their affirming that the story they told was true. Now, you talk about a witness sworn to tell the truth, the whole truth, nothing but the truth.

If a person's life was threatened because of that witness and it was a lie, at least one of them would have broken under the pressure and would have confessed to the entire hoax. He showed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs. Being seen of them for 40 days, speaking to them of the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God.

Now, sometimes we fault the disciples because of their questions of the timing of the Kingdom of God, but let it be remembered that the Kingdom of God was the favorite subject of Jesus Christ. He was always talking about the Kingdom of God, and it is a great hope that he was planting in the hearts of all men. Things are not always going to continue corrupted as they are.

The world is not going to go forever under the power of darkness, under the bondage of evil. God is going to one day establish his Kingdom upon the earth of righteousness, joy, and peace, and Jesus shall reign where'er the sun doth her successive journeys run, and his Kingdom will extend from shore to shore. And that day will be the most glorious day the world has ever seen, as sickness and suffering and pain will be abolished in his Kingdom.

As sin and greed and these things that have made the world such an intolerable place will be abolished in his Kingdom. Godless commercialism, the exploitation of man, all of these things abolished in his glorious Kingdom when he reigns. No wonder the disciples were anxious to get it on.

I'm anxious to get it on. I'm anxious for his Kingdom to come, and Jesus told us when we pray, really the first petition is, Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven. And it is a right kind of a desire that we should all have.

I desire the Kingdom of God. And so he was talking to them during this forty days of the Kingdom. And being assembled together with them, he commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me.

So he said, Now look, wait here in Jerusalem until you receive the promise of the Father. This promise that he is referring to is no doubt the promise in Joel, where the Lord promised, and it shall come to pass in the latter days, saith the Lord, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall dream dreams, your old men shall see visions, and upon my

servants and my handmaidens, the other way around, your young men see visions, old men dream dreams, because I'm dreaming. And that's how I always remember that one.

And upon my servants and handmaidens will I pour out of my spirit, saith the Lord. The promise of the Father. The day is going to come when God is going to pour out his spirit upon all flesh, all of the believers.

They will each one receive that dynamic from God. For John, he said, truly baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now. Now, the idea of baptism was that of immersion, the baptizo.

John baptized with water, submerged the people in water. You're going to be submerged in the Holy Spirit not many days. Now, when they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel? When's it going to be, Lord? When is the time for this restoration? And Jesus is talking to them now not about the kingdom, but about the power that they are going to receive for service.

And so he brushes aside their question, saying unto them, it is not for you to know the times or the seasons which the Father has put in his own power. It's not for you to know now they lived constantly in the anticipation of the immediate setting up of the kingdom during the entire lifetime of Jesus. They were expecting him at any moment to go into the phone booth and come out as the Savior of the world and show his power and demonstrate and to overthrow the governments of the world and to establish God's kingdom upon the earth.

And they were waiting daily for this change to transpire. And whenever Jesus would talk about going to Jerusalem and being turned over into the hands of sinful man, crucified and all, oh, no, Lord, no, no, you don't understand the kingdom, Lord. Be that far from thee.

And when Jesus died on the cross, they were greatly disappointed. The two disciples on the road to Emmaus, so sad. Hey, fellas, how come you're so sad as you're walking along? What do you mean? You must be a stranger around here if you don't know the things that have been happening lately in Jerusalem.

What things? Oh, a fellow by the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Oh, man, it was mighty in power and wisdom. The anointing of God was upon his life.

And we had hoped that in him was the deliverance of Israel. But they crucified him. We had hoped.

He's dead. Now he's risen. And he's saying in a few days, fellas, you're going to receive the promise of the father.

Oh, what promise? The promise of the establishing of the kingdom. You see, it was legitimate that they should. Oh, is this it, Lord? All right.

Is this the time you're going to set up your kingdom now? No, it's not for you to know those times that the father is appointed or that the father has in his own power. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you. Now, here, the Greek preposition hippie is used to signify a new relationship that they were to have with the Holy Spirit.

In the gospel, according to John, chapter 14, as Jesus is there promising to send the Holy Spirit, he said, I will not leave you comfortless. I will come to you. And he said, and I will pray the father and he will send to you another comforter, even the spirit of truth whom the world cannot receive because it seeth him not neither knows him, but you know him for he dwells with you, Para, and he shall be in you.

Same Greek prepositions are as ours. Only they spell it in instead of I am twofold relationship there in John. He is with you, Para, but he's going to be dwelling in you.

But now Jesus said, you're going to receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. The Greek preposition hippie, which is translated in different texts throughout the new Testament as upon or over, or I like it overflows because in the seventh chapter of the gospel, according to John on the last day, the great day of the feast, when Jesus stood there on the temple mountain, cried to the people, if any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. And he who drinks of the water that I give out of his innermost being, there will gush torrents of living water.

John said this spake, he of the spirit, which was not yet given, which they who believed on him should receive. What did he speak of the spirit? That it would be like a torrent of living water flowing out. So I like when the spirit overflows you upon you or over you or overflows from you.

