

## The Great Acts of God through His Apostles

These are what I will call ‘speaker’s notes’. I don’t anticipate any future for them: certainly not in this form. There are many things we could say about this topic, but I hope you will see that there is a theme running through the scriptures which, when recognised in experience, prompted the early believers in a way which mere missionary appeals could never do.

Bible references are in **bold** for ease of use, but also to stress that it is the text of scripture which must inform and control us.

### A brief introduction (i) The Gospel according to Matthew

These sessions have developed out of sense that somewhere along the line we may have drifted from the somewhat excited attitude of the writers of the four Gospels toward all that Jesus did and taught from the beginning (**Acts 1:1**). Certainly, the Gospel writers were not mere story tellers. They were men who had a fresh insight (read ‘knowledge’ as we will see later) into their own history as members of Israel and of God’s purposes for and through them.

**The Gospel according to Matthew** is carefully constructed. It has a beginning and a conclusion and they are related. So what does he mean when he begins with ‘The book of the beginning of Jesus Christ, son of David son of Abraham’? We as modern westerners do not find our identity from our forebears so much as from our own personal achievements. Such was not the case in other times and cultures. Hence there are significant genealogies provided. So who is Jesus? The reply is that he is the son of Abraham and he is the son of David. His significance derives from these two men.

In the Gospels there are many references to ‘the kingdom’ and David is the paradigm of God’s king. He is the pattern. He is not just an ancestor but he is the one through whom God defines his own kingship. For instance, **Psalms 2** sets out the establishment of God’s king, his anointed messiah, over against the rebellious kings of the earth. ‘He who sits in the heavens laughs; he has them in derision’ (**v. 6**). **Verses 7-9** set out the greatness of David’s kingship. He, ‘the son of God’ will rule the nations with a rod of iron. He is the beloved Son (**Matt. 3:17**), through whom the nations will be brought to submission.

‘Son of Abraham’ makes sense. Abraham’s offspring will be the source of blessing to *all the families of the earth*. It was Paul who noted the fact that the *seed* of Abraham is singular and that seed is Christ, the messiah, the anointed (**Gal. 3:16-18**). The goal is the subjugation of the rebellious nations and the blessing promised to Abraham being given to the nations (**Gal. 3:14**).

Matthew’s Gospel continues with a stress on ‘the kingdom’ (whether ‘of God’ or ‘of heaven’). John the Baptist and Jesus both proclaim the imminence of the kingdom. ‘At hand’ means ‘it’s actively about to break in’. That should hardly have been a surprise: the prophets had told of it (**Isa. 24:21-23; 52:7; Ps. 68:11-12**). God is in action and his reign is being accomplished (**Matt. 16:16-19, 27-28**) ‘*you are the messiah!*’ And there are some present with Jesus at that point who ‘will not taste death before

they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom'. They will still be alive when it happens.

We must not just work with small snippets of the story. **Matt. 17** commences with the account of the transfiguration. Note the words: 'This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased; listen to him' (v. 5). These are the words we have heard at Jesus' baptism. But the key to this phrase is in **verse 9**: 'As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus ordered them, "Tell no one about the vision until the Son of Man has been raised from the dead"' To establish the kingdom, to firmly fix it, demands the cross and resurrection (**16:21**)! As Jesus goes into the city on Palm Sunday, he reminds the disciples of the words of **Zechariah 9:9**: 'Tell the daughter of Zion. Look, *your king is coming to you*'!

So now we can look at **Matt. 24:3-14**. When will all these things, the 'sign of your coming and the end of the age' take place (v. 3)? The climax, the goal, will come when the nations hear the proclamation of the kingdom! **Matt. 10:5-7** sets the program. God had always intended that Israel be the medium through which the proclamation would come to the nations; see the vast sections devoted to the nations in the prophets, though see also **Jonah** where the issue is Israel's refusal to tell Nineveh and Jonah's sulking when Nineveh actually did repent.

How does Matthew's Gospel conclude? I suggest that much has been made of **Matt. 29:18-20** especially since the emphasis made by William Carey. He argued that the command was applicable to the whole church and has not been rescinded. But we should note that the paragraph actually commences with **28:16**. The command is explicitly made to the *eleven* disciples. And we might ask if there is a significance to Jesus meeting them on 'the mountain' (cf. O.T. Sinai; the location of the 'sermon' and of the transfiguration etc.). Furthermore, the response, was one of worship but also of *doubt*.

'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.' Here is **Gen.1:28**, where Adam is told to subdue the earth. Here is **Psalms 2:7-9**, the anointed king who is given the reign and to whom in **verses 10-11** there is the call for repentance and submission.

The phrase in **Matt. 28:19**, usually translated as a command, 'Go therefore and make disciples...' is literally 'having gone ...' Once again, this reflects **Genesis 1:26-28**; 'fill the earth...'. If Jesus is the fulfilment of Adam's original commission, what would we expect in the new creation? Surely it would be that Christ and those in him who be impelled to go. Someone has said that 'if the church is not a *going* concern, it is not a *going concern*'. And surely that is what happens. Something gets loose, and they go! Of course the 'they' were the *eleven* and the eleven are now dead. But the end, the goal, is the proclamation, the gospel of the kingdom (**Matt. 24:14**).

How can this happen? The answer: These eleven had seen and seen and known the immensity of the kingdom. They could not but speak of all they had seen and heard! They did not need a command to preach and make disciples; they were too busy doing it!

Now we have their gospel – and it *is* powerful! Surely dull churches are the result of a dull gospel, a non-transforming gospel. The saying has been (probably wrongly) ascribed to P. T. Forsyth, ‘*Our churches are full of the nicest, kindest people who have never known the despair of guilt or the breathless wonder of forgiveness*’.

**Matt. 28:20** expects obedience from the nations, but there are two types of obedience, what Roland Allen describes as an external and legal obedience in contrast to an internal and ‘spiritual’ obedience. This latter is seen in **Jer. 31:33-34** where the law is liberatingly and delightfully written on the heart (**Ps. 40:8**). We should not take ‘meditating on the law day and night’ (**Ps. 1:2**) as mulling over the limitations of obedience, but as the song of a heart set free. ‘I waited patiently for the LORD; he inclined to me and heard my cry. He drew me up from the desolate pit, out of the miry bog, and set my feet upon a rock, making my steps secure. He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God. *Many will see and fear, and put their trust in the LORD*’ (**Ps. 40:1-3**). John the Baptist foretold the baptism with the Holy Spirit and, though Matthew does not mention it later, Jesus does announce the source of the proclamation to Jews and Gentiles: ‘the Spirit of your Father speaking through you’ (**Matt. 10:18-20**). As with Jesus so with those in him.

