

ANTIOCH BIBLE CLASS

LESSON TOPIC

PREPARATIONS FOR THE KINGDOM OF GOD

SCRIPTURE TEXT: ACTS 1:1-26

MEMORY VERSE: ACTS 1: 4-5 And being assembled together with them, 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. For John truly baptized with water but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.

INTRODUCTION

For the past three years of his life, Jesus has daily been with his closest disciples during the manifestations of his ministry, miracles, messages and mission. He was crucified some 43 days prior to this moment which was followed by his resurrection three days and three nights after that. Now, 40 days after his resurrection, Jesus stands on the Mt. of Olives with his disciples, delivering his last words on this earth to them. It is a very momentous occasion. The instructions he gives them at this time are generally referred to as "The Great Commission", which they, in fact, were. The great commission is generally thought to be recorded only in the four gospels, which is a misconception. The first chapter of Acts also records this exact same event and, in fact, provides further details of the occasion. In addition it would be very narrow and unrealistic to assume that the "Great Commission" was only mentioned by Christ in just these last few minutes of his stay on the earth. In fact, this is what he has been teaching, training and preparing the disciples for since the day when he first called them to follow him. The great commission is not just a few last minute words, such as are found in Mt. 28:19-20. Instead, the great commission is embraced in the entire mission and message of Christ as he prepared to establish another kingdom in this world; one in which all are called to become citizens.

A very important aspect of the account of this great commission in Acts, chapter one, is the instructions for them to tarry in Jerusalem until they are endued with power from on high. This power, as this chapter defines, is the baptism of the Holy Ghost.

Acts chapter one provides us with the last minute preparations, as they wait for the "kingdom of God" to come among men. It is important that we consider these preparations for their instructions and inspiration as to what they hold for us today.

DAILY SCRIPTURES AND COMMENTS

MONDAY. ACTS 1:1-5. JESUS' LAST COMMAND.

SCRIPTURE.

V1. The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach. 2. Until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen. 3. To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God. 4. And being assembled together with them, 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. 5. For John truly baptized with water: but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.

COMMENTS.

“The former treatise” refers to the gospel of Luke, addressed to this same Theophilus. In that treatise he told of “all that Jesus began both to do and teach”. That is, it gives the story of the life and works of Jesus.

V2. That same treatise covered events “until the day in which he was taken up”.

- During which moment Jesus had given specific commandments unto the chosen apostles.

V3. Jesus had been with these apostles for forty days after his “passion” (death, burial and resurrection).

- He had provided infallible proof of his resurrection.
- During which time he spoke to them about the kingdom of God.
- Note: The kingdom of God was about to be instituted among men. It is not some yet-to-be-revealed kingdom off in the future. It is the kingdom or domain of the church wherein there is a heavenly citizenship of people re-born by the power of the Holy Spirit and wherein the laws of God and not the laws of sin rule.

V4. Being assembled together on this last meeting on the Mt. of Olives, he commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem but to wait until they received the baptism of the Holy Ghost. Jesus knew that they would not be able to carry out the great commission of the gospel to all the world without this promise.

V5. You will receive the promise of the Father, which is the specific baptism of the Holy Ghost, in just a few days.

At the time of his ascension Jesus, in effect, transfers the responsibility of establishing the kingdom of God in this world over to these apostles, ordinary men, whom he had been fervently teaching and demonstrating its message and life during his own ministry. Before they could successfully embark on so great an undertaking, they must first tarry until they receive the baptism of the Holy Ghost.

TUESDAY. ACTS 1:6-8. THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

SCRIPTURE.

V6. When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? 7. And he said unto them, it is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. 8. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and, in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

COMMENTS.

Will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel? This question seemed to always be in the forefront of the minds of the disciples. Are you ready to restore the (natural, civil) kingdom of the nation of Israel? They still could not see and understand that the “Kingdom of God” was not of this world, but was a kingdom within you. Still today many ministries are focused on the notion of the restoration of the nation of Israel as a natural, civil kingdom on earth. And if they aren’t focused on Israel as a restored nation, then they are focused on restoring “Christian America” as though that was the center piece of God’s dominion. With all the patriotic allegiance possible duly vested in our “American heritage”, yet the kingdom of God is not centered in nor confined to the political boundaries of either Israel or America. God’s kingdom is bounded by the church, not in her nominal existence, but in that domain which was created by the word of God by the power of the indwelling of the Holy Ghost.

So Jesus just deflected their question by putting it in the realm which was at present out of their reach. Then he points them to the coming of the Holy Ghost again. The disciples were like Nicodemus (Jn. 3), who could not see the kingdom of God. The coming of the Holy Spirit was not just some significant event to get the church jump started. It was the embrace of the entire kingdom, both of its institution and ongoing function. The Lord was telling the disciples that their understanding of the kingdom was contingent upon the outpouring of the Holy Ghost. It still is.