So the threefold relationship. He is with you prior to your conversion. He is the one who causes you to realize that you are a sinner.

He is the one who points to Jesus Christ as the answer, as he convinces the world of sin of righteousness and of judgment. The moment you open your life and heart to Jesus Christ and invite him to come in the Holy spirit comes and begins to indwell. You, he shall be in you.

Know you not that you are not your own. You've been bought with a price. Therefore glorify God in your body and your spirit, which are his.

And know you not that your body is the temple of the Holy spirit, which is in you. Be not drunk with wine wherein is excess, but be filled or be being filled with the spirit. But now here is a third relationship.

This is a empowering experience. You will receive the dunamis, the dynamics when the Holy spirit has come hippy upon you or over you, or when there is that overflow from you and ye shall be witnesses unto me. And so the dynamic to be a witness for Jesus Christ.

It is interesting that the word witness in Greek is the word Martis from which we get our word martyr. And in Greek, it does mean martyr. So that witness a witness is one who not only proclaims what he believes, he lives what he believes.

He is what he believes. And he believes it so strongly that if necessary, he'll die for what he believes. That's how strong is his belief.

He's a Martis. You can't stop him. He's not afraid to die for what he believes.

And so you remember when Paul was on his way back to Jerusalem and Agabus came down to Caesarea and he took Paul's girdle and tied himself up. And he said, so is the man who owns this girdle to be bound when he gets to Jerusalem. And Paul's friends all began to weep and say, Oh, Paul, don't go.

Don't go. And he says, what do you mean by these tears? I think you're going to dissuade me. You think I'm worried about being bound.

I'm ready to die. He was a Martis. I'm ready to die.

So that being put to death for your faith did not make you a martyr because you were a martyr. You were put to death because you were a witness because you believed it so strong. So it did not make you a bit.

And this had only proved what you were. You were a witness all along. If you hadn't been a Martis, you would never have gone to your death.

You would have recanted. You would have you said, Oh, wait, wait, hold on. Let's change course here.

I think that I may have made a mistake. You know, you say, well, he wasn't a Martis. It's the same thing.

You know, stealing a horse doesn't make you a horse thief. It only proves that you were no one steals a horse unless he's a horse thief. So stealing it doesn't make you a horse thief.

It only proves that you were a horse thief all along. If you weren't a horse thief, you could have never stolen a horse. So being martyred only proves what you were a witness, a Martis, and you will be witnesses.

And isn't it interesting that most of them were martyred witnesses unto me. Now the witness was to be both in Jerusalem and in all of Judea. The witness began right at home.

It's the hardest place, isn't it? It's to start right at home in Jerusalem. And then the area around Jerusalem, the area of Judea. And then it was to spread on up into Samaria.

And then it was to go out into the uttermost parts of the world. And as we study the book of Acts, we will see this very progression, how that the witness began in Jerusalem. We'll get that in the next chapter.

And then we'll see how it began to spread out throughout Judea. And then Philip went up into Samaria. And then finally Paul and Barnabas are called to go into the uttermost parts of the world.

And so the witness spread through the anointing and through the empowering of the Holy Spirit. Now, when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up and a cloud received him out of their sight. So this is the final promise made by Jesus to his disciples.

This is it. The final words prior to his ascension. Of course, later he came and talked to Paul and others, but prior to his ascension, this is his final word.

And upon this, when he had spoken these things, while they were watching him, he was taken up and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they were looking steadfastly toward heaven, as he went up, behold, there were two men who stood by them in white apparel. We assume they were angels, which also said, ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in light manner as you have seen him go into heaven.

So they saw him as he ascended up into heaven. And they will behold him when he comes again. Behold, every behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints to execute judgment upon the earth.

And then unto him who loved us and gave himself for us, and who has made us unto our God, kings and priests, and we shall reign with him upon the earth. Behold, the Lord cometh and every eye shall see him. And they also who pierced him shall mourn.

So the Lord's coming, every eye shall see him. The Jehovah Witnesses say that he has already come, but it was a secret coming. And even as it was only the disciples that saw him go, it was only the disciples of the Jehovah Witnesses who saw him return.

But Jesus said, if they say unto you, he's come in secret and gone into a secret chamber, don't believe it. So you have your choice to believe Jesus or them. This same Jesus, which has taken up from you into heaven shall so come in light manner as you've seen him go into heaven.

Now there's a very interesting verse in third John. And in this particular verse in third John, and you might turn to it because it's one that is important to remember. Would you believe second John? But if you're at third John, you can't be far from second John.

Verse seven for many deceivers are entered into the world who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. That unfortunately is a poor translation of the Greek for this participle is in the present tense and should be translated is coming in the flesh. Those who would deny that Jesus Christ is coming in the flesh.

What does John say of them? They are a deceiver and an antichrist. Look to yourselves that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward for whosoever transgresses and abides not in the doctrine of Christ has not God. He that abides in the doctrine of Christ, he has both the father and the son.

