



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

6420 Churchill Way | Dallas, Texas | 75230 | t 972.239.5371 | believerschapeldallas.org

Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Acts 1:1-5

“Volume 2”

TRANSCRIPT

We’re turning to Acts chapter 1, verse 1 through verse 5 for our Scripture reading, and it’s a very brief section, but it’s the introduction to the book. Let’s give attention to Luke as he writes these ancient words. Isn’t it thrilling to be able to open up a Bible, and to listen to a member of the early Church—a highly regarded member—give us some significant spiritually inspired information concerning our Lord and the apostles and the early church.

“The former treatise,” Luke says, “have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach. Until the day in which he was taken up, after he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen. To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God. And being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father which, saith he, ye have heard of me.”

Now, the promise of the Father is not the promise of the gift of the Father, but the promise from the Father of the gift of the Spirit.

“For John truly baptized with water, but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.”

May the Lord bless this reading of his Word. Let's bow together in prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we are thankful to Thee for the privilege of meeting in a meeting such as this, and we ask that as we consider this great document of the early Church, written by one of the companions of the Apostle Paul in his missionary journeys, that our hearts may be opened, that our minds may have the illumination of the Holy Spirit, and that the things that we study may be helpful to us, and fruitful for us in our Christian life and ministry.

Lord, we ask especially that we all may sense that the Lord Jesus Christ is still present in his church through the Spirit and still working as he worked in days of old. And, Lord, we ask in this body of believers, with friends and visitors, that he may continue to do his work to the glory of the triune God's name. We give Thee thanks for the blood that was shed, for the redemption that we have, for the tasks that are given to us, and grace to perform, and may, Lord, we be able to do it. We pray for the elders, for the deacons, and for the members and friends and visitors who are here today, and we ask Lord, spiritual blessing upon each one of these individuals. May we all together have a fresh understanding, and then experience of the work of God in our lives. We ask Thy blessing upon us in this meeting, and in the meeting this evening.

We pray for the sick, for the troubled and perplexed, and for those who have difficult problems and difficult decisions to make, perhaps. We ask, Lord, that Thou would give guidance and direction through the Lord and the ministry of the Spirit. We pray for the whole body of Christ. We pray for the outreach of this particular body. We especially ask Thy blessing upon the daily Vacation Bible School which begins tomorrow. May, Lord, it be a rich time of growth and grace for our young people, and may it be a permanent thing in their lives. May the things that they learn be things that stand them in good stead throughout all of their lives.

We look back, Lord, upon the experiences of our youth. We're grateful for many of them, and we ask that those who attend may throughout the remainder of their lives, be thankful for having been here to study the Word of God together. We pray that the needs of the Chapel may be met, especially the needs of our sick and bereaving, and we commit this ministry to Thee, all of the things that transpire here. May they have the touch of Jesus Christ upon them.

We pray in his name.

[Message] The subject for this morning in the bulletin is “Volume 2,” and obviously the connection by that title is made with the Gospel of Luke. The beloved physician, as Luke has been called, has already given us a magnificent book on the life of the Messiah, but here we learn that it is only one volume—one of a two-volume work, we should say—only Volume 1. He says, “The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and to teach.” So, in effect, God kept on talking and working after Luke finished his Gospel of Luke. And though his work had gone to press, well still the work of our Lord continued.

When I was growing up in Birmingham, Alabama, I still remember—I know most of you wouldn't remember this, but I still remember when newspaper boys used to have extras on the street. And downtown in Birmingham, Alabama, from time to time, extras would be published by the newspapers, and the men who were selling newspapers on the downtown streets would walk up and down the streets shouting out, “Extra, extra!” And we would expect some unusual news. Now, some of you may not remember this, but they used to do that also in the neighborhoods, not simply downtown, and so out in the neighborhoods the newspaper boys who delivered newspapers day after day would also upon occasion come out with extras in the neighborhoods and shout, “Extra, extra!”

Well, if something like that were done when the book of Acts was published, someone could go out shouting, “Extra, extra. New developments in the life of Jesus of Nazareth!” For that is what we really have in the book called the Acts of the Apostles.