A closing question: Where in the New Testament are Christians *commanded* to preach the gospel?

### **A brief introduction (ii) The Gospel according to Mark**

**Mark 1:1** ‘The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God’. This is not merely something like the opening of David Copperfield ‘Chapter One. I am born’. I suggest that is Mark saying, ‘This is how our Gospel began’! Again, the significance is the *proclamation*, the *gospel*, through which God effects his purpose, dramatically began in this way. We must not lose sight of the context in which the gospels were written. The growth of the church from Pentecost onwards was so observable that when Paul arrived at Rome the Jewish leaders who met with him said, ‘we would like to hear from you what you think, for with regard to this sect we know that everywhere it is spoken against’ (**Acts 28:22**). At that point they understood that the church was a group (an *hairesis*, a self-chosen opinion) within Judaism, but by the end of the first century the Christians were totally rejected, even cursed, by Judaism.

But the catch was that among the Christians also there were, even then, deviant opinions, and strange teaching, so that a clear statement was definitely needed. So he began by identifying ‘John the baptizer’ with the messenger promised in **Mal. 3:1** and **Isa. 40:3**). In fact, in Mark’s Gospel there are over thirty one quotes from or clear allusions to the Old Testament. The apostles knew and took seriously the prior written revelation to Israel.

Jesus was the Messiah, and he was also ‘the Son of God’. A problem: many manuscripts omit this latter phrase. Luke, on the other hand, traces genealogy, his pedigree, back to ‘Adam, the son of God’ (**Luke 3:37**). We have mentioned Jesus’ lineage in our look at Matthew, but in Luke (and Paul in **Rom 6:6**; **1 Cor. 15**) the link is from the old Adam to the last. The reference to Jesus the son comes at his baptism (**Mk.**

**1:11**), which links Jesus with David in **Ps. 2:7**. We can but speculate but not be definitive. In the words of Oliver Cromwell: ‘I beseech you, in the bowels of Christ, think it possible you may be mistaken’.<sup>1</sup>

**Mark 1:4-8** describes John the baptizer (i.e. here he is described by what he did, not by a title) and what he did was significant. His role is that of the promised Elijah of **Mal. 3:16–4:6**.<sup>2</sup> He even appeared as Elijah did, but his primary task was to announce the coming of the one who will immerse, baptise, Israel in the Holy Spirit (v. **8**).

Later, in **Mk. 13:3-11**, Jesus again warns that persecution is coming but that it will be the Holy Spirit who will speak through the disciples. The gospel, the proclamation, of the kingdom will nonetheless remain essential to the closure of the age. The disciples need the Spirit!

There is a small difficulty ahead. You may recall that in the TV series M\*A\*S\*H (S6.E6: The Light That Failed’) there is the dilemma of the missing final page of ‘*The Rooster Crowed at Midnight*’. So, with Mark’s Gospel. How does it end? What is certain is that many older manuscripts of the Gospel end at **Mark 16:8**, ‘[the women] went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone for they were afraid’. But that is hardly an ending to the story thus far. So, we are faced with three possible endings, none of which is, I think, satisfactory, nor original. It is the longer ending, found in most Bibles but which does not appear in the oldest manuscripts, which seems to try to summarise the issues, most of which are gathered from the books of Luke and Acts (handling snakes and drinking poison). Nonetheless, **verses 15-16** do seem like an attempt to repeat **Matthew 28:19** with the addition about being baptised. Perhaps the best we can say is that the original ending of Mark was somehow lost, possible as a tear at the end of a scroll?

So how do we respond to all this? If we do not have an account of the early church’s faith and action, apart from what is in Acts and what may be gleaned from the letters, then how much are we forced to examine our own faith and action. How much are we responding to the resurrection of *the man* Jesus from the dead? Do our credal statements such as ‘I/we believe in the resurrection of the dead’ really reflect the passion of the apostolic gospel? We should compare **1 Cor. 15:3-34** etc. to see how the apostles understood and proclaimed the resurrection of the Lord Jesus.

### **A brief introduction (iii) The Gospel according to Luke**

In Luke’s Volume 1 (this ‘Gospel’) he tells of his own reason for writing: ‘Since many have undertaken to set down an orderly account of the events that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed on to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word, I too decided, after investigating everything carefully from the very first, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know the truth concerning the things about which you have been instructed’ (**1:1-4**).

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<sup>1</sup> Letter to General Assembly of the Kirk of Scotland, 3 Aug. 1650.

<sup>2</sup> A small booklet on this topic ‘The Baptism of John and its significance for Christian baptism’ (sorry about the title, but it is free!) which can be found at <https://www.newcreationlibrary.org.au/books/covers/189.html>.

In spite of the ‘Bible Stories for Children’ sort of thing (and they may be valuable) there is no ‘once upon a time’. These ‘events’ are things which have actually happened! What we have are events which eye-witnesses have handed on to us. What is more, these events ‘have been *fulfilled* among us’. A fulfilment has taken place. What is seen and experienced among the first believers, those we call ‘the early church’, are the fulfilment of God’s great purposes. But, of course, the early church is still being formed. The final goal will be seen when the Christ presents his bride to himself, loved and cleansed by the washing of water by the word, ‘engloried’ (‘in splendour’) no spots, no wrinkles, holy and without blemish (**Eph. 5:25-27; cf. 1:4**).

These eye-witnesses were ‘*servants of the word*’ (no doubt the apostles; see **Acts 2:42**). Luke is insistent that ‘the word’ is potent, as in **Luke 1:2; 3:2; 5:1; 7:7; 8:11**; etc. What is significant is that the phrases ‘the word of God’ or ‘the word of the LORD’ are *never* a reference to a written document.<sup>3</sup> ‘The seed is the word of God’ (**Luke 8:11**). The same applies in **Acts 6:7; 12:24; 13:49; 19:20**. Then there is **Eph. 6:17**; the sword of the Spirit is not a sword which we wield but one which Holy Spirit himself uses, ‘the *utterance* of God’ (see also **Eph. 6:19; Heb. 11:3**).