And if they're coming into your door on Saturday morning and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house and neither bid him goodbye. For he that bids him goodbye is a partaker of his evil deeds. Ask them one question, is Jesus coming in the flesh? Just ask them that question.

And if they say no, just remember what John warned you and what John told you. If any confess not that Jesus Christ is coming in the flesh. You remember when he was with the and he said, here, give me something to eat.

He said, you know, spirits don't eat. Touch me. See, it's me.

So the same Jesus is coming again in the same manner in which they saw him go into heaven. And I, for one, believe that that coming is very soon. Then returned they unto Jerusalem from the Mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey, about two thirds of a mile.

And when they were come in, they went up into an upper room where their abode, both Peter and James and John and Andrew and Philip and Thomas and Bartholomew and Matthew, James, the son of Alphaeus and Simon, and Judas, the brother of James. And these all continue with one accord in prayer and supplication with the women and Mary, the mother of Jesus. And with his brothers, this is the first men, or this is the last mention rather of Mary, the mother of Jesus at this point.

And from this point on, there is no further mention of her in the acts of the apostles or in the epistles, no mention of her death or have her miraculous ascension into heaven without death. Nothing is mentioned in the scripture. It's silent.

His brethren would be a reference probably to James and to Jude and to those other brothers who were sons of Joseph and Mary, the upper room. There are some that say it is the same upper room in which Jesus had the last supper with his disciples. And yet there are others who hold to this upper room being a room in the temple precincts where the early church met.

Take your choice. And in those days, Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples and said the number of their names together were about 120. Men and brethren, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit by the mouth of David spake before concerning Jesus, which was a guide to those who took Jesus.

Now, here again, Peter still in the same impetuous self, you know, they're they're waiting in prayer and supplication. And Peter stands up and says, fellas, there's a scripture that's got to be fulfilled. And, you know, he's going to move ahead.

Let's let's get the program going. Let's cast lots and find out, you know, who's going to take Judas's place. I do feel that Peter was again in the flesh manifesting that impetuous nature that was his.

And I think that the future history of the church in the book of Acts points this out. I am interested in Peter's understanding of the scriptures, how that he is quoting from so many places in the Old Testament. And Peter does manifest a very great understanding of the Old Testament scriptures, which is a point in his favor.

Notice that Peter ascribes to the Holy Spirit those things that David wrote so that all scripture is given by inspiration of God. Not part of the scriptures, because if you tell me that part of the scriptures are given by inspiration of God, then I must ask you what parts are by inspiration and what parts are not by inspiration. And then you are then the authority who tells me what part I can believe and what part I can't believe.

And the minute God is no longer the authority, but you're the authority, I'm in trouble. So beware of those who say, well, you can't believe all of the scriptures. The scriptures themselves say all scripture is given by inspiration of God.

And here, Luke in writing of what Peter was saying, declares that David was actually the spokesman for the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit by the mouth of David spake concerning Judas, for he was numbered with us. He was one of the 12. He had obtained a part of this ministry, but now this man purchased a field with the reward of iniquity and falling headlong.

He purchased the field with the reward that potter's field, as the prophecy of Zechariah 11th chapter declared and falling headlong. He burst asunder in the midst and all of his bowels gushed out. Now there are those who find a discrepancy in the scriptures because in one of the gospels, we are told that when Judas came back and tried to return the money and they said, Hey, it's your problem.

We can't take it and put it back in the temple treasury. It's blood money that he threw it there on the floor of the temple. And he went out and hung himself.

So now here, Peter tells us that he fell headlong and just popped. And there are those who imagine a discrepancy, very simple. He went up into the tree to hang himself, tied the rope around his neck and tied it to the limb and jumped.

And the force of the fall either snapped the rope or his head. And he fell on down into the canyon. And just as he said it here, it was known to all of the dwellers at Jerusalem in so much as the field is called in their tongue, Al-Saddamah, that is to say the field of blood.

For it is written in the book of Psalms, let his habitation be desolate and let no man dwell therein and his bishopric let another take. Now, in reality, he's quoting from two different Psalms here from Psalm 69, 25, and he puts it together with Psalm 109, eight and putting the two together. He finds these prophecies concerning Judas.

Wherefore, of these men now here, as they're looking for someone to take Judas's place to be an apostle, here are the qualifications that they look for in that time. Wherefore, of these men, which have accompanied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us. Now you remember there were many disciples, many disciples of which Jesus chose 10 to be apostles.

And the word apostle means one who was sent out or chose 12 to be apostles. So he sent out the 12, uh, a number of human government. So we only have 11.

We need one to take Judas's place, but we need one who has been with us all the while from the beginning with Jesus, from the time that he was baptized by John until the day that he was taken up from us. Must one be ordained to be a witness of what of his resurrection. So these are the requirements they were looking for.

Someone who'd been around the whole while from the time of John's baptism to the Ascension and one who saw the risen Lord and thus could bear fact of the resurrection, their testimony to the fact. Now, Paul, the apostle later in asserting the fact that he was an apostle said, have I not seen the risen Christ? So evidently that was one of the requirements of apostleship. Someone asked me, are there apostles today? Well, I don't know.

