

SHEKINAH MINISTRIES

GLORY AND PRESENCE OF GOD

Book of Acts

We've talked about them and even compared ourselves to the them. It seemed only fitting to Pastor that we should study them.

The very first edition of the Latter Rain Update had an article in it entitled "Are we becoming the Church in Acts?" The answer to this question will be within our grasp at the conclusion of the current lesson entitled The Book of Acts.

After Jesus' resurrection from the dead, He appeared to the apostles over a period of forty days. Just before He ascended to the right hand of the Father, Jesus left them instructions to wait in Jerusalem until they received the promise of the Father, the Holy Spirit, whom He had spoken to them of in John 16:5-15. He told them that they would receive power to be witnesses once they received the Holy Spirit.

They then asked Jesus if He was going to restore the kingdom of Israel at that time. They viewed the Messiah as the Lion coming to deliver them from the oppression of their enemies. This is why they asked. Jesus will indeed come as the lion at His second coming, but, at His first coming, He came as the lamb.

Jesus was then received into a cloud up into Heaven from the Mount of Olives (Acts 1:9-12). Angels here testified of Him that just as He left, so would He come again to them.

The disciples obeyed Jesus and assembled together into the upper room where they were staying in Jerusalem to wait for the Holy Spirit.

In the meantime, they cast lots to decide who would take Judas' place as the twelfth disciple. This was a mechanism that God used to communicate to the people through under the Old Covenant. Although the Old Covenant had ended, because the New Covenant had not yet begun, God still used this method to tell the people His will. Another method God used to communicate to the people through was called the Urim and Thummim (Num.27:21, I Sam.28:6, Ezra 2:63). Under the New Covenant, however, things have changed:

"God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son..." (Heb.1:1-2).

At that time, however, they cast lots. Judas was the enemy from within that enabled the devil to cause damage to Jesus' ministry. "A house divided against itself cannot stand," as Jesus said. Even so, Judas' betrayal was all a part of God's plan to trick Satan into shedding Jesus' blood. It was written of Judas beforehand by the mouth of David.

* Prophecy is merely history prewritten; it does not set history. Jesus even knew that Judas would betray Him when He called him to be His disciple because He foresaw what would happen. *

Seven days later, on the Day of Pentecost, the disciples received the Promise that Jesus told them about. The Holy Spirit entered the earth with the sign of tongues of fire and the sound of a rushing, mighty wind. He then entered into the believers and the evidence of His indwelling them is that they began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. It was at this time that they received the power that they needed to be witnesses. It is He who bears witness of Jesus by His actions. Without His witness inside of us, we cannot truly be effective witnesses to others of Jesus. Without Him, we have a very minute understanding of Jesus because the Teacher, the Holy Spirit, hasn't revealed Him to us yet.

Once the Holy Spirit entered into the earth, He began convicting the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment. His arrival caused the disciples to be more effective in ministering salvation than Jesus was able to be because He had been limited to using miracles, signs, and wonders to draw people to Him. People came to Him because they had needs, not because they were sinners in need of salvation. The Holy Spirit convicted the hearts of men and thus was much more effective in working through the disciples.

When the Jewish men in Jerusalem, who had come from every nation under Heaven, heard these Galileans speaking in their own languages, it boggled their minds. The disciples were speaking in tongues foreign to them but common to the various nationalities present for the Jewish Festival. What they were experiencing was the fulfillment of the prophecy from the Prophet Joel who spoke of what would come in these, the Last Days. All believers, not just selected few who were anointed to fill the office of prophet, high priest, king, or artisan, could now be filled with the Holy Spirit.

Newly endowed by the power of the Holy Spirit to witness of Jesus, Peter began to preach to the multitudes and explain that it was the partial fulfillment of Joel's prophecy. He also began to tell them about Jesus whom they crucified and how God had raised Him up. He further explained that the pains of death could not hold Jesus (Acts 2:24).

THE MYSTERY OF THE GOSPEL

Satan had shed Jesus' innocent blood. The killing of Jesus was unjust. God had tricked the devil into thinking that Jesus was a sinner. However, the sin that was on Him was our sin, not His own. When it came time for Jesus' arraignment, there were no legitimate charges. Death had to loosen Him. God also declared that since Satan had killed Jesus unjustly, Satan would also have to release all those who believed on Jesus. We all rode Jesus' coattails out of Hell (Ephesians 4:8-10). **I**

Corinthians 2:7-8 tells us that the devil and his hoard did not know this, otherwise they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory.

The Father then gave Jesus a name above every other name, even above all other Host of Heaven except the Father Himself. The Father made Jesus Lord - (Phil.2:9-11) not only the Son of God, but also the Son of Man. He was re clothed with His deity and given all authority over the power of the enemy.

