**YOU WILL BE MY WITNESSES**

**Acts 1:1-26 / Key Verse: 1:8**

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth (8)

We are going to study the book of Acts from today. The book of Acts records how the gospel of good news spread from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth by Apostles and by the Holy Spirit. I pray that May God richly bless our study of the book of Acts this year.

The book of Acts was the second part of Luke's gospel. The end of Luke’s gospel is linked into the beginning of Acts. Luke’s gospel ends with Jesus’ death, resurrection and ascension, the book of Acts begins with a brief reminder of these events. Both books’ author is Luke, and they begin with an address to the same person, called “Theophilus." (Acts 1:1 Theophilus VS Luke 1:3 most excellent Theophilus) We do not know who Theophilus was exactly because the Bible does not identify who he was. The name “Theophilus” literally means “lover of God “, “loved by God,” and “Friends of God” in Greeks, so Luke might write both books to all believers who loved God, to all Christians who had suffered because of their faith at that time.

When we look at verse 1-2, **“In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the Apostles he had chosen.**

Luke's gospel was all about Jesus’ teaching through his life, death and resurrection, and the book of Acts teaches us the continuity of Jesus' teachings by his disciples, who were called Apostles, through the Holy Spirit. In the book of Acts, we can learn that it was not the work of the Apostles, but the work of the Holy Spirit Himself. The Holy Spirit empowered them to accomplish the Jesus’ Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20), they were used in God’s redemptive work in early Christian history. This is why the book of Acts is also called **“The Acts of the Apostles”** and **“The Acts of the Holy Spirit”.**

Look at verse 3.  “**After his suffering, he presented himself to them and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God”.**

Jesus suffered terribly during his crucifixion, but three days after death, he walked out of his own tomb. He then spent the next 40 days to prove that He had risen from the dead. Jesus Christ rose from the dead. His resurrection is God’s victory over the power of sin and death. During that time, he didn't just prove his resurrection but also continued to teach them. His focus was always on the kingdom of God. Jesus began his gospel ministry with the words, **"The kingdom of God is near" (Mk 1:15).** During his earthly ministry, Jesus taught them about kingdom of God with many parables. After his resurrection, he also mainly spoke about the kingdom of God as the continuity of his teachings on the earth.

Look at verse 4-5**.  “On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: “Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days, you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.”**

While Jesus was with his Apostles after resurrection, one day Jesus told them what they should do when they remain in the world. **First, Jesus commands them not to leave Jerusalem**. Jerusalem, for the Apostles, was a city of nightmares. When they came up to Jerusalem with Jesus, they had a dream that the Messianic kingdom would be established. However, what was the reality? Jesus was caught by the religious leaders in Jerusalem and died on the cross. And even they did not know when they would be captured and killed. To them, Jerusalem was a city of fear and failure. They would have wanted to leave Jerusalem and get back to their hometown Galilee as soon as possible.

But, the prophet Isaiah prophesied in Isaiah 2:3 **“Many peoples will come and say, “Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the temple of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths. The law will go out from Zion, the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.”** This prophesied that the work of God’s salvation would begin from Jerusalem. And Jesus said**, "Forgiveness of sins will be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem" (Luke 24:47).** That is why Jesus came from Galilee to Jerusalem to be crucified for our sins. Jerusalem is the place where Jesus' salvation was accomplished, and it should be the starting point for preaching the gospel of salvation to the whole world. Therefore, Jesus commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, even though it was against their humanly desire.

**Second, Jesus commanded them to wait for the Holy Spirit.** Jesus did not command them to remain without a plan. In verse 4, Jesus tells them not to leave Jerusalem but to wait for **"what the Father has promised."**. What does it mean “the promise of the Father"? When we see verse 5, **it refers to the Holy Spirit**. Jesus promised they were going to be dipped in the power of the Holy Spirit in a few days. They weren’t going to wait a long time. Specifically, it was the promise that they would be baptized with the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4). The Holy Spirit has might power. When they receive the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit’s power would be in them and work through them. The Holy Spirit is the best gift for the Apostles to be used in God’s work.

