

Chapter One

The Prelude to Pentecost

Acts 1:1-11

The Church will advance the testimony of Christ throughout the world by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Devotional Commentary

Luke naturally begins his record of Kingdom Advance with the life and ministry of the King. As far as what Jesus did on earth we will let John speak on this matter, *“There are also many things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. Amen.”* (John 21:25)

Jesus began his Messianic ministry on earth at the age of thirty by the act of baptism in the Jordan River. The Messiah’s Ministry would be authenticated by the divine Trinity (Luke 3:21-23). Trinity is a word that describes God as being one God in three persons. We see the Trinity at work in creation (Genesis 1:1-3; John 1:1-13), in salvation (Ephesians 1:1-14), in Christian baptism (Matthew 28:19-20), in the life of Jesus (Luke 3:21-22), and in the life of the Church (Acts 1:3-8). At our Lord’s baptism we see a thrice-fold descending: First, we see the *descending* of God the Son into the watery grave of Jordan. By this act Jesus was numbered with transgressors (Isaiah 53:12), fulfilling all righteousness (Matthew 3:15), and dying to his glory, to glorify the Father (Philippians 2:5-11). Second, we see the *descending* of God the Holy Spirit upon the Son. By this act the Spirit was fulfilling Scripture and anointing Jesus for ministry (Isaiah 11:1-6; 61:1). The words Messiah and Christ mean “the Anointed One.” Third, we see the *descending* of God the Father to speak for his Son. By this act the Father was sealing his Son (John 6:27) and authenticating the Deity of Christ. Jesus has always been and will always be God.

There are three wonderful applications for us:

Application 1:

Our baptism is the funeral for the “self-life.”

The Jordan River is symbolic of “death to self.” Before Israel could advance to conquer Canaan, they had to cross old Jordan’s stormy waters. They descended down into Jordan symbolizing they were dying to themselves and then they came out on resurrection ground. This is exactly the meaning of Christian baptism. It is our public identification with the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. It is our public avowal that we have died to self and have been raised to walk in newness of life (Romans 6:3-6). To neglect baptism is to keep “self” alive, and the Holy Spirit will never descend upon “flesh” (Exodus 30:32).

Application 2:

The anointing of the Spirit qualifies for ministry.

Jesus did not begin ministry “until” he was clothed with the Spirit. Jesus’ submission to the Spirit is a beautiful act. It is the Lamb being clothed with the Dove. Jesus knew the importance of the Spirit’s ministry. This is why Jesus would not allow his disciples to begin ministry “until” they were clothed with

power from on high (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4-5). This is an established pattern for ministry. Must our Lord and the early Church need the Spirit's power and yet, we will do ministry without it? God forbid! Let us plead Luke 11:13 with our Father until he answers. The anointing of the Spirit is what will carry you through the difficulties (Isaiah 59:19).

Application 3:
God's seal is our security.

The New Covenant blessing would be the indwelling gift of the Spirit (Ezekiel 36:27; Acts 2:38-39). God the Father would seal his saints with the Spirit, thereby authenticating his ownership of them and granting to them the full assurance that they would be eternally secure (2 Corinthians 1:22; Ephesians 1:13, 4:30).

The Trinity is not only clearly seen in action at the beginning of our Lord's ministry, but also at the beginning of the Church's ministry. We have the *Passion of the Son*, the *Promise of the Father*, and the *Power of the Spirit*.

The Passion and Ascension of God the Son (1:1-3, 9-11) Jesus spent forty days with his "hand picked" apostles giving commandments and instructions of what was to come concerning the kingdom of God. These forty days of Jesus showing he was alive was undeniable evidence that he was the biblical, risen Messiah (1 Corinthians 15:5-8). The passion and resurrection of Christ would become the message by which the Church would accomplish Kingdom Advance. The word passion means "to suffer." It has reference to the "Paschal Lamb" which was killed for Passover (Exodus 12). Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament feast of Passover when he died as the Lamb of God (1 Corinthians 5:7). The passion and resurrection of Christ would catch fire in the early church and start a blaze that would burn until the Ascended Lord becomes the Descended Lord (Revelation 19:11).

Whenever a local church loses its passion for the Passion of Christ then Kingdom Advance will cease in that assembly.