I, um, don't think that there are in the same sense as there were in the new Testament. Surely there's none today that can bear witness to the resurrection as they did. Now they appointed to Joseph called Barth of us, who was surname justice and Matthews.

And they prayed and said, thou Lord, which knows the hearts of all men show whether of these two that you have chosen. I think that we often make this mistake of giving the Lord two choices, both wrong limiting God. You see, we're so prone to do this.

Obviously, Paul was God's choice. Peter was just impetuous and jumping the gun and saying, Hey, we got to do something, you know, got to help God out. You know, one's missing and we got to fill him in.

And yet God, which one of these two do you want? And giving God the two choices that he may take part of this ministry and apostleship from which Judas by the transgression fell that he might go to his own place. And so they gave forth their lots an interesting way by which they sought to determine the will of God. Let's throw dice, find out what God's will is here.

It's interesting to me, the various ways that people have devised to discern the will of God. Now, in the Old Testament times, they had an interesting way of coming to the priest. Who would inquire of the Lord for them through the urn and the Thuman, the lights and perfections.

Now, just what this urn and Thuman were, we don't know. I'm sure that they were not the colored glasses that Joseph Smith found with the golden tablets, the magic glasses that when you put them on, you could suddenly read the Greek or the hieroglyphic writing. There are those who say that the urn and the Thuman were actually a black and a white stone that was worn in a pouch on the chest of the priest.

And so they would pray and ask the Lord a particular question. You remember that David was asking the Lord definite questions. Lord, shall we go out against the Philistines? The answer was no.

So again, the next day, Lord, shall we go out against the Philistines? The answer was yes. When shall we go? You know, and they would ask specific questions and the Lord would direct them through the urn and the Thuman. And they say that the priest, they would pray, seek God, the priest would reach in and pull out one of the two stones.

If it was the white stone, it was a yes answer. If it was a no, then it would be the black stone that he would pull out. And some even say that we get the term black ball from this urn and Thuman actually back in the original, that it is a no vote against a particular project or idea.

So just what the Thuman actually were, we don't know. But during the Old Testament period, they did use a method of casting lots to determine the will of God. And so here the disciples are picking up on this same thing as they are throwing the dice to see which of the two fellows that God had chosen to replace Judas Iscariot.

The lot fell on Matthias. He was numbered with the 11. Now who in the world is Matthias? No one ever heard of him before or since.

So it'll be interesting to meet Matthias and find out who he is and what he did. But I think from the subsequent history, it's obvious to assume that God chose Paul as an apostle. Paul declares it himself.

Now, this is the last time we ever read of them seeking to discern the will of God by the casting of lots or by a chance kind of a thing. I know a fellow today who in seeking to discern the will of the Lord will pray, ask the Lord a question, and he'll have 10 pennies in his pocket. And as he's praying, he'll take the pennies with eyes closed and put them down on the table.

And if they all come up heads, it's a yes. Not an interesting thing. Every once in a while, they all come up heads and that's pretty good odds.

So, um, yet we don't find any pattern for this after the Holy Spirit was given. You see, once the Holy Spirit came upon the church, then the Holy Spirit began to speak to them and direct them. And the Holy Spirit said, separate unto me, Paul and Barnabas for the ministry where I've called them and the Holy Spirit sent them for.

So we find the church now more directly guided by the Holy Spirit. Once the Holy Spirit came, this business of throwing dice to find out the will of God was set aside. Now, when the day of Pentecost, this would be the feast day following the Passover at which Jesus was crucified.

And 50 days after the Passover, the second major Jewish feast, the Feast of Pentecost, or the Feast of Engathering. This is, of course, the time that they would gather the winter wheat, the winter grains that had been sown in the early part of June. They're ready for harvest.

And the Feast of Pentecost was marked by their taking a portion of their field and harvesting it, tying the wheat in the sheaves, bringing them in and offering them before the Lord as a wave offering, as the priest would take the sheaves and wave them before the Lord and offer them before the Lord as the first fruits unto God. God, to you belongs the first fruit. There's a harvest that is coming in, but this Lord is the first fruit.

It belongs to you. And they would give to God the first fruits of the increase of their land at the Feast of Pentecost and the Feast of Engathering. And as was the custom in all of the Jewish feasts, there would be people that had gathered, Jews that had gathered from all over the world to celebrate these feasts.

And so the day of Pentecost, the feast had come, and the disciples were with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as a fire, and it sat upon each of them.

And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them the ability or as the Spirit prompted their speech or as King James, the Spirit gave them utterance, but better as the Spirit gave them the ability or prompted their speech. Now we notice certain phenomena accompanying the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. There was a sound from heaven like a rushing mighty wind that filled all of the house there where they were sitting.

And notice they were sitting. It doesn't matter if you're sitting, standing, or whatever. It is not the physical position.

I am tired of trying to formulate God. I think that God defies any formulation by man. But people are always trying to put together a formula, and I guess it's only natural.