I didn't say this in the Scripture reading, but the title, “The Acts of the Apostles,” is not a title that Luke himself wrote. That was attached to this work later on. So far as we know, this title was attached to the book sometime around the middle of the second century, so “The Acts of the Apostles” is not the title that Luke gave the book. And as a matter of fact, it's not really a very good title, and yet it is so long associated with this book, that we have no hope whatsoever of changing it. And when we say, “The Acts of the Apostles,” I'd like for you to remember simply, that it ought to be qualified in this way. In the first place, the acts of only four apostles are found in “The Acts of the Apostles.” Only four of them are mentioned. Strictly speaking, the book's title in Greek—this title added later—is simply “Acts of Apostles.” Well, that would be better than, “The Acts of the Apostles,” if that suggested that we have the acts of all twelve. “Acts of Apostles” at least lets us know that it's not necessarily the act—the acts of all twelve. But the thing that we learn as we read this book through, is that while “Acts of Apostles” are found in it, the pre-eminent actor in the story of the history of the early Church, is really our Lord. And as we will go through this, we will see that this is really the perspective from which Luke writes his book, and he suggests it here when he says, “A former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach.” In other words, in the book itself—the book of the Acts of Apostles—we have indication that Luke himself regards this book as the continuation of the things that our Lord does and teaches.

Renan, the French philosopher and critic of the Scripture called Luke—that is, the Gospel of Luke—the most beautiful book ever written, but it does not record all then, that the Lord Jesus did and taught. Luke's Gospel tells us the story of Christ from his birth to his ascension. In Luke chapter 24 he describes the ascension, and how Jesus told the apostles to stay in Jerusalem until they received the gift of the Holy Spirit. But in this book, we have the continuation of his work, so Luke tells us the beginning of our Lord's ministry, Acts gives us the continuation of it. And, incidentally, the fact that Acts ends as it does—very abruptly—is designed to let us know, that the end of the book of Acts is not the end of the ministry of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. It ends abruptly just to lay stress upon the fact that he is continuing his ministry even to this present day.

Many years ago I read a book entitled, *The Twenty-ninth Chapter of the Book of Acts*, and it was designed to emphasize that fact, that the book we call, “The Acts of the Apostles,” is simply a continuation, but not the conclusion of our Lord’s ministry.

So, Weymouth renders verse 1 something like this, “The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus did and taught as a beginning,” and that I think, is true to the context. So the Lord Jesus is the point of departure, as well as the point of arrival. The earthly career is the prelude to the mightier, wider one. Remember he had said in the Upper Room, “It is expedient for you that I go away. If I go away I will send the Comforter to you, and he will guide you in all truth.” So the Lord Jesus has gone away. He has ascended to the right hand of the Father. On the day of Pentecost, he received the gift from the Father of the Holy Spirit. He poured out the Holy Spirit. And since that time, believers have been united to him, and united to one another through the baptizing ministry of the Holy Spirit, and contact is made between our Lord and every believer through the Spirit since that day.

What a magnificent picture this is then, of the early church, and of the later church also. What is the church? Well, it is the instrument of the risen Lord. By virtue of the baptizing ministry of the Holy Spirit, we are all united to Christ. We are permanently indwelt by the Holy Spirit. We are the recipients of the ministry of our Lord through the Spirit. There is a vast unity created by the baptizing ministry of the Holy Spirit which never ends. It’s not surprising then, that in the Bible, the Church should be called the “body of Christ,” because he is the head, we are the body. We are the instrumentality for the continued working of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I always like that story which I’ve told more than once in the Chapel of the Hindu man who came to an Indian bishop in the Indian Christian Church. He had—unaided—received a New Testament, and had read the New Testament through. The story had fascinated him as a Hindu, and finally he came to the Indian Christian bishop, and he said to him, “In the light of what he had read, he had become so convinced of the truthfulness of what he had read.” He said, “I must belong to the Church that carries on the life of Christ.” Well, that’s what the Church of Jesus Christ does. It

carries on the life of Christ, and through the Spirit, the Lord Jesus continues to work. That’s the thrill of the worshiping and witnessing company. We gather around him. We are drawn to him. We learn of him through his Word. We learn of his love, his grace, his mercy, his justice, his holiness. All of the things that make up his person and his work, we learn from him through the Holy Spirit, and then we go forth with him, gentle as doves, but bold as lions, because the Lord Jesus is with us.