WEDNESDAY. ACTS 1:9-11. I WILL RETURN.

SCRIPTURES.

V9. And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up, and a cloud received him out of their sight. 10. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold two men stood by them in white apparel. 11. 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 like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.

COMMENTS.

For the disciples of Jesus, the past few weeks had been a series of “highs and lows”. First, they were totally demoralized by the crucifixion of Christ, believing, as they did, that he would restore Israel.

Then, while reeling under the disappointment and fear of this event, they are transported to the very highest peak of euphoria by his resurrection. Afterwards they spent the next forty days in the many events following the resurrection.

Today, they have followed him to the Mt. of Olives, where the setting, though not understood by them, seemed so ominous. He gave them some incredible instructions about being baptized with the Holy Ghost, by which they would be empowered to witness for him in all the world. While they tried to comprehend these instructions, he suddenly disappeared from their presence, this time straight up. He was gone! Here we go again with another “low point”.

Then “two men” appears unto them and gives them the only words that could possibly lift them from “low” to “high”. “HE WILL RETURN”, and in like manner as ye have seen him go, so his return will be. Armed with the great hope of all the ages, they return to Jerusalem to be filled with the Holy Spirit and thereby begin the great work of the gospel.

Still today, in the midst of every set back, trial, disappointment and the work of the gospel, the rallying cry of the faithful Christian is: “our Lord will come again”. Without the “blessed hope and glorious appearing of our savior”, everything else is totally in vain.

THURSDAY. ACTS 1:12-14. TARRYING IN JERUSALEM.

SCRIPTURES.

V12. Then returned they unto Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a Sabbath day's journey. 13. And when they were come in, they went up into an upper room, where abode both Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, Philip, and Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew, James, the son of Alphaeus, and Simon Zelotes, and Judeas the brother of James. 14. These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren.

COMMENTS.

They returned to Jerusalem, to the upper room. This was where the apostles assembled. There is nothing else too important to do in their lives at this time but to simply obey the injunction of the Lord to “tarry”. Assembled together there were all of the apostles, with the women and brethren, 120 in all.

They continued with one accord in prayer and supplication. Surrounded with questions, fears, assurances, enormous responsibilities and the express directive to tarry for the Holy Ghost not many days hence, they are occupied with continual prayer. In other words, they immersed themselves in seeking God and his total will for their lives. They knew what their commission was, they were seeking the power to carry it out.

FRIDAY. ACTS 1:15-26. SELECTING A REPLACEMENT FOR JUDAS.

V15. And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples, and said, (the number of names together were about an hundred and twenty). 16. Men and brethren, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas, which was a guide to them that took Jesus. 17. For he was numbered with us, and had obtained part of this ministry. 18. Now this man purchased a field with the reward of iniquity: and falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out. 19. And it was known unto all the dwellers at Jerusalem; inasmuch as that field is called in their proper tongue, Aceldama, that is to say, the field of blood. 20. For it is written in the book of Psalms, let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein: and his bishoprick let another take. 21. Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us. 22. Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection. 23. And they appointed two, Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias. 24. And they prayed, and said, thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, shew whether of these two thou hast chosen. 25. That he may take part of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place. 26. And they gave forth their lots; and the lot fell upon Matthias, and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.

COMMENTS.

Peter sets before the group of disciples, all 120 of them, the need to select one to replace Judas Iscariot, who fell by his betrayal of Christ.

- The one selected must have been with us during all the ministry of Christ, from his baptism up to this present time.
- They selected two as possible candidates, Justus and Matthias.
- Then they prayed and asked God which one He had chosen of these two.
- They cast their lots and Matthias was chosen.

United in prayer and purpose, they asked God to guide their selection, which he did. The selection of Matthias does not mean that Justus was unqualified. It simply meant that some personal characteristic, temperament, availability, etc., made Matthias the right choice.

SUMMARY

Their preparation for the task of preaching the gospel of a risen Lord to the world was nearly complete. They have been taught well by Christ; they are tarrying for the promise of the Father; they have prayed and selected a replacement for Judas, and they are united in one accord. Their only need is the empowerment of the baptism of the Holy Ghost. They must not – cannot – venture forth on this world-changing mission without that.

That is so often where men find themselves today. They have made all of the possible earthly preparations, but need the heavenly enduing of the Holy Ghost. Without that all of our efforts and

claims come up short. We are too often carrying on the mission of the gospel with preparations of our own efforts. What is so desperately needed is the baptizing power of the Holy Ghost. The next chapter will reveal that need in its fullness.

QUESTIONS

1. How can you tell that the events in the first eight verses of this chapter were so much a part of the great commission as Mt. 28:19-20 is?
2. Describe the promise of the return of Christ as set forth in verse 11.
3. Why was it necessary to select another apostle to replace Judas?
4. Where were they tarrying?
5. Why were they tarrying?