

TARRYING UNTIL ENDUED WITH POWER FROM ON HIGH.

– ACTS 1:1-11 – JAN. 5. –

"While he blessed them he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven." – Luke 24:51.

BIBLE STUDIES of the International series, begin the new year with studies in the Book of Acts, and after six months will return us again to Old Testament studies from Moses to Samuel.

Luke, the physician, who wrote the Gospel of Luke, was the author of the Book of Acts. In the latter he takes up the narrative substantially where he left it in the Gospel – the ascension of Christ. He recapitulates, however, to the extent of giving us a narrative of the conversation immediately preceding our Lord's ascension. The account is evidently addressed to a friend, of the then common name, Theophilus, who was supposed to have been a person of considerable dignity and influence, inasmuch as he is elsewhere styled "most excellent," a title which implied a considerable social or political rank. Luke was not one of the apostles, and his records are not, therefore of apostolic authority. Such authority or plenary inspiration was not necessary, however, in the recording of plain, simple facts such as the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts present. It requires no inspiration to record a fact, though it does require some ability, and it is reasonable to assume that since the Lord used Luke's abilities in connection with the work of recording the facts of that time he was *guided* of the holy spirit in the *ascertainment of the facts*, which his education and natural talents eminently qualified him to state succinctly. Luke was guided of the holy spirit, in the same sense that all of the Lord's consecrated people are guided by his spirit, which is to a different degree from

that *plenary* inspiration granted to the twelve apostles – Paul taking the place of Judas.

The first verse refers back to the Gospel of Luke, as a treatise of the doings and teaching of Jesus from the time he began his ministry to its close; and some have assumed that the word "began" might reasonably be understood to imply that our Lord continued his ministry after his ascension, speaking and acting, through his apostles, and those believing on him through their word. This is true enough whether it was what Luke meant or not; for the Scriptures invariably teach that the Church of Christ [R2924 : page 393] in the flesh is his representative: as the Apostle Paul says, we "fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ, for his body's sake, which is the Church." (Col. 1:24.) And as we have to do with the suffering of the anointed one, so we have to do with the witnessing or ministry by which the members of the body are to be called out from the world, separated, instructed, and thus prepared for a share in the glorious Kingdom and the great work of judging the world, which it will inaugurate. It is in this sense that our Lord declared, "Ye shall be my witnesses, both in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." Primarily, the apostles were the witnesses who testified to us respecting our Lord's words, his death, his resurrection and ascension, and His promises of a return to accept his faithful to a share in his kingdom, when he shall take unto himself his great power and reign. In a secondary sense all who receive the apostolic testimony and declare the same to others are likewise Christ's representatives and witnesses.

It was in order that the apostles might fill this position of witnesses, and might be enabled to give us, and all, a clear testimony on the important subject of Christ's death and resurrection and ascension, which constitute the foundations for hope, that our Lord was present with them after his resurrection,

and, as Luke declares, demonstrated the fact of his resurrection by "infallible proofs" – explaining to them meanwhile things pertaining to the coming Kingdom, for which he had already taught them to hope and to pray, "Thy Kingdom come," and a share in the throne which he had already declared would be for the faithful. This explanation respecting the Kingdom was necessary, because, as Jews, they had properly looked for an earthly Kingdom, and now needed to be informed that before the earthly Kingdom could be established a heavenly Kingdom must first be inaugurated; and that they were eligible to a place in the heavenly Kingdom, through which, in due time, the blessing would come to an earthly Kingdom, and ultimately extend to all the families of the earth. This information was not due to them so long as the old or Jewish dispensation remained – up to the time of our Lord's death. It would only be "meat in due season" after the Jewish nation, through its representatives, the priests and doctors of the law, had rejected Christ and crucified him. But now that the new dispensation was fully inaugurated, it was "meat in due season" to the faithful to know that God, having rejected fleshly Israel from being his peculiar people, for a time, to gather a spiritual Israel, to be the holy nation, the peculiar people, the royal priesthood, to show forth his praise, and to constitute his chief agents for the blessing of the world in due time. This work of calling the spiritual Israelites, and of inducting such as would heed the call into the new relationship, was the work being committed to the apostles – the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God, which our Lord unfolded to the disciples in such measure as they were able to appreciate them – leaving to the future the work of guiding them into all truth, into the deep things of God, under the ministration of the holy spirit, which he had previously promised would show them things to come. – John 16:13.

