

EMPOWERED: a series in "Acts of the Apostles"

more accurately named: "Acts of Jesus and the Spirit"- the only single character who unifies the story from beginning to end, either directly or through His Spirit)

empowered- to have given someone the authority or power to do something/ to have made someone stronger and more confident, especially in controlling their life and claiming their rights (syn. qualify, enable, equip, set free, liberate)

Acts- Second volume of the unified work "Luke-Acts" written by Luke, a physician and traveling co-worker of the Apostle Paul. (Col. 4:14; Phil. v.24)

BRIEF Recap of Luke- describe purpose and bring up to date, leading into Acts Introduction

Acts 1:1-

Volume 1 (Luke) about all that Jesus BEGAN to do and teach

Volume 2 (Acts) about all that Jesus CONTINUED to do and teach

The first chapter recounts how, after His resurrection, Jesus spent forty days with his disciples and close followers teaching them about the Kingdom of God. (Connects back to Luke's Gospel)

-Jesus restores God's kingdom over the world (beginning with Israel)

-Called Israel to follow him (and live under God's reign)

-Enthroned as king through his death and resurrection (when he willingly gave up His life and conquered death with His love)

And so the book of Acts begins with the risen savior teaching his followers about what life will look like in His kingdom.

Acts 1:1-11 (ESV)

"In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach, until the day when he was taken up, after he had given commands through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. He presented himself alive to them after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God. And while staying with them he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, "you heard from me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now." So when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, and said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.""

Acts 1:1-11 ESV

Promise of the Spirit:

-Jesus promises his followers that the Spirit will come and immerse them in His personal presence. This fulfills one of the key hopes of the OT prophets about the Messianic Kingdom (Isaiah 32:15, Ezekiel 36:25-27, Joel 2:28-29): God's presence would come and take up residence by His Spirit in a NEW TEMPLE and transform their hearts. Jesus says that when this happens, His Spirit will EMPOWER His disciples to "be my witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." (Acts 1:8)

It's at this point that Jesus is taken up from their sight into a cloud. It's an image drawn from Daniel 7 and shows how Jesus is now being ENTHRONED as the Son of Man who was vindicated after His suffering and now shares in God's rule over the world, and so He promises that He will return one day.

Daniel 7:13-14 (NLT)

"As my vision continued that night, I saw someone like a son of man coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient One and was led into his presence. He was given authority, honor, and sovereignty over all the nations of the world, so that people of every race and nation and language would obey him. His rule is eternal—it will never end. His kingdom will never be destroyed."

Daniel 7:13-14 NLT

John 14:15-21 (ESV)

"If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you. "I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. Yet a little while and the world will see me no more, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him."

John 14:15-21 ESV

John 16:7 (ESV)

"Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you."

John 16:7 ESV

EMPOWERED- what is the purpose of our empowerment? It's too easy for us to get caught up on the personal side of this that we can forget about WHY we are empowered in the first place. It's not to become super-Christian's. It's not because we are more special than anyone else in and of ourselves. The purpose of God's choosing to immerse or BAPTIZE us in His Spirit, is so that we might SERVE Him and others by being WITNESSES of the very life-transforming work He has done in us. It's one thing when God does a work IN us. When we become witnesses to that change is when He begins to work THROUGH us.

Whether one believes that the evidence of being "baptized in the Holy Spirit" is speaking in tongues, a new boldness and courage that comes over you and/or a supernatural love for people that you possess...all of those are important and can be absolutely vital to a life lived with passion for Jesus but they are not the goal in and of themselves. It's not the WAY you get to the destination that matters the most, it's THAT you get there. There's a lot of different routes to Safeco Field but the point is that the game is starting soon and you're invited...get there, and on time! What matters is that we are witnessing to others about how the gospel of Jesus Christ has and is continually transforming us and if it takes tongues, boldness or supernatural love to make that happen for you...GREAT...you can take I-5, 405 or 99 to Safeco...I don't care how you get there, just get there!

Sadly, so many in the church spend their lives arguing away regarding the various methods of travel or route options when, if we would just keep the main thing the main thing and remember that Jesus loves me this I know for the Bible tells me so and we are to simply love God and love others, we would all be at the destination and we'd be celebrating together and I bet the stadium would be FULL, no half attendance nights here!

Think about this, you have an opportunity to "Throw to Cano" and let's say it's the real guy and not just some cut out, would you just keep your mouth shut (or maybe your jaw would be on the ground) and play catch with the guy or would you stop him every time he goes to throw you the ball and ask him question after question to

learn more ABOUT him? Sometimes the greatest failure in our lives can actually be our pursuit of the KNOWLEDGE of God RATHER than the pursuit of God Himself. Spend time with Jesus and what He says in His Word, The Bible, and you'll learn to LOVE better. When we learn to love better is when we learn to hear His voice better which is when we learn what steps He wants us to take each day as we trust Him more and more.