You know, when you pray for someone and they're healed, you try to think, now how did I pray? You know, what did I do? You know, and you know, something happened here. Oh, that's great. You know, now how did I do it? You know, and you're immediately wanting to formulate it.

What did I say? Magic words, magic movements, or whatever. But God defies being formulated by man. And so they were sitting in this particular case.

And there appeared unto them these cloven tongues like fire, and it was above or upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit. And in this case, began to speak Glossiella, other tongues, as the Spirit gave them the ability, and was prompting their speech.

Now there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews who were devout men out of every nation under heaven. And now when this was noised abroad, what was noised abroad? Maybe the sound of the wind. And the people heard this whistling sound like a hurricane or something coming out of the house.

They came running to see what in the world was this noise coming out of the house. The multitude came together and were confounded because every man heard them speak in his own dialectus, in his own language or dialect. And they were all amazed and marveled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all of these which speak Galileans? How is it that we hear every man in our own dialect when we were born? And the Parthians, the Medes, the Elamites, the dwellers of Mesopotamia, Judea, Cappadocia, Pontus, and Asia, Pergium, Pamphylia, in Egypt and parts of Libya, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Greeks and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our dialectus, the languages, the wonderful works of

God.

Now notice that when they understood the languages, these people were not preaching sermons in these languages, nor was their speaking addressed to men, but it was addressed to God as they were proclaiming the wonderful works of God. Somewhere along the line, the Pentecostal churches have gotten a mistaken notion that God often speaks to the church through tongues and interpretation of tongues. That is not scriptural.

In 1 Corinthians 14, Paul says if a man speaks in an unknown tongue, he is not speaking to man, albeit in the spirit, he is speaking to God divine mysteries or secrets. And thus he tells them that if in church a person speaks in an unknown tongue, that he should pray that they might interpret. And if there is no interpreter, then he should not speak, but keep silent and speak unto himself and unto God.

For if he gets up and speaks in an unknown tongue in a service and no one interprets, how is the person who doesn't understand what he is saying going to say yes and amen at his giving of thanks? Not at the message that God had for the church, but at his giving of thanks in that he does not understand what he's saying. Indeed, you do bless God well. It's a good way to praise the Lord, but not in church where the people don't understand what you're saying.

So still and always, whenever tongues were understood or when Paul teaches on the subject, never once is there an instance in the scripture where God spoke to men through tongues and interpretation. Uh, the closest thing would be in the book of Daniel when the writing on the wall, uh, was interpreted by Daniel, but that was not tongues and interpretation. And God was giving a message to the pagan King Belshazzar.

So when a man speaks in an unknown tongue, according to the scripture, he's speaking to God, divine secrets. Men do not understand him. It's not addressed to man.

It isn't necessary that man understands him. He is conversing with God in a special language that God has given him. And so they were praising God or they were glorifying God.

They were declaring the wonderful works of God in the various languages. And of course this amazed the people and they were in doubt saying one to another, what meaneth this notice they have a question. What does this mean? Or what meaneth this and others mocking said, Hey, they've just found some good wine.

But Peter standing up with the 11 lifted up his voice and said unto them, ye men of Judea and all of you that are dwelling at Jerusalem, be this known unto you and listen to my words for these are not drunken as you suppose in that it is only the third hour of the day. It's only nine o'clock in the morning too early to be drunk. Now, what was their question? What meaneth this? And Peter's message is first of all addressed to their question.

And I think that's important that messages answer the questions that are in the minds of the people. I think there's a lot of preaching that is so totally irrelevant to anything. Well, thanks for the information.

I really didn't need it. And I don't understand what it is after I've got it, but, uh, but he was addressing the question. What meaneth this? And his answer is this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel.

And he began to give them a scriptural basis for the phenomena they had just observed. And let me say, I think that this is vitally important. I think that you are on dangerous ground when you are seeking spiritual phenomena for which you can give no scriptural basis, because whenever you get into the area of spiritual phenomena, people are going to ask questions.

What is this? And if you are practicing some kind of spiritual phenomena for which you cannot give a solid scriptural basis, you're in big trouble. As far as I'm concerned, I am not interested in any kind of phenomena for which I cannot give solid scriptural basis. And I think that it is very irresponsible for evangelists or whoever to promote spiritual phenomena without scriptural foundation.

So Peter leads them right to the word of God. This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel. And now notice how Peter quotes from the prophet Joel.

You see, he had a good working knowledge of the word of God. And I point that out in order that I might point out to you the characteristics of the men that God used and will be following this as we go through the acts. But one of the first characteristics that we find of the men that God uses is that they are men of prayer.

Peter and the others were waiting daily in prayer and in supplication. You remember now the men that God uses are men of the word, a second quality that God is looking for. Peter had a good working knowledge of the word of God.

He's able to quote from the Psalms, remote little songs, songs that aren't apt to catch your attention. And yet he is quoting from them, putting them together, making sense out of them. Now, as this phenomena is taking place and they're saying, what means this? And he said, this is that which was spoken of by the prophet Joel and it shall come to pass in the last days, saith the Lord.