It is very true that not only must the things of Christ be taught but also caught. Have you spent forty days with Christ lately? Have you gotten alone with Christ before an open Bible and viewed his nail-scarred hands and feet? Have you visited the empty tomb and rejoiced that he is alive? Have you caught the passion? What drives you? Is the fire of the Gospel in your bones? Are you living like the two disciples that were headed for Emmaus with downcast spirits or are you living like the 120 disciples that were headed towards the uttermost parts of the earth with a fire in their heart? Maybe you need to put the brakes on and invite Jesus to abide with you awhile and rekindle the burning heart (Luke 24:32).

The Gospel of Jesus Christ is the Church's weapon of power to advance his Kingdom. Moses had his staff, David had his sling, and the Church has her gospel. The blood-shedding death of our Lord and his empty tomb laid the groundwork and secured the victory for advance. Every obstacle in the path of advance was obliterated by the finished work of Jesus. The Church would have a message that no other religion on earth could compare to. She could proclaim a God that would forgive all a persons sins, live in their heart, walk with them at all times, never leave them and grant to them a title to a mansion in heaven!

The Gospel would be good news for mankind. The bad news is that sin destroyed mankind. It hindered the progress of what Adam was to be. It became the arch enemy of heaven and happiness. It brought with it death and the grave. The good news is that Jesus came into the world and took Adam's place on our behalf. He tasted death on the cross and after three days he conquered the grave! O death, where is thy

sting? O grave, where is thy victory? Soon the goodnews of Christ would advance to the whole world. Soon, Jerusalem and the world would experience the sound waves of a TNT Church, ignited and inspired with the Gospel of Jesus Christ! Oh, my fellow saints; we have the cure, let us not be silent! We must have a passion for his Passion!

The Ascension of Jesus (vv. 9-11) would play a huge role in the hearts of the early Church. It is sometimes lost sight of in comparison with the Death and Resurrection of Christ and the blast of Pentecost. However, its vital truth should be known. The Ascension of Christ has several truths for us:

Truth 1: Christ is now seated by the Father's right hand in supreme authority (Matthew 28:18; Hebrews 1:3). The authority of Christ secures the accomplishment of evangelism. The success of Kingdom Advance does not depend upon the shifting will of man but upon the sovereign will of God (Psalms 110:3; Ephesians 1:11). This fact does not exclude the will of man in salvation. No man ever came to Christ against his own will. The efficacious work of the Holy Spirit upon the sinner causes the sinner to yield to Christ voluntarily and freely.

Truth 2: Christ is now glorified and the dispensation of the Spirit is now in full effect (John 7:39, 16:13-14). Therefore, the Church will not have to rely on the might or power of human strength to evangelize the earth, but on the guidance and energizing power of the Spirit (Zechariah 4:6).

Truth 3: Jesus' heavenly ministry of intercession is now in full effect (Hebrews 7:25). When Moses' arms were lifted up in intercessory prayer on the mountain, Joshua won the battle in the valley. So, likewise, the Church is guaranteed victory in the valley because the nail-scarred hands of Jesus are lifted up continuously in intercession. This is why intercessory prayer is so powerful in Kingdom Advance.

Truth 4: At the Ascension of Jesus the disciples were promised that Jesus would return. This truth has encouraged the Church and given her hope throughout the ages. The doctrine of the Second Coming of Christ has been a tremendous motivation for all the saints. The Bride longs to see her Bridegroom (Revelation 19:7-8).

As Jesus was taken up into heaven the disciples were gazing up into heaven (v. 11). The Church needs to keep her eyes upon Jesus. The whole of the Christian life is a continuous looking to Jesus. The Christian life is *commenced* by looking unto Jesus (Isaiah 45:22); it is *continued* by looking unto Jesus (Hebrews 12:2) and it is *consummated* by looking into his face at his appearing (1 John 3:2).

Our Lord's earthly ministry was now complete. His feet will not touch earth again until he returns as Judge (Revelation 19:11; Zechariah 14:4). His final word to the disciples was one of the hardest for faith to endure – WAIT.

The Promise of God the Father (1:4-5) - The Father's promise was given in Joel 2:28-32 and Ezekiel 36:24-30. The gift of the Holy Spirit's indwelling would be the New Covenant gift. Jesus amplified this promise in his discourse to the disciples in John 14-16. The Father's promise would involve four things: First, Jesus would baptize his disciples with the Holy Spirit (Matthew 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33). Second, the Holy Spirit would baptize the disciples into the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13). Third, The Church would begin (Matthew 16:18; Acts 2:47). Fourth, the Spirit would come to indwell each believer (Ezekiel 36:27; John 14:17; 1 Corinthians 3:16).