Our Lord wished the apostles to distinctly understand that they were not then in the condition to undertake the new work, and that the proper time for action had not yet come – that they

would not be prepared until they should receive the holy spirit, a power and unction from the Father, which would specially qualify, enable and guide them in the important service of their commission. Moreover, it would be to them, and to all believers through them, a divine evidence or attestation; first, respecting our Lord's work, that it was approved of the Father, and constituted a basis of reconciliation by which sinners might return to harmony with their Creator; and evidence, further, to those consecrating themselves to the divine service, and receiving the holy spirit, that they were accepted of the Father in the Beloved, and owned as children and heirs of his promises, joint-heirs with Jesus Christ their Lord, if so be that they would suffer with him that they might also be glorified together, in the Kingdom, when the due time should come. – Rom. 8:16-17.

It was appropriate at this time, and in view of the Lord's instructions respecting the Kingdom and the preparatory work for it, which the apostles were commissioned to do, that they should wonder and inquire respecting the time of its establishment; and not knowing that he was about to leave them, they inquired respecting the ancient promises of Israel's restoration, whether or not these were now due to be fulfilled – whether or not Israel was to be released from the domination of the Romans, and to become the great nation of the world, and to be used of God in the blessing of other nations.

It is worthy of careful note that our Lord did not rebuke the apostles, nor tell them that the thoughts represented in their question were foolish, and would never have a realization. On the contrary, his answer clearly implies that their expectations at least approximated the truth; but that as respected the time of their fulfillment He was not at liberty to gratify their curiosity. The things they referred to, which God had promised, would be fulfilled in due course, but the times and the seasons were not for them to know, the Father retaining them in his own power, not

being pleased as yet to reveal this feature of his plan. Our Lord, however, clearly indicates that before the restoration of Israel to divine favor must come in the mission of his apostles, to which he was now appointing them. He would not inform them whether their mission would be quickly accomplished or not, but as a matter of fact, we see that it has already extended over more than eighteen centuries. The restoration of Israel to divine favor cannot take place until Christ, and his apostles, and all his faithful, shall first have accomplished the work of witnessing to the world, and of selecting the full complete number of the "elect" – spiritual Israel. This is the work of chief concern: the times and seasons for the fulfillment of God's promises to Israel after the flesh, and to the world, are to be left in God's power, with the assurance that when the due time shall come the brethren shall not be in darkness on this subject, but be guided by the holy spirit into this and all other truths, as they become meat in due season **[R2925 : page 394]** for the household of faith.

The witnessing properly began at Jerusalem, the center of Judaism, which God himself had chosen, as represented in the Temple. It properly began with those who had knowledge of Jesus and his crucifixion, – amongst whom were the most devout Jews from all quarters of the earth. It was appropriate that the truth respecting our Lord's resurrection and ascension and glorification with the Father, and respecting the gathering of spiritual Israel, and our Lord's second coming to receive them and to exalt them with himself in the Messianic Kingdom, should be declared to those who had been witnesses and instigators of his ignominious death.