**Luke 1:4** Luke wants Theophilus to ‘know the truth concerning the things about which [he] has been instructed’. I suspect that this may mean that Theophilus may already have participated in the great transformation described initially in Acts 2. Luke wants him to know the truth, with absolute certainty, of all that has happened. Of course, given the later documents given the title of ‘Gospels’, which sometimes contained weird stories, were soon spread around. So how can Theophilus – and we – explain what has been seen and heard, what has been experienced? The answer is that these things are known as certain, but only by faith. We cannot yet see them (**2 Cor. 4:13-18; 5:7**). The reality of faith comes through the gift of the Holy Spirit (**1 Cor. 2:6-10**) ‘What no eye has seen nor ear heard ... God revealed through the Spirit, for the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God’. Sometimes authors can convey this sightless knowledge. For instance, C. S. Lewis concluded his Narnia stories in this way:

*Aslan turned to them and said: “You do not yet look so happy as I mean you to be.”  
Lucy said, “We’re so afraid of being sent away, Aslan. And you have sent us back into our own world so often.”*

*“No fear of that,” said Aslan. “Have you not guessed?”*

*“Their hearts leaped and a wild hope rose within them.*

*“There was a real railway accident,” said Aslan softly. “Your father and mother and all of you are - as you used to call it in the Shadowlands - dead. The term is over: the holidays have begun. The dream is ended: this is the morning.”*

*And as He spoke He no longer looked to them like a lion; but the things that began to happen after that were so great and beautiful that I cannot write them. And for us this is the end of all the stories, and we can most truly say that they all lived happily ever after.*

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<sup>3</sup> The English Reformers and Puritans referred to the Bible, ‘the books’, as ‘the Word written’.

*But for them it was only the beginning of the real story. All their life in this world and all their adventures in Narnia had only been the cover and the title page: now at last they were beginning Chapter One of the Great Story which no one on earth has read: which goes on forever: in which every chapter is better than the one before.*"<sup>4</sup>

P. T. Forsyth put it:

*There are those who can quietly say, as their faith follows their love into the unseen: 'I know that land. Some of my people live there. Some have gone abroad there on secret foreign service, which does not admit of communications.*

*But I meet from time to time the Commanding Officer. And when I mention them to Him, He assures me all is well'.*<sup>5</sup>

**Luke 1:5-80** tells us the story of the birth of John the Baptist. Prominent in the story is the work of the Holy Spirit. John will be filled with the Holy Spirit and will, in the spirit and power of Elijah, turn many of the people of Israel to the Lord their God (**1:15-17**). His mother, Elizabeth, was also specially filled with the Holy Spirit (**1:41-42**). Her, as yet unborn, child leaped for joy, and she said 'blessed is she [Mary] who believed that there would be a *fulfilment*, a reaching of the goal, of what was spoken to her by the Lord' (**1:44-45**).

**Luke 1:26-38** Also there is record of the announcement by the angel (the messenger) Gabriel to Mary concerning the conception and birth of her son, Jesus. The child will be born because 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God' (**1:35**).

It is easy to gloss over the songs which accompany these stories, but they are significant. The first (**1:46-55**) is by Mary and is based largely on Hannah's prayer in **1 Sam. 2:1-10**. Her point is that God 'has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, according to the promises he made to our ancestors, to Abraham and to his descendants forever' (**1:44-45**). It is all happening: God is keeping his promises!

The second song is by Zechariah. It is a prophetic song in which Zechariah, as with Mary and Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Spirit, recounts what God has done in the past. He looked favourably on his people and redeemed them (**1:46; cf. Exodus 2:24-25**). He raised up a mighty saviour in the house of his servant David. He showed the mercy which was promised to [Israel's] ancestors. He remembered his holy covenant. His goal is a people rescued in order to serve him without fear in holiness and righteousness. Then, after rehearsing all God's faithfulness to himself and to his people, he looks at his baby son and prophecies that what God has done in the past he will do again (**1:76-79**). The great eagerness; Do it again!

**Luke 2:25-35** tells us of old Simeon, also a man filled with the Spirit. He was righteous and devout, also looking forward to the consolation of Israel. **Verse 26** tells us that the Holy Spirit had told him that he would not die until he had seen the Lord's messiah. As he held the baby Jesus, he praised God and said, 'I can now die in peace

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<sup>4</sup> *The Last Battle*.

<sup>5</sup> *This Life and the Next*, Independent Press, London, 1918, p. 37.



just as you have promised. I have seen your salvation. It is light to the Gentiles, the nations and glory for Israel.’ Simeon’s words ‘blew Mary and Joseph away’! Familiarity should not hide the dramatic events that are unfolding.

Then, prior to the appearing of John and the introduction of Jesus, there was Anna, an eighty-four-year-old widow. Her passion was to see Jerusalem redeemed and when she saw the baby Jesus, she began to praise God and spoke about him to everyone who shared her eagerness.

**Luke 3** is the record of John’s ministry. As Isaiah had written, John called for a baptism of repentance on Israel’s part. The coming kingdom will demand a total reversal of Israel’s attitude to the law of God. Judgment is coming, so boasting that being descendants of Abraham will prove nothing.

**Luke 3:21-22** Jesus’ baptism was not one of repentance, he was without sin, but it was a valid declaration of his total submission to the law (cf. **Matt. 3:15**). But he was then filled with the Holy Spirit, and as the ‘messiah’, the anointed, he was then declared to be the beloved son of **Psalm 2** and **Isaiah 42:1-6**. Both these sections of scripture have the nations in view. The genealogy of Jesus is given, to show his new-Adamic sonship (**Luke 3:38**).

**Luke 4:1-13** If God has said it, then that is how it is. ‘Did God say ...?’ (**Gen. 3:1**). Now God has declared that Jesus is his son and given him the Spirit who then led Jesus in the wilderness. So the battle is joined as it was in Eden: ‘If you *are* the Son of God ...’ Notably the temptation took the form of deflecting Jesus from the implications of his sonship. Given that the son was to ask God for the nations as his inheritance, the devil offered Jesus the kingdoms of the world in exchange for worship (**4:5-7**).