The "*Baptism of the Holy Spirit*" has been taught as a separate experience after the salvation experience. Various words and phrases have been brought forth to describe this second experience, however, the Bible is clear that the baptism of the Spirit is the salvation experience. I do believe that the dilemma would be resolved if we would understand just how mighty and supernatural the salvation experience is. It is hard to imagine that anyone that is an avid student of the Scriptures could exalt any experience greater than the salvation experience. I admit that to be filled with the Spirit can be a

tremendous experience, but it can never match being indwelt with the Spirit.

We are not instructed to wait for the Spirit because the baptism has happened. The 120 in the upper room were instructed to wait because the fulfillment of the feast of Pentecost was scheduled to take place fifty days after the resurrection. This was established in the 23rd chapter of Leviticus. There were seven feasts of the Lord and Pentecost was the last of the spring feasts. Pentecost means the fiftieth day.

The Power of God the Holy Spirit (1:6-8) - The disciples were concerned about the prophetic future and Jesus was concerned about the here-and-now. The book of Revelation is good to read and study, but we must not get consumed about what God has not revealed and lose focus on what he has revealed. There are many things unclear about our Lord's Coming, but there is certain clarity about our Lord's Commission. Let the Father take care of our Lord's Coming and we will take care of the going.

Acts 1:8 would become the watchword for advance. The whole mission of taking Christ to the ends of the earth would be led and accomplished and managed by the Holy Spirit. The Kingdom of God has always been led forward by the Holy Spirit. Even though Pentecost is the beginning of his dispensation on earth, he was always involved in the purpose of the Father. God has a fixed principle in Kingdom Advance that we would do well to keep before us: "...*Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord of hosts*" (Zechariah 4:6).

Anyone that has been in full submission to the control of the Holy Spirit has always advanced the Gospel in their generation.

The mission of Acts 1:8 can be summed up by three prepositions within the verse:

Preposition 1: Upon you - There is a vast difference in having the Spirit of God "in" you and the Spirit "upon" you. The Spirit in you is for salvation, and the Spirit upon you is for service. As soon as Samuel anointed David with oil (a symbol of the Spirit) from his horn (a symbol of power), the Spirit of God came upon David from that day forward (1 Samuel 16:13). Have you had a day like that? Are you trying to serve God in the power of the flesh? Do not forget that our Lord did not begin ministry until he had the Spirit upon him. Neither would he allow his disciples to begin advancing until they had the Spirit upon them. This anointing is not for the servant of the Lord to "show-off" but to "show-up" when God calls. The word power means "the ability to do." It is dynamite power. Every local church should be a power-house and every saint should be a power-witness. No device that runs off electricity is worth a nickel until you plug it in. Many churches have lost the power from on high because there is a breaker out in the power box or else someone has pulled away from the power source.

Preposition 2: Unto Me - There are a lot of things that will take place in the Spirit-filled person, but one thing must take place or else we know it to be only flesh faking it. That one thing is: *A Spirit anointed believer will make it all about Jesus*. If there is anything that stands out in the book of Acts it is this: *The early church made it all about Jesus*. Holy Ghost people give great evidence to the person of Christ. Is there enough evidence to convict you of being Spirit-filled? Heaven is heaven, because it is all about Jesus! We would have more heaven in our churches if we would make it more about Jesus instead of ourselves. God only knows how many local churches have lost advancing power because someone wanted more glory than Christ! This is known in the Bible as "vain-glory." The word witness is used in a legal sense of someone giving evidence. Eventually it was associated with those that were willing to die for their faith. They were known as "martyrs."

Preposition 3: Unto the world – The mission of the Church would call for territorial expansion to the ends of the globe. Israel was to conquer Canaan only but the Church is to reach the world with the

Gospel. Luke structured his treatise in the order of Acts 1:8. The Church should pray for Spirit-filled missionaries and missions. We may not be able to go ourselves, but we can stretch our arms through prayer and financial giving. These two weapons for advance are no problem for Spirit-filled believers. Laziness in the prayer-closet and stinginess in the wallet are sure signs that the flesh has usurped the throne in that believer's heart. We have been saved to the uttermost (Hebrews 7:25) to take the gospel to the uttermost and this will only be accomplished by those that have a passion for His Passion.

“The call of the cross is to enter into the passion of Christ. We must have upon us the print of the nails...” – Gordon Watt

-

-