This, like the other features of the Gospel, is totally unlike anything else known in history. Never before, either in fact or in conjecture, did people ascribe divine honors to one who had been put to death as a criminal. Worldly sentiments would be to the **[R2925 : page 394]** contrary of this, as being unwise, and

wholly unlikely to appeal to the sentiments of the people. And further, worldly wisdom, even if it had adopted as a leader one who had been publicly executed as a criminal, would never have thought of beginning the testimony close to the scenes of the ignominy, but would have gone afar off to proclaim that an innocent one had been betrayed and unjustly sacrificed. God so arranged the matter that the truth should stand forth for acceptance or rejection by the Jews in the most unfavorable light, so that only those who were Israelites indeed, and ready to sacrifice every earthly advantage as Jews, and to make themselves of no reputation, and thus take up their cross and follow the Lamb, – these alone would be appealed to, or incline to follow the cause of Jesus – defamed as a Nazarene and as a malefactor, and as specially cursed, as it is written, "Cursed is everyone that hangeth upon a tree." Thus would the Lord hedge his cause about, and keep out of it, through unpopularity, as well as by subsequent persecutions, all who were not Israelites indeed: – thus the Church was kept, not only free from doctrinal errors, but also comparatively free from tares, until the apostles fell asleep, and the enemy came in and sowed tares amongst the wheat. – Matt. 13:25.

The witnessing has progressed, until at the present time at least a cursory knowledge of the facts upon which the Lord's message is based obtains throughout the habitable world. This fact of itself, if there were no other evidences, would seem to imply that the witnessing time had about expired, and hence that the object of the Gospel age had about been accomplished in the selection of the full elect number of the faithful witnesses, and that their work of blessing the world would soon be due. The expression, "Unto the uttermost parts of the earth," is not to be understood as implying every quarter of the globe, but rather a term of that day corresponding in meaning to our present expression, "everywhere."

Apparently much misapprehension prevails to-day respecting the character of the testimony or witnessing to be done. Many of those who preach and of those who hear have lost sight of the real message, the real witnessing, and especially rejoice in and promulgate other gospels – evolution, science, philosophy, human uplift, political regeneration, churchianity, socialism, etc. They may think that they are witnessing in harmony with the Lord's direction, but we cannot assent to this. The Lord's disciples were to bear witness to him, and not to themselves nor to human institutions; they were to bear witness to his testimony respecting the Kingdom, and not to bear witness to various human theories, snares and sophistries. It is well that all who are inquiring for the "old paths," in which the apostles followed the Lamb, should note this point, and should see to it that their daily witnessing, in word and in deed, testified of Jesus; of the fact that he is a living Savior, whose power, through his word and spirit, works in his followers to will and to do his good pleasure, and to show forth the praises of him who has called them out of darkness into his marvelous light; out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of his dear Son, which Kingdom they are to hope for and to wait and prepare for, to the intent that they may be meet for this, "the inheritance of the saints in light."

The instruction that they should tarry, and not begin this work of witnessing until endued with power from on high in a few days, implied their unfitness for the work as natural men; and we see abundant evidence of this in many respects. The narrative is that they were men of humble birth and limited education – "unlearned men" – and this was apparent in some respects, even after they received the holy spirit, for their friends, as well as their enemies, bore witness to it, while acknowledging also their ability under the new conditions. The Apostle Paul, who took the place of Judas, as one of the twelve, being a talented and learned man, did not, we may suppose, show forth the peculiar powers of the holy spirit so remarkably as the other eleven, who were

unlearned. He had the holy spirit in equal measure, or, indeed, we may say, that because of his natural abilities and talents he was enabled to enjoy and use in the service a still larger measure of the holy spirit than the others; but this power of God, working in him, would not be so manifest to the observer as in the case of the unlearned, because the divine wisdom and power would to some extent be accredited to his natural ability and talents. Herein, then, we see another manifestation of the divine wisdom in so selecting the twelve foundation stones of the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:14), as to demonstrate to all that the truth, as presented, was not of their concoction and elaboration. And yet it was needful to have amongst the apostles a man of learning, qualified to be an able minister of the truth, and to present it under the direction and guidance of the holy spirit in such a manner as to be a further testimony that the truths declared were of divine origin, and worthy of all acceptance.