G. Campbell Morgan in his book on the Acts says that there is a beautiful soliloquy which our Lord utters in his earthly ministry in which he says, “I am come to send fire on the earth, and what will I, if it be already kindled. But I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straightened till it be accomplished.” In other words, he was forced by circumstances to keep from pouring out fire, because he needed to undergo his baptizing ministry, which he identifies as his death. So in effect, our Lord said, “I have two things to do. One thing I am really come to do, is to pour out fire upon the earth, but I cannot do that until I have been baptized with a baptism that the apostles themselves could not understand or undergo.” But now that our Lord’s atoning work is accomplished—now that in the cross he has shed his blood, and has been baptized with the baptism that they know not of, there is nothing hindering him from pouring out fire upon the earth; the reference, of course, being to his judgment that he is going to ultimately bring to this earth. The thing that hinders him now is not the cross. That has been accomplished. The thing that hinders him now is simply the Holy Spirit, through this present age, is gathering a group of people to our Lord Jesus through the preaching of the Gospel. So,

“I’m come to pour fire upon the earth,” and that will come to pass as soon as his evangelizing ministry is accomplished through the church, which is his body.

Now he says in verse 2,

“Until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Spirit had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen.”

Well, these words about commandments remind us that Christ, though he departed from the world, did not abandon his concern for us. He left us. That is true in the physical sense, but he is now at the right hand of the Father. Through the Holy Spirit he has united us to himself, and the fact that he gave the apostles commandments, is evidence of his concern, and also of his intention to fulfill all of his purposes. So “after he had given commandments to the apostles” should be a means of encouragement to us; that the Lord Jesus will continue to do his work until it is finished.

Now then, he speaks in verse 3 and verse 4 of the special preparation for the disciples. This is the equipment for obedience to the commandments. He says, “To whom also he showed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.” Notice first, “To whom he showed himself alive.” One might ask the question, and it’s often been asked, “Why did the Lord Jesus in his resurrection appear only to believers?” It might seem strange. We tend to reason something like this—it’s human reasoning, but nevertheless, we tend to do it. If he had just made himself known in his resurrection to unbelievers, would not there have been greater comprehension of his resurrection? So to appear only to believers puts them in a defensive position, because if they announce the resurrection, then someone says, “But you’re a believer. You might be expected to believe something like that, something as impossible as a resurrection from the dead.” So why did he not appear to unbelievers? Well, of course, one answer to it would be, that if he appeared to unbelievers, the chances are they would become believers maybe. Someone reasoning rationally might say that. But the reason he appeared to believers only was simply this; that the others were blind spiritually, deaf spiritually, dead spiritually, and to seek to influence them is like trying to follow the Miss America Contest on radio. You cannot do it. You do not have the necessary capacity for understanding, and they did not have the necessary capacity for understanding.

One of the commentators on the book of Acts, who has written just a series of notes on the book of Acts has said, “The assurance of the truth of religion comes to the aristocracy of the attentive.” That’s an interesting expression, “the aristocracy of the attentive.” In other words, those

who have been prepared by the Holy Spirit to receive truth and give attention to truth, they are the ones who respond to truth. We know the Bible tells us that we are all blind, and deaf, and dumb spiritually until the work of the Holy Spirit has worked in us the receptiveness, and so “he showed himself alive to the apostles whom he had chosen by many infallible proofs.”

The disciples were witnesses of his personal appearances. They saw him. They touched him. They heard him. He appeared to them, according to the New Testament Gospel records, at least ten times throughout the forty-day period of time. These were not unverifiable statements. They were verifiable by the testimony of a number of witnesses. For example, the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 15 is the first to testify to the resurrection in written form, and he says that the Lord Jesus appeared to “above five hundred brethren at one time,” and furthermore, Paul went on to say the majority of them are “still alive.” So twenty-five years after the resurrection of Christ, Paul says that Jesus appeared to many people, and they’re alive at the present time, and you can test it if you wish.

So there were many witnesses, and I’m not surprised that Luke says that, “there were many infallible proofs of the resurrection.” All explanations of the resurrection fail except the explanation of the bodily resurrection from the grave, and the fact that it was undisputed twenty-five years later. We have no evidence of anyone disputing whatsoever, the testimony of the resurrection; a strong evidence of its truthfulness. If we were to say they just had some hallucinations, you might say their minds were unfavorable due to depression. Did the five hundred also have hallucination, and why did these hallucinations suddenly stop at the end of the forty-day period of time? The resurrection theory is the only thing that really is harmonious with Scripture, but men I think, are inclined to not want to investigate the evidence, and the result is, that many do not believe in the resurrection; either philosophically you cannot accept anything that is supernatural, or for other reasons. I’m—I am really startled at how among Christians, there is still the attitude, “I must have truth confirmed by my feeling in order to be sure that it is truth.”