After they heard about the promised Holy Spirit from Jesus, what was their response? Was it “Amen” full of overflowing joy? Look at verse 6**. “Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?”** What did the Apostles misunderstand? The Apostles expected Jesus to restore the kingdom to Israel and bring back their former glory. They were dreaming of the establishment of the Messianic kingdom that God had promised to David. They believed Jesus as Messiah who would come as king and rule over them again. That’s why the disciples left everything to follow Jesus. However, when Jesus died on the cross, along with that, their dreams also had faded. But when they saw the risen Jesus, they believed that the risen Jesus would soon restore Israel.

**How did Jesus answer the Apostles’ question?** Jesus did not rebuke their thought. He understood how they felt. But He made it clear that the restoration of the nation of Israel is a matter of God's sovereignty. Jesus told them God’s plans for the nations, the “times and dates”, were not going to be shared with them. Jesus corrected their thought, helped them to refocus their attention on God’s plans for them.

Now Look at verse 8. **“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”**

Jesus promised that they will be his witnesses by the power of the Holy Spirit. What does it mean to be **“ a witness of Jesus”** ? It is to be a witness that Jesus is the Christ. Jesus' witnesses testify that Jesus died on the cross for our sins and rose again from the dead. Jesus' witnesses testify our salvation, forgiveness of sins. Jesus wanted his Apostles, who had seen and experienced Jesus' death and resurrection, to preach this good news to people, first to Jerusalem, next to all Judea and Samaria, and finally, to the ends of the earth. They just wanted to know about the future of Israel, but Jesus gave them a mission to the ends of the earth.

**"To the ends of the earth"** is not just geographical. It refers to "all people" who live in this world. Everyone in the world needs the gospel. Jesus wants everyone to receive the gospel and be saved. At that time, the Jews looked down on the Samaritans because they were a “mixed race” with foreign blood and false worship. They also hated the Romans who ruled over them. But Jesus loved the Samaritans and the Romans and commanded his Apostles to preach the gospel to them. Jesus wanted his disciples to have the same mindset as Jesus.

When we see the Apostles’ situations, it must have been overwhelming and almost impossible to believe Jesus’ words, but Jesus promised them they would receive the power of the Holy Spirit. Jesus said that power of Holy Spirit come first. When the Holy Spirit empowered them, they would tell people boldly about Jesus’ words, His life, His resurrection. In other words, the verse 8 is both commands and promise from Jesus to his Apostles.

**This is Jesus’ world mission command**. He gave us world mission command while we studied the bible during college year. Though we were still sinners, we accepted and obeyed his world mission command by believing the help of Holy Spirit. By the help of Holy Spirit, we could overcome cultural, language, financial difficulties and be used in God’s redemptive work in our mission fields. Last year during the ISBC, we could see God’s glory in all around world through UBF ministry by the help of Holy Spirit and we thank and praise God.

I really thank God for many UBF silver missionaries in these days, including M. Alex and Eunice Safos in Belize. They changed the definition of “retire”. To them retiring does not mean stopping work. To them, retiring means re-tire (change tire), ready to do something with new tire. They had already served world mission in their mission field for many years, even many decades. However, they gave up comfortable life after retirement and obeyed Jesus’ world mission command with dreams and visions given by the Spirit (Acts 2:17c). May God continue to bless our world mission ministry and help us to continue be witness the work of the Holy Spirit beginning from New York, America, Korea, and whole world.

Now look at verse 9-11. **“After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight. They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. “Men of Galilee,” they said, “why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.”**

The disciples had seen many incredible miracles throughout their time with Jesus: the healing of diseases, driving out demons, feeding five thousand people with only the five loaves and two fishes, Jesus’ transfiguration, resurrections from the dead, and now his ascension to heaven. I don’t think I can describe how glorious it was. The Apostles were gazing intently into the sky while Jesus was going.