**Luke 4:18-28** Jesus in the power of the Spirit returned to Galilee. In the synagogue in Nazareth, his home town, he was given the opportunity to read, from **Isaiah 61** and its implications. He had received the Spirit, so he said plainly, ‘today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing’. But as far as the Jewish leaders were concerned the nations were not in view. In fact, these leaders tried to kill Jesus.

**Luke 5:36-39** Here there is a powerful contrast. Talk of old garments and new cloth and old wineskins and new wine seems obvious, but it is the final sentence which exposes the attitude of those whose reaction to Jesus was so strong: ‘No one after drinking old wine desires new wine, but says, “The old is good”’ (**verse 39**). Israel had found its security and comfort in itself, not in the power and purposes of God. Of course, they enjoyed the familiarity with the past and its easy security, but the kingdom is coming with a powerful surge!

The Gospel of Luke (i.e. Volume 1) closes with the description of Jesus’ resurrection. But it is more than a bland story. When the two on the road to Emmaus were in the presence of the risen Jesus, their previous disappointment at his death was met with them being described as ‘foolish ... and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have said’. He began with Moses and all the prophets and opened those scriptures to them, showing that ‘it was necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and

enter into his glory'. As we have heard from others, suffering was not the cost of glory; it was the way to glory'. But it was not a mere group study that was the issue. It was the presence and voice of Jesus - risen from the dead! So, no wonder they said, 'Were not our *hearts burning within us* while he was talking with us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?'

**Luke 24:36-43** makes it clear that the Jesus who was there was the resurrected *man*. Whatever questions we may have do not stop us seeing him as raised from the dead! Resuscitations there may be, but none of those who had died 'live forever more'. But this is the way things are.

**Luke 24:44-49** Now it was the eleven and their companions who were the recipients of Jesus' teaching. He opened their minds to understand the scriptures. It was not that he showed them how to find proof-texts. He declared all that the scriptures had said: 'Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. And see, I am sending upon you what my Father promised; so stay here in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.' It is still the nations who are in view. Begin from Jerusalem and keep going. You are witnesses (cf. **Luke 1:2**). I am sending the promise of the Father and repentance and forgiveness will be, must be, proclaimed!

So, Theophilus, *that's* how it happened!

#### **A brief introduction (iv) The Gospel according to John**

We should note the ways the four writers of the one gospel approach their task differently and carefully. Their concern is not for what we might regard as historical 'accuracy' but to a presentation of how the story comes *powerfully* to us. The Gospel documents are structured to make a particular point, within the overall structure of the story.

John's Gospel, in various ways, shows us that there is intimacy between the Father and the Son. This is, perhaps, climactically revealed in the prayer of **chapter 17**. But it is an intimacy that is not closed off. **Verses 20-26** are stunning. The Son asks that his intimacy with the Father might include not only the first disciples but also 'those who will believe in me *through their word*'. Jesus said, 'I given them *your word*' (**vs. 14**) but it lies ahead that *their word* will be potent.

**John 1:1-18** The '*word*' by which all things have their existence has become flesh. We see his glory; it is the glory of the only Son of the Father. It is full of grace and truth. Such is the intimacy he has with the Father. He is in the bosom of the Father and the Father is known through his Son (cf. **14:9** 'He who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'?)

**John 1:29-34** When John the Baptist saw Jesus he said 'Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world'. Plainly it necessary that sin be taken away in its guilt and power by the supreme sacrifice for intimacy with the Father and the Son is



to be restored. But at this point a dominating feature of John's Gospel appears. It is first seen and then anticipated in **verses 32-33**.<sup>6</sup>

John announced that he had seen 'the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it remained on [Jesus]'. Unlike all who had gone before him, the overflow of the Spirit on Jesus was not a temporary matter. The Father had baptised his Son with the Spirit in order that the Son could do the work of reconciliation (**2 Cor. 5:19**), and the restoration of intimacy as others are likewise baptised with the Spirit (**Jn. 1:33**). Now, says John, '*THIS* is the Son of God!'

**John 2:1-23** is the account of the wedding feast at Cana and the cleansing of the temple in Jerusalem. The new wine, the marriage are significant of course and the cleansing of the temple refers to the total purging of the debased worship and the consequent restoration of Israel's true worship. The location of the temple traders was the court of the Gentiles, who were thus excluded from their rights within Israel (**Acts 21:15-30**).

**John 3:1-8** The visit of Nicodemus is presented. The issue is that Nicodemus has seen signs but is incapable of seeing the kingdom without being 'born again' or 'born from above'. Given that rebirth is through water and/even the Spirit, the phrase 'born from above' is probably better. But familiarity with the old Authorised Version will probably make it more difficult to make a change. But the point is still clear: there can be no rebirth apart from the Holy Spirit's action.

**John 4:10, 13-14, 16:26, 27-30** (Just read the whole chapter!) Here is 'the woman at the well'. She is a Samaritan and, as such, is descended from the northern kingdom of Israel. Living Water, transcending mere spring water, will mean the person who drinks will never thirst again. The person who drinks of that water will know the surge of eternal life. Instead of petty questions of Samaria or Jerusalem, the true worshipper will worship in Spirit and in truth. And then, *O Boy! Does the life flow?*

Even if the readers did not have access to **Acts 1:8** at this point, a reading of **Ezekiel 37:15-28** would have led them to see Jesus fulfilling that prophecy. Not that it was obvious to someone who had not been born from above, but to someone on this side of Pentecost (see **John 8:48; Acts 8:25**): 'Yes! It is happening!'

**John 6:60-63** Jesus had many learners (= disciples) and they would have followed any 'charismatic' leader, as many did, at the cost of their lives. But there would have to be a dramatic change: To the offended 'learners' Jesus asked, 'Does this offend you? Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before? It is the Spirit that gives life: the flesh is useless. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life.'

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<sup>6</sup> Just prior to the closing of New Creation Publications in early 2013 I had submitted a book, entitled: *Rivers of Living Waters*. ([https://www.newcreationlibrary.org.au/books/pdf/431\\_RiversLivingWater.pdf](https://www.newcreationlibrary.org.au/books/pdf/431_RiversLivingWater.pdf)). It was a study on the Holy Spirit in John's Gospel. Almost sadly, I confess to being relieved that a paper version did not arrive. A small but vital section had slipped by unnoticed *by me*. It is in John 19:28-30 and we will see it as we proceed.

