

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

The Promise of the Holy Spirit

1 In the first book, O Theoph'ilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach,² until the day when he was taken up, after he had given commandment through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. ³To them he presented himself alive after his passion by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days, and speaking of the kingdom of God. ⁴And while staying^a with them he charged them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, "you heard from me, ⁵for John baptized with water, but before

many days you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit."

The Ascension of Jesus

6 So when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" ⁷He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has fixed by his own authority. ⁸But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samar'ia and to the end of the earth." ⁹And when he had said this, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of

1:1: Lk 1:1-4. 1:4: Lk 24:49. 1:8: Lk 24:48-49. 1:9-12: Lk 24:50-53.

1:1 the first book: The Gospel of Luke, which has a similar but more expanded dedication (Lk 1:1-4). This link with the preface of the Gospel has a direct bearing on the composition of Acts, i.e., Luke has gone to the same painstaking lengths to separate fact from fiction in preserving the historical memory of the earliest Christians. See note on Lk 1:2. **began to do and teach:** Implies that what Jesus began to do in Luke he continues to do through his disciples in Acts. The Spirit directs this mission of the Church and is the driving force behind it (1:8; Lk 24:46-49).

1:3 many proofs: The Resurrection of Jesus is a miracle substantiated by multiple strands of historical evidence (CCC 640-44). (1) His tomb was empty Easter morning (Jn 20:4-9); (2) he presented himself alive to the apostles and other disciples that evening (Lk 24:13-31; Jn 20:19-20); (3) he invited eyewitnesses to touch his risen body and examine his wounds (Lk 24:36-43; Jn 20:26-29); (4) he showed himself risen to more than 500 people (1 Cor 15:6); and (5) his appearance to the Church's fiercest adversary, Saul of Tarsus, transformed him into her most zealous apostle (9:1-19). **forty days:** A period of final instruction between Easter Sunday and Ascension Thursday. The number 40 signifies a time of preparation for the disciples, just as Jesus underwent 40 days of preparation before his own ministry (Mt 4:2). For other symbolic meanings of the number 40, see note on Lk 4:2. **the kingdom of God:** A central pillar in the apostolic preaching of Acts (8:12; 14:22; 19:8; 20:25; 28:23, 31).

1:4 promise of the Father: The Holy Spirit (Lk 24:49), poured out through Christ (2:33).

1:6 restore the kingdom: Judaism hoped for a militant Messiah who would redeem Israel from the yoke of Roman oppression (Lk 24:21) and rebuild the kingdom of David that had lain in ruins since the sixth century B.C. (Mk 11:10). These political aspirations are given a spiritual fulfillment in Acts with the enthronement of Christ in heaven (2:32-36; Lk 1:32-33) and the redemption of Israel and the Gentiles in the Church (5:31; 15:16-18; CCC 439, 672). See essay: *Kingdom Restoration* at Acts 15. ● Two interrelated traditions evoke in the question of the disciples. (1) The time of restoration evokes

Yahweh's promise to reunite the tribal family of Israel in the messianic age (Sir 48:10; Jer 50:19-20; Hos 11:11). This hope is confirmed in Luke (Lk 22:30) and kept alive throughout Acts (26:6-7). (2) Giving the kingdom to Israel recalls Daniel's vision of the Son of man (Messiah) giving an everlasting kingdom to the saints (Dan 7:18, 22, 27). This hope is likewise confirmed in Luke (Lk 12:32; 22:29).

1:7 times or seasons: Jesus affirms the coming of the kingdom but conceals the precise timing determined by the Father. His words imply that speculation is pointless, although the parable in Lk 19:11-27 denied that the kingdom would come in its fullness when Jesus arrived in Jerusalem at the start of Passion Week.

1:8 power . . . Spirit . . . come upon: These terms also appear together in Lk 1:35, showing that the same Spirit who brought forth Christ in the womb of Mary is about to bring forth the Church in the world. ● The wording of this promise is inspired by Is 32:15. **witnesses:** That is, to the dying and rising of Jesus (1:22; 2:32; 3:15; 5:32; 10:41). The word translates the Greek *martyrs*, from which the English term "martyr" is derived. All the disciples in Acts witness to Christ with their words and life, while Stephen and James offer the testimony of a martyr's death (7:58-60; 12:1-2; CCC 857, 995). See word study: *Witnesses* at Rev 11. ● The witness motif comes from Isaiah, where the people of the covenant proclaim Yahweh as the God and Savior of all nations (Is 43:10-13; 44:8). This missionary vocation of Israel to enlighten the world with the truth is now the mission of the Church (13:47). **Jerusalem . . . Samaria . . . end of the earth:** A thumbnail sketch of Acts: the gospel seizes Jerusalem (chaps. 1-7), spreads to Judea and Samaria (chaps. 8-12), and then stretches throughout the Roman Empire (chaps. 13-28). ● The outer limits of the mission recall Isaiah's vision of salvation reaching the ends of the earth (Is 45:22; 48:20; 49:6; 62:11). Although writers in Jewish and pagan antiquity equated the outer rim of the world with the Atlantic coast of Spain, here the expression "end of the earth" signifies that the scope of the mission is unlimited rather than bound within geographical borders.

1:9 lifted up: The Ascension of Jesus culminates with his heavenly enthronement at the right hand of the Father (Mk 16:19). The traditional site of the Ascension is located

^a Or eating.