And He gave it to us.

MAN OF GOD ARRIVES IN TOWN

The streets of Jerusalem were filled with infirmed people who eagerly awaited their arrival. They had heard of the mighty miracles and wonders done through the hands of these apostles (Acts 5:12-16). It was even reported that one man who was born lame had been healed of his infirmity when he encountered them.

Peter and John were the names of two of these men, but the entire group of believers in Jesus grew in number each day. They spoke boldly in the name and authority of Jesus, and God moved in response to their words. Peter spoke to the Sanhedrin saying, "Let it be known to you all and to all the people that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him, this man stands before you whole," (Acts 4:10).

God confirmed the words of these apostles through signs and wonders, and it is clear that these men were truly from God since only He could authenticate their words supernaturally. So why then were the priests, the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees persecuting them? Weren't they supposed to be on the same side?

They had been brought to trial, thrown in jail, and even beaten for testifying of Jesus and for using His name to bless others. For what mighty work were they persecuted? Healing the sick? Drawing a bigger crowd than they could? Proclaiming Jesus Christ as the Messiah? If He were not the Messiah, how could these mighty works be done through His name? If God indeed bears witness to this Jesus and His name, then who is man to fight against them?

COUPLE DIES FOR LYING

You just can't lie to God.

Ananias along with his wife Sapphira found this out when they conspired to lie to the Holy Spirit in the face of the Man of God (Acts 5:1-10).

Peter, by manifestation of the Word of Knowledge, knew that they were lying to him when they told him that they had sold their entire possessions and gave them all of their increase. It was only part of the proceeds of their sale, and God knew it.

Peter gave the two of them an opportunity to come clean of their folly, but they both gave their word that the amount of money that they brought to the Apostle Peter was the sum total of their profit.

Immediately after this admission, Peter called them on it, and they both, at separate times in the day, fell over dead.

You don't want to lie to the Man of God. When you do, you just may be lying to the Holy Spirit, and He won't accept that.

Be very careful that when you bring your tithe to the ministry that you are truly giving the tenth part of your increase, of the first fruits. God is not mocked; you can't lie to Him.

SEVEN MEN ATTACKED BY A DEMON

The Seven Sons of Sceva, Itinerant Jewish exorcists, were quite surprised at the response they received when they who took it upon themselves to try to exorcise demons in the name of Jesus, "whom Paul preaches," we read in Acts 19:11-16.

When conversing with the evil spirit (mistake), it stated, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know, but who are you?" Then it attacked the men for daring to come up against it without any authority to, since they weren't Jesus' disciples.

The men fled the scene naked and wounded from the encounter.

Demons are stronger than we are because they are celestial beings. They are "glorious ones" and, regardless of their fall, they have not changed in glory. This is why in Ezekiel 28:11-19 God calls Lucifer the Anointed Cherub Who Covers (present tense). "*The gifts and callings of God are irrevocable,*" *Romans 11:29 states*. So, if people come up against them with no authority to do so, they will not tolerate that. These men found this out. They dared to speak against these dignitaries, and they are as those spoken of in Jude 8.

God has given us a mechanism by which we may defeat the demonic hoard - the name of Jesus. Because of Jesus' obedience to the point of death, he was given a name far above all names and authority by His resurrection (Ephesians 2:5-11). Then God gave us, Jesus' body, authorization to use His name to defeat the devil. It is a celestial connection greater than Lucifer's. This authority is limited to us, however, in use in our own lives and in the lives of our families.

WAS IT GOD'S WILL THAT PAUL BE IMPRISONED?

In Acts 21:4, the disciples at Tyre warned Paul through the Spirit not to go up to Jerusalem, but Paul would not listen. The Holy Spirit also warned Paul a second time in verse 11 not to go, and again Paul refused to accept this. It is commendable to be bound for the Lord Jesus (as he declared he was willing to be in Acts 21:13) but in this case, it was not necessary.

So why didn't God want Paul to go to Jerusalem?

God knew that Paul would succumb to political correctness due to pressure from the Jewish brethren. This is why He warned Paul through numerous ways not to go. God was right (as always). Paul was brought to task because it was told that he taught all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses by not circumcising their children nor walking according to the customs. At Acts 21:22-25 Paul should have refuted them to tell them that the law could not justify them, but the blood of Jesus, but he didn't. They compelled him to purify himself and three other men to prove that he was obedient to the law of Moses. He did that, and he even went to the point of offering animal sacrifice for himself and the men, although Jesus had already come as the final sacrifice.

He acquiesced to them. The result of Paul's going to Jerusalem apart from the leading of the Holy Spirit was that he was bound and put in chains, and the mob came after him.