

RESTORATION OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD!
ACTS CH1:6-11

ILLUSTRATION

Edith Cavell was a pioneering British nurse who was court martialled and executed by the German forces occupying Belgium during the First World War in 1915. Her crime had been to work with the Belgian resistance to shelter about 200 Allied soldiers trapped behind German lines and get them to safety. Her execution by firing squad provoked worldwide condemnation. It prompted a surge in army recruitment in Britain and ***is thought to have been one of the factors which encouraged the United States to enter the war.***

She admitted helping 200 men to reach the Dutch frontier and, on 11 October, she was condemned to death. She had communion with the only remaining English-speaking minister in Brussels that evening. She told him, ***'...I have seen death so often that it is not strange or fearful for me...(but) standing as I do in view of God and eternity I realise that patriotism is not enough. I must have no hatred or bitterness towards anyone'. When he said she would be remembered as a heroine and a martyr, she said she wanted to be remembered 'as a nurse who tried to do her duty'.*** At dawn on 12 October Edith Cavell was executed by a German firing squad.

The citizens of God's Kingdom, through the power and presence of the Holy Spirit, witness Kingdom values! Edith Cavell is one of those citizens!

RE-CAP!

1. The Bible notes the time span of "40 days and nights" in a number of references. For example, Genesis Ch7:4+12 tells us God was so troubled by the wickedness of the world that he planned to destroy all life – with the exception of those righteous few on the ark – and "rain fell on the earth forty days and forty nights."
2. Later, after Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt toward the Promised Land, God called him to the top of Mount Sinai for "forty days and forty nights without eating bread or drinking water" (Exodus Ch34:28). There, God gave Moses His covenant, the Ten Commandments, so they could live in alignment with the Lord.
3. On the eve of their long-awaited entry to Canaan, God had Moses send out spies into the land so they could explore. They spent 40 days and nights scouting the land, then returned and reported all they had found (Numbers Ch13:25).
4. In the famous story of David and the giant Goliath, God's people endure 40 days of taunting and challenges from Goliath before David is sent to the battlefield with bread for his brothers and decides he's the one who will fight for his people (1st Samuel Ch17:16).
5. When the prophet Elijah fled the wicked queen Jezebel, he travelled 40 days and nights until he reached Mount Horeb (1st Kings Ch19:8). There, in the shelter of a cave, he heard God — not in the mighty wind, earthquake, or fire, but in a gentle whisper.
6. After Jonah's rebellion, he prophesied about God's wrath to the Ninevites, telling them they would be destroyed in 40 days (Jonah Ch3:4).
7. Many, many years from that time, the Bible tells us that after His baptism, Jesus was led by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by Satan. He fasted 40 days and nights, and the devil tempted Jesus there in His hunger and apparent weakness (Matthew Ch4:2).

We cannot understand the power of the Holy Spirit apart from the life of Jesus. There's no example of what it means to live a **Spirit-empowered life** unless we look at the life of Jesus. And so, that's what Luke is telling us. He says, "OK, Jesus lived by the power of the Holy Spirit." He lives without sin, he dies for our sin, he rises for our sin, he evidences it for forty days, and he tells his people, "Don't go do ministry yet. Wait. You need power. The Holy Spirit's coming to cause you to be like me." That's why the former book and the latter book go together.

So, in the book of Luke, what is the relationship between Jesus and the Holy Spirit?