**John 7:37-39** Thirsty for ‘revival’—for the dry bones to dance? Then come to Jesus. Believe in him, that is hang on to him and drink from the water that he gives. All that the prophets had promised was happening (see **Jer. 2:13; 17:13; Ezek. 47:1-12**).

**John 14-17** These chapters (4 of 21) are not about ‘going to heaven when I die’ (sorry about well-meant funeral sermons). They are about the gift of the Holy Spirit, the restoration of intimacy with Father and the Son (**14:23-24**). Only hours before his death, Jesus told the disciples that all that lies ahead will take place because he loves the Father (**14:30-31**). He is not alone; the Father is with him (**16:32**).

**John 16:4b-15** ‘But now I am going to him who sent me; yet none of you asks me, “Where are you going?” But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your hearts. Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. And when he comes, he will prove the world wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment: about sin, because they do not believe in me; about righteousness, because I am going to the Father and you will see me no longer; about judgment, because the ruler of this world has been condemned.

‘I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, because he will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine. For this reason, I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.’

**John 19:28-30** As he was hanging on the cross Jesus knew that ‘it is finished’ (*tetelestai*). Far from just saying ‘It’s over’, he was aware that all that he had come to do had been accomplished. So, he cried out, ‘I am thirsty’, both because of the fearsome physical distress of the crucifixion and also because he must endure the agony of the spiritually condemned, as described in **Ps. 69:21**. Then he cried out what he knew, ‘*tetelestai*’: it is completed! Only then could he do what he was sent to do. **Verse 30** tells us that he bowed his head and gave up his spirit. In Matthew, Mark and Luke that is what is described. *But that is not what John wrote!* John used a totally different word, meaning not to breathe one’s last, but to *hand over* the spirit. John does not say it was *Jesus’* spirit but *the* spirit. John the Baptist saw that in **chapter 1**, and now that the task of taking away the sins of the world was done, the spirit, the Holy Spirit is passed on. The giving of the Spirit could not take place apart from the cross!

**John 20:19-23** Jesus appeared to the disciples. They were quite concerned for their own safety, as it was only a short couple of days since the crucifixion. Jesus’ greeting ‘Peace be with you’ would have sounded like the traditional greeting, but when they saw that was indeed Jesus their fear was turned to rejoicing. He greeted them again. Given all that we have seen so far, his next statements were highly significant. He now sends them, but not as mere messengers, but ‘As the Father send me, so I send you’. The Father sent him as the Son and so they go out as one with the Son.

Then ‘he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit”’. It may not appear obvious, but the language used in John’s account bears a striking similarity to the way God is described as breathing into Adam, the breath of life (**Gen: 2:7**) in the

Greek Old Testament, which was, of course, the common version used by Jewish people around the world. So, my suggestion is that at this point these disciples are being regenerated, born from above. Luke described it differently in **Acts 2** so that there is no need for us to try to reconcile the two stories. There is only one story, told in differing ways.

It is Jesus' final comment in **verse 23** which we see in closing. To the regenerated men he says, 'If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained'. If we recall **John 17:20**, people will believe in Jesus through the *word* of the disciples. There is no external authority being exercised, just the power of the gospel, the proclamation of sins forgiven or, indeed, of forgiveness rejected. The same thing is here as in **Matthew 28:18-20**. The sins of the world have been judged, so the gospel, as we see in the next section, is not about sin, but about forgiven sin, about reconciliation and intimacy with the triune God through the gift of the Holy Spirit.

### **Acts Chapter 1 – The Prelude: Part 1**

**Acts 1:1-8** 'All that Jesus did and taught from the beginning'.

We might recall the suggestion that *possibly* Theophilus had experienced the great work of God and needed to ask how it all came about. Was he one of those in **Acts 2:42**? In reply, it is the gospel, the authoritative announcement, which is effective and in which you Theophilus (and we) have participated.

Does this imply that Acts is the way Jesus' action continues? Or that it *is* that *plus* the incredible proclamation, see **Luke 24:47**?

In Acts, 'proclaimed' does not mean *talked about*. Rather it means announcing that this is the way things are.

I have included here a section from *Christianity Rediscovered* by Vincent Donovan:<sup>7</sup>

*This mighty struggle and effort of pagans to reach forgiveness touched me very deeply. It sent me back to the sources of Christianity to begin again to try to find out what it was all about. I went back to the New Testament, to the Acts and the epistles, to Peter and Paul, who were the first ones to preach the gospel to a pagan world. What does it mean to preach the Christian gospel to such a world?*

*If you study the apostolic approach very closely, you will see that something is missing. Sin is missing. There is no mention of original sin or any other kind of sin. Sin will come in later, after Christ, after getting to know Christ, in relation to Christ, but the sin portrayed by the first preachers of the Christian gospel is forgiven sin, something entirely different – the felix culpa. After all, isn't that the only kind of sin there is in the world, forgiven sin?*

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<sup>7</sup> Vincent J. Donovan, *Christianity Rediscovered: An Epistle From the Masai*, SCM Press, London, 1982, pp. 61-64.

*Christ, after his resurrection, said the same thing: "Now that the resurrection is a reality, now that forgiveness of sins is accomplished in this new covenant, go out to all the earth and preach the good news of the forgiveness of sins to all the nations." Isn't that what he is recorded as saying in Luke and elsewhere?*

*This is good news, to the Masai, to the guilty man cast out of his community, to the sinful son and to the offending family. I do not have to convince them of sin. They know of sin. What they did not know of was forgiveness. It has touched the earth. This is where Christianity parts company from Judaism and from Hinduism and from paganism. Sin is a conquered thing. This is a redeemed world. One wonders if one should dare talk to pagans about sin – apart from Christ, until they know Christ.*

*The job of a missionary, after all, is not to teach sin, but rather the forgiveness of sin.*