While claiming that the twelve apostles were unique, separate, distinct, in the divine plan, from all the other members of the Church, we believe, nevertheless, that the divine plan of operation in respect to the general work is outlined in this, our Lord's declaration, "Tarry – until ye be endued with power from on high" – before participating in any sense of the word in public witnessing. Our thought is, that while all men may properly be called to repentance, reformation of life, temperance and every good work, and **[R2925 : page 395]** may be called to faith in Christ, as the Great Redeemer, nevertheless, none are called to be *God's witnesses*, mouth-pieces, representatives, ambassadors, etc., except those who have gone still further, and recognizing themselves as bought with a price, even the precious blood of Christ, have made full consecration of their every power and talent to the Lord and to his service. These consecrated ones should then wait until they experience something of the divine power working in themselves to will, and, as far as possible, to

do the Lord's good pleasure, before beginning to bear witness to others.

And the Lord's sheep should be careful to select as leaders, etc., only such as give evidence of having come under the influence of the holy anointing of the spirit of God. And this, no matter how much of natural ability the would-be leader may possess; indeed, the more his natural ability the more danger from his leading. Only those anointed of the spirit are to be recognized amongst the Lord's people as in any sense of the word representatives and mouth-pieces of the head. As it was the spirit of the Lord God upon our Lord Jesus that anointed or qualified him to preach the Gospel, so it must be the same anointing received of him that will qualify any for this service of preaching or witnessing, in a manner that will be acceptable to the Lord and profitable to his flock. (Isa. 61:1.) All who are not in the attitude of full consecration to the Lord, full submission to the divine will, are in opposition, to some extent; and to the extent that they are in opposition they are wrong, or wicked. "And unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do, to take my words into thy mouth, seeing that thou hatest instruction (refusing to submit themselves to the Lord's arrangement) and castest my words behind thee [neglectfully]?" – Psa. 50:17.

The narrative is brief, and we cannot even conjecture how amply the Lord discussed these matters with the disciples, but when he had explained them amply – or at least to the extent that they (the holy spirit not yet having come upon them) were able then to receive instruction – he was taken from them up into a cloud, gradually receding until lost to their sight.

This matter of our Lord's ascension was evidently arranged, as were all the other features of his manifestations to the disciples after his resurrection, with a view to the establishment of their faith as natural men; and with the view to the establishment of the

faith of all other natural men who might be seeking a basis of faith in this witnessing. As we have already seen, our Lord at this time was quickened in spirit, and not in the flesh. (1 Pet. 3:18.) Yet he was appearing in the flesh, even as angels have oftentimes in the past appeared as men. These appearances in different bodies were not deceptions, but demonstrations of a fact – the fact that he was no longer dead, but alive. They were demonstrations in the best manner possible, because as natural men they could not see a spirit being without injury to their sight, and without a corresponding trepidation, which would have quite disqualified them for cool reflection and for instruction such as our Lord wished to impart.

The two men in white apparel who suddenly appeared in their midst were unquestionably angels, manifested in human form. It was no more a deception of the disciples for the angels to appear as men than it was when the Lord appeared as a man. Again the object desired was better served by this manner of appearing, than if they had been miraculously enabled to see two shining beings, bright above the brightness of the sun at noonday, upon whom they could not have looked, and before whom they would have fallen, as dead men. But beholding them as men, yet knowing from their glistening garments, etc., that they were really spirit beings manifested in the flesh, the disciples were able to control their feelings, so as to receive their message, – "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which was received up from you into heaven shall so come in like manner as ye beheld him going into heaven."

This was a suitable conclusion to the wonderful series of events of those forty days. It furnished a miraculous heavenly attestation that their senses had **[R2926 : page 395]** not been deceived – that their Master, "changed," had really been with them, appearing in various forms during these forty days, and that he had now gone from them. It consoled them, too, in reminding

them that he had not left them forever, but had already promised them that he would come again and receive them unto himself. This evidently was the hope of their hearts through coming dreary days and dark hours of tribulation, persecution, defamation and suffering. They not only endured, as seeing him who is invisible, but as servants who hope for and wait for the return of their Lord, and the nuptial feast and Kingdom blessings then to be instituted.