1. At Jesus' baptism, God the Father speaks from heaven. The whole Trinity is there. "This is my Son, in whom I am well pleased." Here's Jesus, the Son of God, the second member of the Trinity coming up out of the water. Who descends on Jesus? **The Holy Spirit in the form of a dove.** This is to show publicly that Jesus is anointed by the Holy Spirit, that he's indwelt by the Holy Spirit, that he's filled by the Holy Spirit, that he's empowered by the Holy Spirit, that his whole life is by the power of the Holy Spirit. That's why this was public, so everybody could see it. See, Jesus already knew it. This wasn't for Jesus' understanding; this was for our understanding. (Luke Ch3:21-22)
2. The book of Luke, then, goes on to say that Jesus was "**full of the Holy Spirit.**" How many of you have heard, "You should live a Spirit-filled life." That's true. You know what that looks like? Jesus. Any time we lift someone else up and say, "Well, there's the Spirit-filled person, be like them," wrong person. None of us sinners are perfectly, continually full of the Holy Spirit. **We resist (Acts Ch7:51), grieve (Eph Ch4:30), we quench (1st Thess Ch5:19), and we insult the Holy Spirit at times (Hebrews Ch10:29). But Jesus was, "full of the Holy Spirit"—continually, perfectly.** (Luke Ch4:1)
3. The Gospel of Luke says that he was "**led by the Spirit.**" So, Jesus goes here because that's where the Spirit is directing him. He teaches these people, he leads these people, he casts out these demons, he prays over this crowd. Why? Because he's led by the Holy Spirit. (Luke Ch4:1)
4. We read in the Gospel of Luke that he came "**in the power of the Spirit.**" How did he teach? In the power of the Holy Spirit. How did he cast out demons? In the power of the Holy Spirit. How were those who were blind given sight? Because he was empowered by the Holy Spirit. He came with, by, for, through the power of the Holy Spirit. See, ministry has programs, but it does nothing without power. (Luke Ch4:14)
5. Early on in his ministry, he walks into a synagogue, he opens the book of Isaiah, Isaiah 61:1–2, and he reads it. Do you remember what he reads? He reads this: "**The Spirit of the Lord is upon me to preach good news and to set captives free.**" **And then he closed it up, and he said this: "Today, this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."** Isaiah wrote seven hundred years prior and said, "There's one who is coming, and the Spirit of the Lord will reside on him so that he could preach good news and set captives free from sin and death. **"And Jesus says, "I'm here. That's me. I'm the one you've all been waiting for, and the Spirit of the Lord is upon me."** (Luke Ch4:16-21)
6. The Gospel of Luke says that he "**rejoiced in the Holy Spirit.**" When he had joy, when he celebrated, it was because the joy of the Lord was his strength. It was the Holy Spirit in him, causing him to glorify, to worship, to enjoy, to adore, to thank, to bless God the Father. (Luke Ch10:21)

What is the essence of being baptized with the Holy Spirit? Is it the sound of wind, the tongues of fire, the other languages, the words of praise, the prophecies and dreams and visions? Can we get at the essence of what it means to be baptized with the Holy Spirit, or does it have to include all these things?

I think the essence of being baptized with the Holy Spirit is ***when a person, who is already a believer, receives extraordinary spiritual power for Christ-exalting.*** There are good reasons for believing that these disciples were already born again and converted and had the Holy Spirit dwelling in them (John Ch13:10; Ch15:3; Romans Ch8:9). But even more important than that is the fact that the issue of the new birth and conversion of the disciples is simply not in view at all in Acts Ch1 + Ch2. Jesus doesn't say, "Wait in Jerusalem until you are born again or converted or put into the body of Christ." He says, "But you will receive power....." He doesn't say, "You shall receive membership in the body of Christ when the Holy Spirit has come upon you." He says, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you."

So filling with the "Spirit" is a special empowering for ministry that is described as ".....baptised with the Holy Spirit." and this idea of "baptism" is almost always associated with this extraordinary power for ministry in the book of Acts. Notice that when the baptism with the Spirit happens in Acts Ch2:4, Luke says, "All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit" The effect of that filling was a powerful and even miraculous testimony to the truth of Christ that resulted in 3,000 people being converted (Acts Ch2:41).

So here my conclusion is that being baptized with the Holy Spirit is when a believer in Jesus Christ receives extraordinary power for Christ-exalting ministry.

THE KINGDOM OF GOD! V6

What is a Kingdom? A territory? A leader? A power? A people?

It would appear from the disciples/apostles question – that they were still thinking about Jesus restoring Israel, its King, it's Kingdom (territory) and it's citizens (Jews alone). God's Kingdom cannot be found on any map with a particular area! They were in fact confusing the Kingdom of God, with the Kingdom of Israel! The disciples did not understand! They were still thinking in terms of Israel being restored to its former glory, with its King, Kingdom and Jewish Citizens!