*It is all clear to me now, many years later. It was not clear to me when I first began to evangelize the Masai. Whereas, at that time, I felt I had got off to a fairly good start as far as God and creation were concerned, I truly bogged down when I came to man and salvation and sin. The nearest colleague with whom I could confer on such a matter was two hundred and fifty miles away. I had to face the difficulty alone and it almost finished me. I became discouraged in a way it would be hard to describe. More than that, before I began to see the way out of the mire, I was ready to give up. I was ready to announce to the church that had sent me, and to anyone else who wanted to listen, that Christianity was not valid – not valid for these Masai, perhaps not valid even for me. I suppose you would call it a crisis of faith, a loss of faith. I had begun to doubt the very message of Christianity.*

*I can sympathize with and feel with young Americans, whom I have met, who are going through the agony of unbelief. I used to think that faith was a head trip, a kind of intellectual assent to the truths and doctrines of our religion. I know better now. When my faith began to be shattered, I did not hurt in my head. I hurt all over.*

*Months later when all this had passed, I was sitting talking with a Masai elder about the agony of belief and unbelief. He used two languages to respond to me -- his own and Kiswahili. He pointed out that the word my Masai catechist, Paul, and I had used to convey faith was not a very satisfactory word in their language. It meant literally "to agree to." I, myself, knew the word had that shortcoming. He said "to believe" like that was similar to a white hunter shooting an animal with his gun from a great distance. Only his eyes and his fingers took part in the act. We should find another word. He said for a man really to believe is like a lion going after its prey. His nose and eyes and ears pick up the prey. His legs give him the speed to catch it. All the power of his body is involved in the terrible death leap and single blow to the neck with the front paw, the blow that actually kills. And as the animal goes down the lion envelops it in his arms (Africans refer to the front legs of an animal as its arms) pulls it to himself, and makes it part of himself. This is the way a lion kills. This is the way a man believes. This is what faith is.*

*I looked at the elder in silence and amazement. Faith understood like that would explain why, when my own was gone, I ached in every fiber of my being. But my wise old teacher was not finished yet.*

*“We did not search you out, Padri,” he said to me. “We did not even want you to come to us. You searched us out. You followed us away from your house into the bush, into the plains, into the steppes where our cattle are, into the hills where we take our cattle for water, into our villages, into our homes. You told us of the High God, how we must search for him, even leave our land and our people to find him. But we have not done this. We have not left our land. We have not searched for him. He has searched for us. He has searched us out and found us. All the time we think we are the lion. In the end, the lion is God.”*

*The lion is God. Of course. Goodness and kindness and holiness and grace and divine presence and creating power and salvation were here before I got here. Even the fuller understanding of God’s revelation to man, of the gospel, of the salvific act that had been accomplished once and for all for the human race was here before I got here. My role as a herald of that gospel, as a messenger of the news of what had already happened in the world, as the person whose task it was to point to “the one who had stood in their midst whom they did not recognize” was only a small part of the mission of God to the world. It was a mysterious part, a part barely understood. It was a necessary part, a demanded part — “Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel.” It was a role that would require every talent and insight and skill and gift and strength I had, to be spent without question, without stint, and yet in the humbling knowledge that only that part of it would be made use of which fit into the immeasurably greater plan of the relentless, pursuing God whose will on the world not be thwarted. The lion is God.’*

There is another, shorter, story from a book entitled *The Hammer of God*:<sup>8</sup>

*Fridfeldt seated himself on the sofa. He felt that he must not put off confessing where he stood. This strange old man with his brandy and his soldiers should at least learn what kind of assistant he had gotten.*

*‘I just want you to know from the beginning, sir, that I am a believer,’ he said. His voice was a bit harsh. He saw a gleam in the old man’s eyes which he could not quite interpret. Was approval indicated, or did he have something up his sleeve?*

*The rector put the lamp back on the table, puffed at his pipe, and looked at the young man a moment before he spoke.*

*‘So you are a believer, I’m glad to hear that. What do you believe in?’*

*Fridfeldt stared dumfounded at his superior. Was he joking with him?*

*‘But, sir, I am simply saying that I am a believer.’*

*‘Yes, I hear that, my boy. But what is it that you believe in?’ Fridfeldt was almost speechless. ‘But don’t you know, sir, what it means to be a believer?’*

*‘That is a word which can stand for things that differ greatly, my boy. I ask only what it is that you believe in.’*

*‘In Jesus, of course,’ answered Fridfeldt, raising his voice. ‘I mean—I mean that I have given Him my heart.’*

*The older man’s face became suddenly as solemn as the grave. ‘Do you consider that something to give Him?’*

*By this time, Fridfeldt was almost in tears. ‘But sir, if you do not give your heart to Jesus, you cannot be saved.’ ‘You are right, my boy. And it is just as true that, if*

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<sup>8</sup> Bo Giertz, *The Hammer of God*, Augsburg Publishing House, Minneapolis, 1960, pp146f.



*you think you are saved because you give Jesus your heart, you will not be saved. You see, my boy,' he continued reassuringly, as he continued to look at the young pastor's face, in which uncertainty and resentment were shown in a struggle for the upper hand, 'You see, my boy, it is one thing to choose Jesus as one's Lord and Savior, to give Him one's heart and commit oneself to Him, and that He now accepts one into His little flock; it is a very different thing to believe on Him as a Redeemer of sinners, of whom one is chief. One does not choose a Redeemer for oneself, you understand, nor give one's heart to Him. The heart is a rusty old can on a junk heap. A fine birthday gift, indeed! But a wonderful Lord passes by, and has mercy on the wretched tin can, sticks His walking cane through it and rescues it from the junk pile and takes it home with Him. That is how it is.'*

In Donovan's words, *'The lion is God!'* So, see **Acts 2:36-39**. The truth is that God has raised Jesus from the dead! You can know what we know: there is forgiveness of sins. The Spirit who was promised has come and you may also participate in that gift. But note that **v. 39** says that it must be that God calls us, effectively, that is, it is not by invitation. He calls us to himself. The lion is God! See also **Rev. 19:9**, 'Blessed are those who are *called* to marriage supper of the Lamb'. We are not invited merely to observe the nuptials but are called to *be* the bride of the Lamb. See also **Rom. 8:28-39**. God is King: he has poured his love into us and so we love (**1 John 4:19** 'we love *because* he first loved us'). He has justified us, so we remain justified. Nothing can separate us from his love. So don't wriggle.