This past week I had a young man call me over the telephone and said that someone had recommended that they call me, and—it was a couple of professors at Dallas Seminary—and they

had recommended that this young man call me after he had spoken to them. And the question at issue was the “assurance of salvation.” Well, I confess, there are times when people call me on the phone that I’m sorry they called me, because I have things that I have to do. And this was in the afternoon of one the earlier afternoons of the week, and I didn’t want to spend any unnecessary time, and when he told me he’d already seen two professors at the seminary over the doctrine of assurance, I said, “Well, why do you think that I could possibly tell you anything that they have not told you? I know those men. I know I think what they would have told you. They would tell you the same thing that I would tell you.” And anyway, we got into a little conversation, and—and in the course of the conversation he explained to me the difficulty that he was having, and it was over the doctrine of assurance. And I—because our conversation continued—I began to talk to him about the importance of just simply responding to the Word of God. And he found it very difficult to do that, because he felt that he must have some experience that would confirm the Word.

Well, about a day later I was reading something that came across my desk, and it spoke right to that point and sort of summarized it very beautifully. And while this is essentially what we all said to this young man, it’s helpful to remember that spiritual truth is ultimately found in the Word of God, and this author asks the question, “How can I, with my weak faith and sinful nature, find any assurance of a saving interest in the Lord Jesus?” And he said, “First, we should look to Jesus Christ and not to ourselves.” This young man was looking to himself.

In other words, the Lord is the object of our faith, and he is the object of our assurance, and what he has done upon the cross is the basis of our cleansing from sin. So look to Christ and not to ourselves. We rest in him, and what he has done. And, second, we should look to his Word, and not to our thoughts. It doesn’t really make a bit of difference what we might think. If God has said in the word that Christ has offered an atoning sacrifice for sinners, and that if you rely upon this, you are saved and have the assurance of eternal life. It doesn’t make a bit of difference whether we feel like it or not, if we really have looked to Christ and his atoning work, and we have rested upon the faithfulness of God to his word, we may feel bad or feel good. It doesn’t really make any difference.

And then finally—and this particularly had reference to this young man, and I think to us all at one time or another—listen to the Holy Spirit, and not to your doubts. In other words, when we have doubts, we should not listen to our doubts, we should listen to the Holy Spirit who bears witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God, through faith in the one who has offered that sacrifice, and in the Word of God, that he who believes in the Son has life.

Spiritual truth then, is not something based upon feelings. God gives us adequate reason for our faith, and then through the Holy Spirit brings us to certainty. We do not believe that it is probable that Christ lived, and probable that he died, and probable of that—probable that his death is an atoning sacrifice for sin, and we probably have life if we believe in him, we know that we have through the things that Christ has done through the faithfulness of God to his Word, and through the testimony of the Holy Spirit. So many people rest their faith upon their feelings.

I have a friend—I haven’t seen him for many years. He taught in the University of London, but he wrote a book called, *Christianity: The Witness of History*. He was an outstanding student of Muslim philosophy and religion, and he said, “A Muslim professor in Cairo, a well-known authority on Islamic history, once remarked to him that religion was not so much a matter of science, as of art.” And he went on to explain that, “When you’re interested in something scientific, you’re interested in the strict accuracy of all of the relevant facts.” Now, anybody who knows anything about science, and the philosophy of science, knows that that’s impossible. No one can look objectively at scientific facts. We cannot look at anything objectively. We interpret everything that we see, and scientists do too. They must use the method of in—induction, and there are literally scores of ways in which we can be wrong through the method of induction. Any scientist whose mind is open, would understand that the only thing he can ever expect to have, is a reasonable probability of truth, by the method of induction. But anyway, this professor went on to say that—that, “In science you’re interested in the facts, but in poetry you’re not interested in the facts, so much as in the aesthetic impact of the composition as a whole.” And then he uttered these words, “In matters of religion, similarly the criterion is not whether the facts on which Christianity, or Islam, or any other religion were said to

rest, would stand up to historical investigation, but whether the religion concerned made those who followed it happier in themselves, and more helpful to others.”