I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh and your sons and daughters shall prophesy. And your young men shall see visions and your old men should dream dreams. And upon my servants and handmaidens, where I'll pour out in those days of my spirit and they shall prophesy.

And I will show wonders in the heaven above and signs in the earth beneath and blood and fire and vapor of smoke. And the sun shall be turned into darkness and the moon into blood before the great notable day of the Lord come. And it shall come to pass that whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

Quoting out of Joel chapter two. And what does he quote? The promise of God to send the Holy Spirit upon the world. Now notice that in context, this promise was for the last days and Peter or Joel actually carries it right on up to the second coming of Jesus Christ through the great tribulation period, right into the second coming.

I will show wonders in the heaven above signs in the earth beneath blood, fire, vapor of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, the moon into blood things of the great tribulation period before the great and notable day, the day of the coming again of Jesus Christ, the great notable day of the Lord come and it shall come to pass that whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. So the empowering of the Holy Spirit was not limited to just a short period of church history, but is to continue throughout the church history, right into the coming again of Jesus Christ, the great notable day of the Lord.

And it is wrong to try to put the limitations upon the experience of being empowered by the spirit of God. Several years ago, our older daughter came home from a prayer meeting and we were sitting and sharing with her and she was telling us how that at that prayer meeting, God's spirit came upon her and she began to prophesy by the spirit of God and what a beautiful and exhilarating experience it was for her to just speak forth God's word under the anointing of the spirit. Our son, Jeff, who we were having problems with at that time, who was in high school at that time, I turned to him and said, well, son, the Bible says your sons and daughters shall prophesy.

Now that my daughter is prophesying, when are you going to start prophesying? And he quickly, without any hesitation said, when are you going to start having dreams? Smart kid. Now he is going to expound on the scripture. He gives now the text and now the exposition.

Ye men of Israel, hear these words, Jesus of Nazareth, identifying who he's talking about because there were many named Joshua. And so he is Joshua of Nazareth so that they know exactly who he's talking about. And here's what he says of him.

First of all, he was a man approved of God among you. The word approved is literally proved to be of God among you. How was he proved to be of God? By the miracles and the wonders and the signs which God did by him in the midst of you, as you yourself also know.

So he was proved to be of God. Now Jesus said, look, believe me or else believe me for the very works sake. And Jesus often called upon his works as the proof of his origin and of his authority and of his ministry, of his identity.

Believe me that I am in the father and the father in me or else believe me for the very works sake. And so here Peter is pointing out that the works that Jesus did attested to the fact that he was proved to be of God from God. Remember, they said no man can do these works except God is with him, but he goes on to say him being delivered by the determinant counsel and foreknowledge of God.

You have taken him by wicked hands of crucified and slain. Now notice that as Peter talks about the cross, he's not speaking of some horrible, tragic accident that happened, but in referring to the cross, he is talking about it as God's predetermined counsel and foreknowledge. Now it could not be any other way because the cross was prophesied in the Old Testament and the very fact that there are prophecies of the cross, death on the cross, Psalm 22, Isaiah 52 lifted up a term used for crucifixion and his death prophesied in Isaiah 53.

There can be no other conclusion, but what the death of Jesus Christ on the cross was planned by God long before Jesus ever came into the world. And thus it is manifestly wrong to try to blame the Jews or to try to blame the Romans or anybody else for the cross. It was something that God had predetermined by his own foreknowledge, a method by which he might manifest the extent of his love for lost man.

And so as he refers to the cross, he talks about God's predetermined counsel and thus the scripture speaks of Christ crucified from the foundations of the world. Before man ever sinned, God had in mind to send his son to redeem man from his sin and thus to manifest God's love for sinning man. All a part of God's predetermined plan, his foreknowledge.

And so Peter isn't really laying the blame on them. You with your wicked hands did it, but it was all a part of God's predetermined plan. But then he declares, and this is the central part of his message, whom God

hath raised up.

Remember, they were looking for someone who could bear witness of the resurrection and the message of the church. The central message of the church is always the resurrection of Jesus Christ. It was not possible that death could hold him.

It's the message of the church today. And wherever the church denies this message, it has ceased to be a church. It is the central hope of man that we have to proclaim the man that Jesus rose from the dead.

Peter said, thank God that we've been begotten again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death because it was not possible that he could be held by it. Why wasn't it possible? Because the scripture not only prophesied his death, but it also prophesied his resurrection. And because God had predicted or prophesied it in advance, it had to happen.

It was not possible that he could be held by death. For David speaking concerning him said, I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved. Therefore did my heart rejoice and my tongue was glad.

Moreover, also my flesh shall rest in hope because you will not leave my soul in hell, neither will you allow the Holy One to seek corruption. Thou hast made known to me the ways of life. Thou shalt make me full of joy with your countenance.

And so again, he is quoting from the scriptures. Notice how he just, you know, has the capacity of just quoting God's word. It was something that was really there in his heart.

And the men that God uses are men who have hid that word away in their heart. They have a ready access ability to just quote from God's word. Now Peter is going to expound on this text.