As we have noted already, Luke has shown the effectiveness of the word of God: **Luke 1:2** the account of the great events 'were handed on – as authoritative reality – by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and *servants of the word*'. See also **Luke 4:22** 'the words of grace' and **Ephesians 4:29**; **Luke 4:36** 'what is this word ...?', **Luke 7:7** 'but say a word ...', **Luke 8:11** 'the seed is *the word of God*'.

This emphasis is, of course, also in Acts. So **Acts 4:29-31**, where, when the pressure was on to silence those who quite evidently had been with Jesus (**v. 13**), the only solution was for Peter and John to cry out to God as 'servants of the Lord' so that they might speak *his* word with all boldness; with the result that 'they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God with boldness'. We might also note that 'the sword of the Spirit', the sword which the Spirit wields, is the word of God.

What seems to me to be of great significance is **Acts 6:1-4**, where the twelve argue that it was not right for them to 'neglect the word of God', rather that they should 'devote themselves to prayer and to *servicing the word*'. It was not that these men were opting out of caring for the needy, but that they recognised the great dignity of *servicing the word*. It struck me that in a strange way there is a parallel in **Exodus 39:1-30**, where the elaborate details and preparation for the high priestly duties were done because the high priest was as one 'holy to the Lord'. His role was especially significant! Aaron and his sons were not to be exalted of themselves. The blessing was for them to be objects of God's choice, so that the contrast is fearfully demonstrated in **Lev. 10:1-3**, and **Num. 3:4** and **26:21**.

Also in Acts we note **10:44** where 'the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word'; **13:48**, where those destined for eternal life believed (the lion gripped them) and 'the



word of the Lord spread throughout the region'; **14:3** where Paul and Barnabas spoke in such a way that many believed, and then 'they remained for a long time, speaking boldly for the Lord, *who testified to the word of his grace* by granting signs and wonders to be done through them'. Climactically, **Acts 19:20** identifies that it was 'the word of God [which] grew mightily and prevailed'. So, **Acts 28** concludes the book with the Apostle Paul in prison in Rome. But the final verses, **verses 30-31** highlight the true nature of the proclamation of the word: Paul 'lived there in Rome at his own expense and welcomed all who came to him, proclaiming the kingdom of God and preaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and *without hindrance*.'

**Acts 1:2-3** Jesus' final acts prior to his ascension were to teach the apostles *through the Holy Spirit*. It was not mere information, though doubtless that was there (cf. **Luke 24:25-27, 45**). This teaching was accompanied by many convincing proofs that Jesus was, and is, truly alive! This is the message of the kingdom, and is soon declared by **Peter in 2:22-36**. Later Paul showed that Jesus is not just an isolated case of long-term resuscitation. His point was that Jesus is the restarting the creation. He is the second man, the last Adam (Adam – at last). Whereas in the first Adam all die, in the last Adam all will be made alive (**1 Cor. 15:3-8, 20-28, 42-49; 2 Cor. 5:16-29**).

Teaching through the Holy Spirit was for Jesus the only way to teach as he did. The aim was not to provide information. That was already available. He was, through the Spirit, imparting *intimate knowledge*. This was also obvious in the major section of John's Gospel, **chapters 14-17**. This intimate knowledge was possibly what was implied in the Old Testament where the serpent tempted Eve (and Adam, 'who was with her') to 'be like God, knowing good and evil' (**Gen. 3:5**). This knowledge was not theirs to have of themselves, only to receive. But the result of their attempt to be independent gods was the inescapable knowledge that they were naked (**3:7**), before God and before each other. Hence there was the futile attempt to disguise their guilt.

On the other hand, there was God's solution, described in **Gen. 3:21**. Still, there was available to the couple genuinely intimate knowledge: 'The man knew his wife and she conceived'. Even though they were one flesh (**2:5**) and they could never again fully understand each other in their created unity (**3:16-19**) there was still the valid human knowledge in the act of procreation (**Gen. 4:1, 25**). Contrary illicit attempts to replicate this are described, not as 'knowing' but 'to lie with' (**Gen 19:32, 34; 39:7, 10**). A similar contrast is in **1 Cor. 6:16**, where there is a distinction between one *body* and one *flesh*.

**Acts 1:3** *Convincing proofs* of Jesus' resurrection were given to the apostles. What they were is not given, though the four Gospel accounts provide some answers. But the time was well used. The phrase *forty days* needs a comment. On a number of occasions *forty* is used in compounds such as in the attempted bargaining of **Gen. 18:28-29; 47:28** etc. or in precise ages or numbers. But on a large number of occasions, it is used for 'a significant amount of time'. So, the flood was described as forty days and forty nights, Isaac and Esau were both forty when they married, Moses spent forty days and forty nights on Sinai, Israel spent forty years in the wilderness, as did Elijah, Nineveh was given forty days in which to repent, Jesus fasted for forty days and forty nights, and finally this time of Jesus with the apostles. Modern western readers may demand absolute precision, but I suggest that often generalisations are

quite acceptable. We know what was intended, as with ‘a long while’, ‘a little while’, ‘soon’ and so on.

**Acts 1:4-5** As recorded in **Luke 24:49**, the apostles were ordered not to leave Jerusalem but to wait for the promise of the Father. Jesus had also said these things, though the details are not spelled out. The story had commenced with the story and the significance of John and his baptising people with water with forgiveness of sins in view. The kingdom is at hand (Luke 3:36), so Israel ought to repent in anticipation of the coming clean up of the nation (**Luke 3:16-18**). But what is specific is that the nation will be baptised with, immersed in, the Holy Spirit. This will be the great establishment of the kingdom of God.

**Acts 1:6-7** If Jesus has been speaking of the imminent kingdom coming to Israel, then it would seem only logical to ask him if this is the time for it to take place. But, as usual, Jesus’ subordination to the Father’s authority is paramount (see **Mark 13:32**). As the second man, the last Adam, it is vital even for Jesus not to usurp what belongs to the Father alone. Certainly, it is not for the apostles to try to double think the Father.

**Acts 1:8** In spite of historical expectations or events, the kingdom does not come with displays of physical strength or success. Indeed, God will not remove impediments to displays of his power. This is what Paul had to learn, as recorded in **2 Cor. 12:7-10** and **13:4**.

