

Acts Chapter 1 v 1 - 14

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 12 April 2020

Preacher: Barry Davies

[0 : 00] I'd just like to read a chapter from Acts chapter 1, I'm going to read verses 1 down to 14.

In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach, until the day was taken up in heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles and children. After his suffering, he pretended himself to them and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and throughout the kingdom of God. On one occasion, while he was teaching with them, he gave them this command. Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which he heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit. Then they gathered round him and asked him, Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel? He said to them, it's not for you to know the times or days the Father had set by his own authority, 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. As he had said this, he was taken up before their eyes, and their cloud hid him from their sight. They were looking intently up into the sky 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? The same Jesus who has taken you into heaven will come back in the same way you have seen going to heaven. Then the apostles returned to Jerusalem from the hill called the Mount of Olives, the Sabbath day war 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 Delic, 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.

I don't know whether you've ever played a wide game. This is a game that's played in an open space. And the aim of the game is to either get somewhere or to get away from somewhere without being caught. On one occasion, a few years ago, with the church youth group, in the early days of the church, we arranged a wide game at Maybeck. And Maybeck was a place where families gathered, particularly at the weekend. It was very crowded. And for this particular evening, we told people that those who were involved in this group were part of a group that were meeting for a Christian meeting at Maybeck. But it was in a time when we were pretending to be persecuted group of Christians, living in some country where Christians were being persecuted at that time. So the instructions we gave were, they had to come on their own to this place, that they could only come in a way that they wouldn't be seen by anybody else, and that they had to come on their own to this place.

That they could only come on their own to this place. And that they would also try to remember a scripture, or perhaps a testimony, so that when they got to this meeting, which is actually on the side of a hill, in an area that was a bit protected from sight from all the rest of the people there, that they could come with their words, and they wouldn't have to have a Bible.

[4 : 17] Because if they were caught with a Bible, because if they were caught with a Bible in a country where Christians were being persecuted, that could be a serious thing. And so we told them if they saw somebody coming along, they had to wait until they wouldn't be seen before they got to this area, because nobody had to find them.

We had a good group of people, probably about twenty. And when they all got there, we found it was quite exciting, just to have struggled to get there without being seen.

Obviously remembering the scripture, and then just sharing with one another in a very secretive way. And it was a good exercise. But because it was in May Beck, in Britain, there was of course no danger involved. It was just a very enjoyable evening.

But in this passage that we are looking at, in Acts, we have a different situation. Because the people there were actually being persecuted. And Christians in particular, if they were found to be connected to Jesus, and what had happened, it was likely that they would be put into prison, or in some cases even crucified.

And that's the situation that we find these disciples in. And what we find here in Acts 1, is that after the death of Jesus, and at his resurrection, they were meeting together.

[5 : 50] And before Jesus left them, in the forty days he was with them, it says he gave them many proofs that he was alive. And he also spoke of the kingdom of God. That's what he's saying in verse 3.

Jesus must have spoken to them about many things during that time. But we have no record of what those things were in detail. And the very last instruction that he left with them, before he went into heaven, he said this, You are my witnesses of these things.

I am going to send you what my Father has promised. But stay in the city, until you have been clothed with power from on high. Well, this command to be witnesses is clearly remembered by the disciples.

And Acts chapter 1 also recalls the Lord saying, You will be my witnesses. It's clear that this part of Acts talks about the disciples being unclear about what was going to happen in the future.

Because in the sick they asked Jesus, Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel? They thought about the physical kingdom, and their own nation, and whether that would be restored to its former glory.

[7 : 14] And so they were unaware that Jesus was really talking about the spiritual things and restoration. Like many Christians who find themselves in unexpected and difficult situations, they were confused, despite the fact that Jesus had spoken to them about many things over that period of the day.

So what was their response to this situation? Well, it says in Acts chapter 1 that, Well, at first, they went back to their upstairs room where they were staying.

And there were 11 of them. Because of course, Judas was not with them any longer. And the first thing that we find of four things I want to mention this morning, is that, this evening I should say, is that they met together for fellowship.

Verse 14 says, They all joined together. So the very first thing that they did, after the Lord let them, was to meet together.

And Peter was speaking to the believers at that time. And although there were 11 of them, from the disciples, it also said, in verse 15, that at one point, Peter was talking to about 120.