Now, there are many Christians who think like that, too. They say that they believe that Jesus was raised from the dead, because they’ve had a personal experience with him today. That’s the same kind of thing. In fact, we have some hymns that express that kind of false Christian philosophy. “How do I know that Christ lives today? Well, because I’ve had an experience with him today.” That’s not how you know that. You know this only through the word of God, as testified by the Holy Spirit, or by your experiences.

Anyway, my friend who is also a professor, applied he—replied to the Muslim professor in Cairo. He said somewhat flippantly, I fear, that, “When he was a boy in school, he played a football match against a group from a lunatic asylum.” He said, “I vividly remember being locked in while we changed our clothes so that we would not get mixed up with the other lunatics in the lunatic asylum.” And he said, “I remember vividly that we were told, that one of the patients in the institution firmly believed that he was a poached egg, and that he went about everyday asking for a piece of toast to sit upon, and if he was given this, then he became contented and amenable, but if it was withheld from him, he remained unhappy and fractious.” But he said to his Muslim friend, “I could hardly believe that you would regard that as an adequate religion, but you can see, if a religion is simply a feeling, then this fellow had an adequate religion; that is, if you could give him a piece of toast to sit upon, he felt real good. And so after all, that’s what religion is supposed to do; to make you feel real good.” How foolish, and yet that is what many Christians ultimately seek to do; to feel real good.

Now, we know that truth ultimately has its final certification from the Holy Spirit. After all, can there be any higher certification than God himself? That’s why in Scripture, the Apostle Paul appeals to the certainty that the Holy Spirit brings. Christians who have it, know it. Others who are not Christians cannot criticize it, because they don’t know it. That’s why Paul said, “When I came to preach to you, I didn’t preach in flowery words of man’s wisdom. I didn’t want your faith to rest in man’s wisdom. I wanted your faith to rest in the power of God, because if it rests in men’s wisdom,

then someone a little wiser, with perhaps a little more cleverness, may come and teach something contrary to Scripture, and you'd be moved away from the truth. But if God, the Holy Spirit, has testified to the truth of the word of God in your heart, that is an unshakable conviction, for it rests in the certification of God himself.” This is what Christians have taught down through the centuries. Sometimes it's lost sight of, but nevertheless, that's what they've taught.

Now Luke says that, “He showed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs.” What's the difference between a sign, and an infallible truth? Now mind you, Luke is not saying that the ultimate basis of their faith rested in these infallible, empirical proofs, but they were added to the testimony of the Holy Spirit. Well, the difference between a sign, and an infallible proof is rather interesting. Luke uses a word that is, I think, particularly useful here. In fact, there are two words in the New Testament; one is the term *semeion* the plural of which is *samaea*, which means a “sign,” like the miracles of the Gospel of John. They are signs, for example. Those are signs, but this word is the word *tekmarion*; “infallible proofs.” The difference between them—it's a medical term, and the other is a medical term too, and Luke being the “beloved physician,” you're not surprised that he uses medical terms. The difference between them is something like this; the term *semeion* a physician might use of symptoms that come from observation. You go to see your physician, and he takes a look at you, and he says, “Ah, I see that something is the matter.” He can see that from observation. But there are also tests that are made which reveal information that cannot be seen by the visible eye, which are more significant. We have all kinds of electrical, mechanical equipment now to make tests and scans and types of things that were not available when I was younger, and physicians rely upon them. That's *tekmarion*. So *semeion* are symptoms from observation; *tekmarion* are those things that come from more scientific, and more valuable phenomena.