Not only it was an awesome sight to see, but it was also probably sad because now Jesus was gone. Two angels reminded them of what Jesus had said to them: He had ascended to heaven, was at the right hand of God, and would return to judgment (Matthew 16:27). Jesus’ ascension reveals his second coming will surely happen in power and glory. The same Jesus who was ascended into heaven will come back as King and Judge to establish the Kingdom of God forever.

After Jesus ascended to heaven, what did the Apostles do? How did the Apostles show that they were following Jesus’ command practically?

**First, Devotion to Prayer(12-14): Look at verse 12-14. Then the Apostles returned to Jerusalem from the hill called the Mount of Olives, a Sabbath day’s walk from the city. When they arrived, they went upstairs to the room where they were staying. Those present were Peter, John, James and Andrew; Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew; James son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James. They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers.**

The Apostles decided to stay in Jerusalem to obey Jesus’ the world mission command, and they waited for the promised Holy Spirit. **What did they do while they waited for the Holy Spirit?** **First of all, the disciples, along with women, including Mary the mother of Jesus, and Jesus' brothers, were devoted to prayer constantly.** They gathered to pray based on what Jesus told them.

As we remember, the Apostles were not known as men of prayer. But now they were not just standing and looking at the sky. They began to act. They were devoting themselves to praying, and they prayed all together. They surrendered their “me”-centered thoughts and instead remembered Jesus’ promise and his words. By praying all together, they could have prepared a vessel for the Holy Spirit to come. The work of God cannot be accomplished by the wisdom and strength of men. For the work of God, the Holy Spirit must come upon us. The Holy Spirit must guide us, and the Holy Spirit must govern us, and we can experience God’s might work. The united prayer of 120 people in the Upper Room became the powerful force for carrying out the world missions to Apostles and all followers. Personally, I want to learn their united prayer. In ESV bible, **“All these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer”,** they prayed all together with same / one mind. May God bless our family, and our house church may pray together with one mind, so that we may make a vessel for prayer for the Holy Spirit to come in our family. May God bless our NY UBF this year, we may make a vessel for prayer for the Holy Spirit to come in our church.

**Second. Matthias Chosen to Replace Judas (15-26).** In verse 15, Peter stood up and mentioned Judas' problem. Judas Iscariot betrayed Jesus and sold him for thirty pieces of silver. With his guilt feeling, he hang himself miserably. This incident deeply hurt the other Apostles. But Peter quoted the Psalms and interpreted them. “‘May his place be deserted; let there be no one to dwell in it (Psalm 69:25),’ and, “May another take his place of leadership (Psalm 109:8) and suggested that someone need to replace Judas to take over this ministry. After praying for Joseph and Matthias, they cast lots. Finally, Matthias then becomes the twelfth apostle, restoring the number of Apostles to twelve. In this decision-making process, they fully depended on God's guidance through united prayer in every event.

**Conclusion:** Do you know what was the last words Jesus spoke while He was on earth? It was verse 8, “**But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”**

I found a very interesting reference while I prepared today’s message. Do you know who invented dynamite? When Alfred Nobel discovered an explosive element that was stronger than anything the world had known at the time, he asked a friend and Greek scholar for a word that conveyed the meaning of explosive power. They gave answer a Greek word “Dunamis”, and Nobel named his invention “dynamite.” The Greek word “Dunamis” is the same word that Jesus used in today’s key verse, Acts 1:8. “But you will receive **power** when the Holy Spirit comes on you;” In other words, “You shall receive explosive, dynamite power when the Holy Spirit comes on you.”

Thank God for helping us to study the book of Acts. Thank God for helping me to see myself through message preparation. I sincerely repent I lost my vision for world mission as missionary. May God help me to recover burning desire to serve God’s mission. I earnestly pray that we all may experience explosive and dynamite power of the Holy Spirit in this new year so that we may be a powerful witness of Jesus Christ beginning from where we are now, at home, at work, at school, and campuses in NY area. May God help us to renew our world mission vision with the help of the Holy Spirit. I pray that we will be clothed with the power of the Holy Spirit with prayer and be used in God's work of salvation in our time.