He said, men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the Patriarch David, that he's both dead and buried. His sepulcher is with us unto this day. Now there is today on Mount Zion, a little room where you may go where there is a very ornate sepulcher that they call the tomb of David.

I don't know if David was buried there, but at the time that Peter was talking, David's sepulcher was still around. Now, David being a prophet and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up the Messiah to sit on his throne. David knew that God promised that the Messiah would come through him.

That's when David said, Lord, what can I say? You know, I was nothing. You took me from the sheep from falling after sheep. You made me the king of your people.

You've done so much for me. And now you speak of the days to come. Oh God, what can I say? David was overwhelmed by the goodness and the grace of God.

And that's always a beautiful experience to have. You ever had that? You just totally wiped out by God's goodness and God's grace. I love those experiences where I just totally wiped out by the grace of God.

Oh, you can't say anything. You just have to just sit there and enjoy it. I have to pull off the road.

It's dangerous to drive in those conditions. Now, David was a prophet. He knew that God had promised that the Messiah would come through him.

And he seeing this before was speaking of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell. Neither did his flesh see corruption. Now, when Jesus died, he descended into hell and he preached to those souls that were in prison.

Now you remember Isaiah 61, a part of the prophecy of Christ would be that he would open the doors to those that are bound and free those from prison. Set at liberty those that are captive. And so Jesus descended into hell.

Because prior to the death of Christ, it was not possible that the Old Testament saints could enter into the full glory of God's presence. The Old Testament sacrifices could not put away their sins. All they could do was cover their sins as they spoke of a better sacrifice that was to come, the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

So these men all died in faith, not having received the promise, God having reserved a better thing for us, that they without us could have come into the perfected state. So when Jesus died, he descended into hell, preached to those souls that were in prison. But according to Paul in Ephesians chapter four, when he ascended, he led the captives from their captivity.

He who has ascended is the same one who first of all descended into the lower parts of the earth. You remember when they were asking Jesus for a sign and he said, no sign will be given to it. You accept the sign of the prophet Jonah, whereas Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the whale.

So shall the son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. He descended into hell and those who were waiting with Abraham for the promises of God to be fulfilled. He preached to them the glorious victory of the cross.

The sacrifice has been made. It is now complete. And he who has sent has ascended is the same one who first of all descended.

And when he ascended, he led the captives from their captivity, freed them. So death and hell was partially emptied at that point. Two resurrections, the just to everlasting righteousness and the unjust to everlasting condemnation.

That resurrection has not yet taken place. It will not take place until the end of the thousand year reign of Christ upon the earth. Now this Jesus hath God raised up whereof we are all witnesses.

We've all seen it. We've all seen him. Therefore, now you see, he comes back now to the resurrection.

Notice this is the central part of the message. When he he's talking, he gives you a certain, he throws out basic facts about Jesus. He is a man proved to be a God among you by the signs and miracles, which he brought whom you, according to God's predetermined counsel for knowledge with your winged hands of crucified and slain.

But God raised him from the dead because it wasn't possible that he could be held. But now when he gets to the central message, he expounds on it. He goes back, he gives scriptural basis and, and he's talking about the resurrection and all and shows that it is a biblical concept.

And then he says, again, coming back to this point, this Jesus hath God raised up and we are witnesses of that fact. Therefore, now he's going to continue his message concerning Jesus of Nazareth. Therefore he is exalted at the right hand of God.

So Jesus today is in an exalted position there at the right hand of God in the throne of glory. And having received of the father, the promise, and it shall come to pass in those days, sayeth the Lord, I will pour out my spirit and having received of the father, the promise of the Holy Spirit, he hath shed forth this. Now he's back to the question again.

What meaneth this? The outpouring of the Holy Spirit that they were observing and having ascended to the father, being there at the right hand, exalted, he received from the father, the promise, and he has shed forth this, which you now see in here. There was visible the tongues of fire and audible evidence of the outpouring of the spirit as they were glorifying God in these languages. For David is not ascended into the heavens.

He had not yet ascended into heavens, but he saith himself, the Lord said unto my Lord, sit thou on my right hand until I make thy foes thy footstool. Therefore, let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God hath made that same Jesus whom you have crucified, both Lord and Messiah. Now the Bible tells us that there is coming a day when every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is the Lord.

And Peter is laying it straight on the line. This Jesus, you better know that God has made him both the Lord and he is the Messiah. Now, when they heard this, and this is the first message of the church centered on the theme of the resurrection.

Now, when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, men and brethren, what shall we do? Aware of their guilt, made aware by the conviction of the spirit. Then Peter said unto them, join the church, pay your tithes, keep this ministry going, brother. Then Peter said unto them, repent and be baptized.

Every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Now, literally in the Greek, he said, repent and be baptized. Every one of you in to the name of Jesus Christ, which is an interesting point to make into the name of Jesus Christ, into a relationship with Jesus Christ.

There are those who they call Jesus only who make a big, uh, to do over baptismal formula and say, if you were baptized in the name of the father, son, and Holy spirit, you weren't really baptized. That baptism doesn't count. And so the only baptism that counts is the baptism in Jesus name.