Let me illustrate this. About 25 years ago when I went to Scotland, just before I was ready to leave, one of my physicians, an elder in this particular congregation, just happened to be looking at me for some other reason. I must have been in a sports shirt, because he looked at me, and he said, “Let me see your neck.” And he said, “Do you know that you have a slight”—I don't know what

he—what he called “a slight evidence of an enlarged thyroid gland?” I hadn’t even noticed it. I didn’t even know about it. I felt perfectly good, but he looked at me, and he said, “You do have.” And he said, “When you get to Scotland, I think what you should do, is to see a doctor there, and just have him watch you while you’re over there.” So I did. I went to see a Mr. Cameron, and that’s not good for your confidence; when you go to Britain, and you’re not too well acquainted with customs over there, and you go to a “mister” for medical attention. But then I learned, of course, that things are different in Britain. They have a saying about the British, “If the British can find a wrong way to do anything, they will be sure to find it.” And so I learned afterwards, that when a man goes through medical college in Britain, he is given the degree of Doctor, but if he goes on and practices, and gains the credentials in surgery, then he’s no longer a doctor, he’s a “mister” then. So to be a “mister” is better than being a doctor. You’re a “mister,” and then you’re a doctor, and then you’re a “mister,” and you’ve really arrived when you’ve been a “mister” twice. Well, this man was the head of surgery of this particular type in the University of Edinburgh’s teaching hospital; a very well-known hospital, and so I went to see Mr. Cameron. And he looked at me, and he said, “You don’t seem to have any evidences of malignancy.” He looked at me as carefully as he could from the observation—physical observation—and the *samaea* did not give him any impression of the fact, that whatever this was, was malignant. So he said, “I cannot really know whether it’s malignant unless I operate.” But he said, “My advice to you is, since we have”—I think he said—“a hundred thousand people in Britain who are walking the streets with the same condition you have. My advice to you, is simply keep it under observation, and then when you get back to the United States, if you wish, to have it operated on.” Well of course, that was what I did, and it turned out to be non-malignant. In other words, Mr. Cameron was truly a “mister.” A good “mister.”

But that’s the difference between infallible proofs and science. So what Luke says here, are that these appearances of our Lord were “many infallible proofs.” They had the value of good evidence for the resurrection.

Now, then he goes on to say, “Not simply has our Lord appeared, but also he has spoken to the apostles of the kingdom of God.” This is one of the great themes of the book of Acts, as we will see, and the kingdom of God is a doctrine that is inclusive of—well, his passion, his ministry in the present, and particularly his ministry in the future when the kingdom of God comes to pass upon this earth. So he taught them concerning the kingdom of God; the relation of the cross to the kingdom. After all, the apostles remember had flunked pre-cross teaching. They didn’t understand the relationship between the cross and the kingdom, and in fact, the gospel writers make that very plain, but particularly Luke, because Luke records our Lord’s encounter with the disciples on the Emmaus Road when he said, “O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have written. Ought not Messiah to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory.” So it is sufferings first, and then entrance into his glory. But they had flunked that. They didn’t understand that. They had confused his ministry as king with his ministry as Savior in the sufferings of the cross, and so now he taught them the “things pertaining to the kingdom of God.”

And also in the fourth verse, “And being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which saith he, ye have heard of me.” So he called upon them to wait in Jerusalem. The day of Pentecost will come in the future. Then the Holy Spirit will be given, and then you will be empowered to do the work that God desires for you to do. And that illustrates a very important truth, and it is simply this; that God’s work is to be done in God’s power. O, if the church could only learn that. They like to think, that the work of God is to be done by human devising, by human schemes, by human programs. But God’s work is done in God’s power. Put very simply; God’s work is done through the Holy Spirit, and so the most important thing for a church; the most important thing for an individual, is to be in right relationship to the Holy Spirit, and relying upon him for the work of God. Now, that means that we may have to do things differently. It means that we may have to avoid pitfalls that others fall into. So much of the work of Jesus Christ is done by human devisings.

I picked up the telephone two or three days ago, and as a nice, happy little voice of a female came on and said, “Are you Lewis Johnson?” And I said, “Yes, I’m Lewis Johnson.” She said, “I am calling you from Bible Pathway”—whatever Bible Pathway is. So I like to get in conversations over spiritual things, and so I said, “What is Bible Pathway?” She said, “We come out of Murfreesboro, Tennessee.” Now, that always makes me wary. If anything comes out of Murfreesboro, Tennessee, you can be sure that there may be something strange about it, so I said, “What is Bible Pathway?” Well, she didn’t know too much about Bible Pathway, but she was calling for Bible Pathway, and so I said, “What is it?” And she hesitated, and I said, “Is it charismatic?” And she said, “I don’t know. What is charismatic?”