The giving of the Holy Spirit is the chief sign of God's Kingdom beginning! ***Jesus spent the 40 days talking to the apostles about the Kingdom of God (Ch1:3) which had been a central theme in His teaching in the Gospel of Luke – Ch4:43; Ch6:20; Ch8:1+10; Ch9:2+11; Ch11:20; Ch17:20-21; Ch18:16-17+24-25; Ch21:31; Ch22:16 (15 times in 24 chapters)!***

THE KINGDOM CITIZENS! V7-8

Times and dates – The Father, by His own authority only knows (Mark Ch13:32) and the "times and dates" make up His plan! The apostles do not need to concern themselves with Jesus' second coming, known also as the "Parousia" no matter how long or short it is going to be. They do need to be concerned about the time in between "Pentecost + Parousia" ensuring that this period is filled with the spread of the Kingdom of God!

Power - Power in the Kingdom of God is different to power in earthly kingdoms! As we see worldly leaders trying to keep or enlarge their "earthly kingdoms" through a misuse of

sinful earthly power, God's Kingdom is spread in a very different way:

1. through witness, not soldiers!
2. through a Gospel of peace, not a declaration of war!
3. through the Holy Spirit, not by force!
4. through truth, not propaganda!
5. through genuine faith, not by works!

The power of the Kingdom of God is seen in the Holy Spirit working in peoples hearts, restoring God's rule to peoples hearts, His salvation and Lordship!

Witnesses – Involves ever increasing circles of peoples and nations and generations, beginning in Jerusalem then Judea, Samaria and to the ends of the earth. Kingdom mission is “***Local, National, International.***”

THE KINGDOM'S KING! V9-11

According to John Stott the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts have 5 similarities surrounding the ascension of Jesus:

1. ***Both say that the ascension of Jesus followed His commission to the apostles to be His witnesses.***
2. ***Both say that it took place outside and east of Jerusalem, somewhere on the Mount of Olives.***
3. ***Both say that Jesus “was taken up into heaven”, the passive voice indicating that the ascension like the resurrection was an act of the Father, who first raised Him from the dead and exalted Him to heaven. As Chrysostom put it, “the royal chariot (was) sent for Him”.***
4. ***Both say that the apostles “returned to Jerusalem” afterwards, the Gospel adding “with great joy”.***
5. ***Both say that they then waited for the Spirit to come, in accordance with the Lord's plain command and promise. (John Stott Commentary on The Message of the Book of Acts, pg46)***

V9 - Cloud – The cloud! Luke had already recorded for us in – Luke Ch21:27 - “they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.” That same cloud which had hidden them from their sight (Ch1:9), which had previously enveloped Him and the three intimate apostles on the Mount of Transfiguration (Luke Ch9:34), and which through out the Old Testament was the symbol of Yahweh's glorious presence, would be the chariot of His coming as it had been of His going.

V10 - Men dressed in white – Angels were present announcing Jesus' birth – Luke Ch1:26; Angels were present at His birth – Luke Ch2:9-10 + Luke Ch2:13-15; Strengthened Him in the Garden of Gethsemane – Luke Ch22:43; Proclaimed His resurrection – Luke Ch22:43; It is entirely appropriate that angels should be present at His ascension!

V11 - Same Jesus – He will return, personal, in His glorified human nature and bodily form, yet fully the eternal Son!

Same way – His coming back, Parousia, will be visible and glorious!

APPLICATION

To be an apostle, what four things were required?

- To be chosen by Jesus (v2)
- To be witnesses of the resurrected Jesus (v3)
- To be commissioned by Jesus (v4)
- To receive the power of the Holy Spirit by Jesus (v5)

So at The Mission Church we would promote that there are no apostles today because there are no witnesses of the resurrection of Jesus, however, we recognise that there is space for "apostolic ministry" involving Church planting and strengthening. We also recognise that other Churches may well promote that there are apostles in today's Church!

You too, as a Christian, can be a Kingdom builder!

Keep asking God to fill you with His Holy Spirit to receive power for Kingdom witness, Kingdom building and Kingdom restoration!