Uh, but it isn't actually in Jesus name. It is in to Jesus name, into the very relationship with him, into the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins. And ye shall receive the gift of the Holy spirit for the promise, what promise, the promise that God made to pour out his spirit upon all flesh.

Who is it for? It's for you and it's for your children and to all that are far off, even as many as the Lord, our God shall call no mention of just being good for the apostolic period, but on down through the church ages, as many as the Lord, our God shall call. And men with many other words, he did testify and exhort saying, save yourself from this untoward generation. Then they that gladly received his word were baptized.

And the same day there were added unto them about 3000 souls. So you've got the beginning of the church growth program, rapid church growth program. Suddenly they've increased manifestly.

Now this is important. What was the early church function? What were they doing? They continued steadfastly in the apostles doctrine and fellowship and in breaking of bread and in prayers. These were the four institutions of the early church.

First of all, the apostles doctrine, the study of the word of God. Secondly, the fellowship, the Koinonia, a very interesting Greek word. Its implications are beyond translation into English, but this coming together, interrelating, becoming a part of each other, a strong bond and tie and, and communion and commonness and, and fellowship breaking of bread, the symbol of that interrelationship and prayers.

A lot of things the church does today that aren't listed here. And I think a lot of the things that the church does today are extraneous and super silliest. And we do well to let them die a natural death instead of trying to keep them alive by artificial means.

And fear came upon every soul and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles and all that believed were together and had all things Koinonia in common. And many of them sold their possessions and their goods. And they parted them to all men as every man had a need.

There was a, uh, early communism in a good sense in the church prompted by love. Those that had were selling in order that they might distribute to those that did not have that they might be able to help them. And they continuing daily with one accord in the temple and breaking bread from house to house.

So the church actually began in both the fellowship in the temple, but also in the home fellowships, breaking bread from house to house. They did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart. Now, what was the result as they were praising God and having favor with all the people, the Lord added to the church daily, such as should be saved.

You see, when the church was what was what God wanted the church to be, then God did for the church, what he was wanting to do. Today, the church is spending all of its efforts in church growth programs, how to increase our attendance, studying psychology and sociology and making demographic studies of communities and determining what will appeal to the people of this particular community. What type of an advertising program will be most effective taking polls and census and putting everything together so that we can have a church growth program, because we want to add so many members to our church and you can get professionals to come in and do all of these studies.

And for a fee, they will go ahead and develop your whole program. There are other professionals that come in and set up a whole financial program for us. And they will for 10 percent of the take, they will set up the whole program of how to take you.

And many churches hire these professionals for the church growth or the fundraising programs. The early church didn't know anything of that. They weren't very sophisticated and they hadn't been to seminary, so all they could do is what they knew to do, just get together and study the word and pray and fellowship, break bread.

And the Lord added daily to the church such as should be saved. It was a natural, spontaneous growth as the Lord added to the church. Oh, times are different.

Why? Has God changed? No. God's hand is not short that he cannot save, neither is his ear heavy. But we are no longer relying upon God.

We're no longer relying upon the Holy Spirit. We've sought man's devices and man's ways and we've forsaken the word of God and we've gone to entertaining programs and we've tried to attract the people by this lavish program of entertainment. Come and be entertained.

See the tallest Christmas tree in the world. See Elijah ascend directly into the clouds. And oh, what a trap that is.

There was this particular church that every Christmas was putting on, you know, the spectacular program. And the problem is when you draw people to that, you got to get more spectacular every year. And so, you know, they had the living Christmas tree.

Come and see the living Christmas tree. And of course, all of them, you know, they're in the shape of a Christmas tree singing the carols. Well, the next year it had to be a bigger Christmas tree, you know, than the year before because it's got to be the best, you know, the greatest living Christmas tree ever, you know, different costumes and different little gimmicks and gadgets.

And finally, as they were developing this Christmas tree, living Christmas tree year by year, they had just about run out of ideas. When someone had an idea of taking and putting a live angel at the top of the Christmas tree and they would let him out of the ceiling. And as a Christmas tree is formed, he would come out of the ceiling and would be there at the top of the Christmas tree, the live angel.

Well, something happened to the gears and as they were letting him down, he got suspended in midair over the auditorium and he began swinging around and around and the angel began to cry out, get me down from here. And he got up so upset. This is true.

He got up so upset he began to curse. Someone stop this damn thing from swinging, you know. And he got so sick from spinning, he began to throw up.

May that be the fate of all of man's endeavors and programs so that we'll learn to rely upon God and the power of his Holy Spirit to build the church and to do his work. This promise is unto you and to your children and to those that are afar off. Even as many as the Lord our God shall call, ye shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you and you'll become a witness.

The gift of God's Holy Spirit is for you tonight. I pray that each of us might be open to God to receive whatever it is that God may wish to impart to us, that we might become whatever God would have us to be, that we might indeed be his witness of his love in this world in which we live today. And so may God bless you as you go forth to bear witness of Jesus Christ and may your life show forth the works of God that he has wrought in you in his name.

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