Power comes when the Holy Spirit comes on men and women. This is demonstrated in the great description of the restoration of Israel in **Ezekiel 36-37**. In **Ezek. 36:22-27** the significant issue is the vindication of God’s holy name and restoration of the nation to the inheritance from which it has been exiled. This will involve radical cleansing from all Israel’s idols, the transformation of the inner man so that the stony resistant heart is made to beat with re-created warmth. Then there will be gift of the Spirit and the resultant delight in the law as the drive for holiness in life.

In **Ezek. 36:28** there is the restoration of Israel to its inheritance. But there can be no restoration to the inheritance without the deep work of God in the lives of the people. In **v. 29** it is said that the release from uncleanness and guilt and the freshness of life in the inheritance is what brings about repentance (**v. 31**). Then, in **v. 35**, there is the declaration that ‘this land that was desolate has become like the garden of Eden’!

**Ezek.37:1-14** then tells the story from a different angle. Dead Israel needs the breath, the wind, the spirit of God (same words) to reinvigorate it. And when the spirit did come it was because the Lord had commanded the prophet to speak and the breath did come ‘into them ... they lived and stood on their feet, a vast multitude.’

So, what is clear is that the coming of the Spirit will not be with personal, individual power in view, though personal special anointings would not be excluded. Rather, there will be the power to witness to all that Jesus has done, ‘in Jerusalem, in all Judea, and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth’. As a matter of further interest, **Ezekiel 37** continues in **verses 15-28** with a picture of the reuniting of divided Israel’s two usually hostile kingdoms and so ‘the nations shall know that I the Lord sanctify Israel,

when my sanctuary is among them forevermore' (cf. **Rev. 21:3-4**, the *tabernacle* of God is among men). The gospel is 'for the Jew first' (**Rom. 1:16**).

### **Acts Chapter 1 – The Prelude: Part 2**

**Acts 1:9-11** briefly describe the 'ascension' of Jesus. Many have attempted to visualise the moment as Jesus disappears from sight. The attempts have bordered on anything from tragically comical to offensive. Certainly, Luke is not justifying them. He will soon tell what the ascension means in **Acts 2:32-36**. Ascension does not imply some sort of vertical lifting up from the ground until he was hidden by, if I may cheekily say, 'a little black rain cloud'. In the scriptures clouds are often associated with the presence and glory of God. His ascension was his exaltation to 'the right hand of the majesty on high' (**Heb. 1:3-4**) where he was given the Holy Spirit to pour out on those who were his. His ascension is the key to all that is about to break out. The cloud through which they could not see was the cloud of glory. It would take an exceptional gift for one to penetrate beyond and even then, the language used would be almost breathtakingly beautiful and effectively indescribable, not coldly analytical (see **Rev. 4:1 – 5:14; 2 Cor. 12:1-4**).

'Gazing up toward heaven' (**Acts 1:10-11**) is simply explained. Throughout the scriptures the word 'heaven' (or 'heavens') is used in two ways. One is 'the sky' (**Gen. 1:1**) and the other is the presence of God, where, incidentally, we are *now* seated with the risen Jesus (**Eph. 2:5-6**)! There is *no* notion of 'going to heaven when I die'. Sadly, clichés die very slowly.

If Jesus 'will come in the same way as [you] saw him go into heaven', surely that says he will come as the risen, exalted, triumphant Man, the Lord Jesus, to take his bride. The trumpets of his 'triumph' will be blown and all his own, those who have died and those still living at that time, join his 'triumph', his victory procession.

### **Acts Chapter 1 – The Prelude: Part 3**

**Acts 1:12-14** show us the group people in the upper room. 'All of these were constantly devoting themselves to prayer, together with certain women, *including Mary the mother of Jesus*, as well as his brothers.' Quite a group!

### **Acts Chapter 1 – The Prelude: Part 4**

**Acts 1:15-26** is a strange passage. Recently I heard someone describe this passage as being a good example for us to follow of faithful waiting on God. As I listened I was reminded of a little story I heard some years back:

*The story is told of Chinese Christian leaders visiting our churches. At the end of their trip, they were asked what they thought. Conferring for a moment they replied, "We are amazed at how much you have accomplished without the Holy Spirit."*

But the story of the choice of Matthias may well fit into that latter category. The church father, John Chrysostom, observed: ‘Besides [Peter] was not yet endowed with the Spirit.’<sup>9</sup>

I can only offer the *suggestion* that this was an attempt to pre-empt what would take place later. Told to ‘stay here in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high’ (**Luke 24:49**), Peter seems to have identified a need and suggested a solution. Whether it was that Israel of old had twelve tribes or simply that initially there had been twelve disciples, he suggested a vote: they put forward Joseph Barsabbas and Matthias. They were doubtless good men and met the human requirements but was casting lots the way forward? Like choosing the short straw? Like a majority vote at an Annual Meeting perhaps.

Given the way the book of Acts unfolds, could it be that the work of preaching the word to the Gentiles would be performed by one whom the Holy Spirit chose: **Acts 13:1-4** says: ‘The Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them”. So, the church sent them off with their blessing and they went ‘being sent out by the Holy Spirit’.

*Scripture will ultimately suffice for a saving knowledge of God only when its certainty is founded upon the inward persuasion of the Holy Spirit. Indeed, these human testimonies which exist to confirm it will not be vain if, as secondary aids to our feebleness, they follow that chief and highest testimony. But those who wish to prove to unbelievers that Scripture is the Word of God are acting foolishly, for only by faith can this be known.*<sup>10</sup>

## **Acts Chapter 2 – All Heaven Breaks Loose! .....**

When does Acts chapter 2 conclude? Acts 28? 2024? It hasn’t concluded! The bride is still being gathered. What we see begin at Pentecost, we will see in all its glory (**Rom. 8:18-27**) when he returns, and creation is fully liberated.

(Ian Pennicook. 12th Feb. 2024)

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<sup>9</sup> <https://www.crossroadsinitiative.com/media/articles/call-of-st-matthias-st-john-chrysostom/>

<sup>10</sup> *John Calvin (1509-1564), The Institutes of the Christian Religion*, v. I [1559], tr. John Allen, Presbyterian Board of Publication and Sabbath-School Work, 1921, I.viii.13, p. 90-91.