At first I—I thought she really knew, and she was getting me to say something that she would be somewhat critical of, if I were to say, “Well, they believe in spiritual gifts.” So she might have replied, if she was very keen, “Well, don’t you believe in spiritual gifts?” And I would have to have said, “Yes, I do believe in spiritual gifts.” So I—I said, “Well, charismatic means that you believe in such things as; speaking in tongues, healing, *et cetera*.” And surprisingly she said, “I don’t know.” And so she couldn’t answer that, and finally she said, “Would you just listen to this tape?” And so a man comes on the tape, and of course, what he wanted was fifty dollars in order for me to be sure that the gospel got to everyone of those foreign athletes that would come to the Olympics in Los Angeles. Now, you have to be very gullible to believe something like that. Now of course, I am—I would love to see that the gospel—a copy of the gospel of John with some appropriate words was put in the hands of every athlete who comes to Los Angeles, but I would have no assurance whatsoever, that they would do it, and of course, therein after I heard the spiel. I was interested in what would be—what was being said. I finally had other things to do, and I hung up the telephone.

But you see, God’s work is not being done in God’s way. We don’t do God’s work by calling on all Christians to give us money. Where do you find the apostles doing that? You might find them saying, “Help some of the poor in Jerusalem, but don’t give us the money.” In fact, Paul was so careful in carrying the money back to Jerusalem from the churches over Asia Minor and also into

Greece that he had helpers so that there would be no possibility of any criticism, and none of it went to him. I like it when people say, “God has laid something upon my heart to do it, and since he’s laid it upon my heart, he will supply it. And furthermore, here is an adequate test of whether it’s God’s will. If the money comes in, then I have some confirmation it is from God, but if I go out and raise the money, well, how do I know that it’s not like any other human scheme by which we raise money to do something?”

God’s work is to be done in God’s way. The church in the 20th Century has forgotten all about that, and we have too, because they wouldn’t do that if you weren’t willing to send your fifty dollars in, because you have a sense of guilt, and so you send in the money. I felt a little twinge. Fifty dollars; that’s nothing really. Why not send it in? There’s just a chance that what he’s saying might be true, but then my better nature took over; not my Scottish nature, my better nature, and I said, “That’s foolish. You’d be supporting the very thing that you don’t approve of. It’s not scriptural.”

Well, in the last verse here—verse 5—we have the identification of the promise. It’s the coming of the Holy Spirit, and the reason for the waiting. We’re going to say more about that later on. Let me just comment here, that what he says is that, “You shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days hence.” In other words, they were to wait until the Spirit came. He would bind the whole body of believers into one body, all related to one another, and all related to Jesus Christ, and thus through the presence of the Holy Spirit, equipped to represent him in the world to which they had been sent.

Well, let me say this in conclusion. There is a kingdom to be proclaimed. The passion, the resurrection, the Second Coming; all of these things belong to the ministry of the Lord Jesus, but the equipment is the power of the Holy Spirit, and we must not attempt to do the work of God in our own strength. We cannot expect to be successful if we do not do it in the power of the Holy Spirit.

There’s a wonderful Bible teacher that is now with the Lord. He had one of the happiest ways of expressing things. He said, “Never has the church had more wires stretched out with less power in it. Like Samson, we was not—we was not that he, the Holy Spirit has departed, but we keep

shaking ourselves in the prescribed calisthenics. That’s what the church is doing; shaking itself; shaking itself seeking to do its work apart from the presence of the Holy Spirit, and we shall fail. We borrow”—he says—“the world’s program, and pep, and propaganda, and paraphernalia, and personnel, but from the world we cannot borrow power; the power that works; the works of God. Our efficiency turns out to be deficiency unless we have his sufficiency.”

So Luke tells us right at the beginning, that the work of the church is the continuation of the work of the Lord, and the Holy Spirit is the new power given to perform our Lord’s task. May we not lose that message. If you’re here this morning, and you have never believed in Christ, we invite you to believe in him, whom to know, is life eternal. Trust in him who has offered, through his passion, the atoning sacrifice. Come to him. Acknowledge him as your Lord and Savior. Receive the gift of the forgiveness of your sins, and leave this auditorium with the assurance of eternal life, because Christ has suffered, and the Word of God has testified to it, and the Holy Spirit testifies within to those whom he brings to Christ. Come to him. Believe in him. May we stand for the benediction.

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful to Thee for these magnificent opening words of this magnificent account of our Lord’s continued ministry. O God...