We find this longing for and hoping for and waiting for the coming King in the writings of all the apostles. It is John who exclaims, "Come, Lord Jesus!" It is James who says, "Be patient, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord." It is Peter who encourages the brethren, by pointing out that shortly, when the Chief Shepherd will appear, they shall receive a crown of glory, which fadeth not away. It is Jude, who speaks of the Lord's coming, with myriads of his holy ones. It is Paul who urges faithfulness, and assures the brethren that not only himself, but all who love his appearing, shall then receive a crown of righteousness. – Rev. 22:20; Jas. 5:7; 1 Pet. 5:4; Jude 14; 2 Tim. 4:8.

And if this hope so encouraged, strengthened and upheld the early Christian Church, should its influence be less today, upon us who remember that "now is our *salvation nearer* than when we first believed?" Nay, verily! Indeed, when the light of present truth, shining on the pathway, shows us that he who was to come has come, and has not tarried – that the promises of God through the prophets, written aforetime for our admonition, are fulfilled; that we are living in the harvest-time of this age; that the Chief Reaper is present; that the gathering of the "wheat" into the barn, and the bundling of the "tares," for the coming fiery troubles, is in progress; and when, the eyes of our understanding being opened, we see these things in evidence about us, what manner of persons ought we to be in holy joy and faithfulness, and courage, and zeal; – to be, to do, to endure, whatsoever things our present Lord and **[R2926 : page 396]** Master, in his infinite

wisdom and love, may mark out for us! As he declared, "The cup which the Father hath given me to drink, shall I not drink it?" So may we, with implicit confidence, say that whatever cup of experience our present Lord and Head may pour for us, his disciples, we will cheerfully partake thereof, and thus fill up the afflictions which are behind; and shortly, with all the faithful, enter into the glories of the Millennial Kingdom, which God hath in reservation for them that love him.

We have already commented upon the expression, "In like manner as ye have seen him go,"* pointing out that the manner was not a noisy one – not with either worldly or celestial commotion; – that the world was in ignorance of our Lord's going, so that only his faithful few recognized the fact, and that in like manner he will come again, unknown to the world, without commotion; – that his presence will be known only to the faithful ones, whose eyes of understanding are being opened; – until, having gathered his elect, his presence will be manifested to the world gradually in the symbolical flaming fire of the great time of trouble – in the overthrow of present institutions, preparatory to the establishment of the Kingdom of light and love.

*[Millennial Dawn, Vol. II., P.153.](#)

The disciples apparently abode together in Jerusalem, where they were all comparative strangers, their home being in Galilee. Our Lord's mother, and others of the faithful sisters, were of the company, who, in harmony with the Lord's promise, waited at Jerusalem for power from on high. Doubtless those days of waiting were not only essential to the going of our Lord into the Father's presence and the presentation before him of the merits of the ransom sacrifice, and the application of these for the benefit of mankind, but the time was necessary also for the development of the apostles – in faith and trust, through the influence of the promises the Lord had left them. It required some time for them

to consider and to reason over the wonderful things they had heard from the Master's lips, and thus to get their hearts into the condition where they would be best prepared for the blessings they were expecting.

Hope is a valuable factor in Christian development still, although the object of the hope may vary from time to time. For instance, we are no longer hoping for the Pentecostal blessing, believing that it came at the time appointed, and that it has been with the Church, as a Church, ever since; and that we, in becoming united to the Lord, come under this blessed influence of the holy spirit. But while that hope has reached fruition other hopes have taken its place in our case. We are waiting also; not waiting, as the groaning creation is waiting, "for the manifestation of the sons of God," either; but we are waiting for our adoption, to wit, the deliverance of our body – the body of Christ, which we trust will shortly be completed, and ourselves be amongst those who will be "changed" to be of it. (Rom. 8:23.) What an anchor to our souls is this hope! How it makes all other interests and affairs of life comparatively insignificant! Wealth and fame, and all the things which the human heart can desire and appreciate, grand and good as some of them are, pale before this grand *epiphania* (bright-shining) in which we, as members of the body of Christ, hope soon to share.