[8 : 40] Which was a huge number for those days. Particularly as they would be worried about being in court. Though we're not talking about what was discussed in detail, we know that we're thinking about appointing another disciple to replace Judas.

And surely it would have been the case that they would have been also discussing what Jesus had done and said in those 40 days while he was with them, before he went into heaven.

So this, in getting together in this way, those 120 people. This was the beginning of the church of God as we know it. And the fellowship of believers was at the core of this development.

At the end of Acts, we're told that all the believers were together and had everything in common. There was something else that the disciples did when they gathered together.

The second thing, he says, they all joined together constantly in prayer. Constantly. This is something that the disciples didn't just do from time to time.

[9 : 53] He said they were constantly in prayer. And it's one of the main signs that men or women, because there were women there too, to become believers. Later on in Acts, chapter 8, Ananias, needing proof that Saul was a true believer before he would go to him.

Jesus convinced him, because he said, for he's praying. The fact that Saul was praying, was proof enough for Ananias to go and meet him and speak to him.

When we study the Psalms, we see a man who was constantly in prayer to God. As David, all the way through, prays to God about all sorts of things, because it was so important to him.

Because prayer, isn't just for times when we're in difficulty, or that we want something. It's because the Christian, craves communication with their Father.

Just an illustration of this would be that, if you read the biography of many of the Christians of the past, you often read, in part of their story, that they went to their room, to pray fervently.

[11 : 07] And often, it was for very long periods. Today, prayer for Christians can seem like a duty, rather than delight.

A famous hymn that we often sing, includes this line, When peace like a river, attendeth my way. And then the chorus follows.

When we have that peace, it says, It is well, it is well with my soul. And that's a song that was written by Horatio Spafford, in 1873, which speaks, partly, of the fact that he lost his daughters, who were travelling to America, when their ship sank, and they were lost.

The third thing, is that, these disciples, were witnesses, of what had happened to Jesus. This first chapter of Acts, ends with Matthias being chosen to replace Judas.

And the reason that, the disciples did this, to replace Judas, is important, because Peter says, For one of these, because there was another candidate at the time, must become a witness with us, of his resurrection.

[12 : 26] Being a witness, is another sign that we belong to Christ. When Jesus said, You will be my witnesses, He was using the same words, as Isaiah, chapter 43, verse 10, when the message was given by God, to his chosen people Israel.

At that time he said, You, are my witnesses. Now there are various kinds of witnesses, but they all share, one common trait.

They all report what they've seen, heard, and believed. We simply need to tell others, what we know about our Saviour Jesus. The Lord, will do the rest.

Now immediately after this period, the promised Holy Spirit, came upon the believers, and Peter spoke to the crowds. The Bible account of this, is very clear, and straightforward.

The good news was preached by Peter, but then, something happened, which is an encouraging message, for every minute of the Gospel. Peter ends his speech, by one closing sentence, to summarize the conclusion, which was, Therefore, let all Israel be assured of this, God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah.

[13 : 52] The response from those who heard this message was, When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter, and the other apostles, Brothers, what shall we do?

That's, said also in other part of the Scripture, where it says, what shall we do, to be saved? And finally, there's a Scripture itself.

Here is elsewhere, in the New Testament, the Scriptures were well known, and believers recognized, that though written before Christ came into the world, those Scriptures referred to the work he would do.

Peter uses five Scripture passages here. Paul in Romans, and other areas, gives nine or ten Scripture references.

Even James, in his short epistle, uses eight Scriptures. But in conclusion, historians say, that you must go back to the source documents, to find the truths of history.

[15 : 01] The accounts of the birth of the church, that we find now, gives us the basis, of the Christian living. The first disciples, when Jesus left them, followed the pattern that Jesus taught them, whilst on earth.

Christians, need various things. And he puts them in this way. Christians need, will enjoy, and benefit, from fellowship, with other believers.

Christians, need to pray constantly. Christians, need to witness to others, about what they know, and their Saviour.

Christians, need the Scriptures, to be the source, of their knowledge. And also, where they find, new things, about what Jesus, came to do.

Imagine, for a moment, living without the benefits, of having fellowship, with other believers. It would be unthinkable. Think about, life as a Christian, where, you never pray.

[16 : 16] Think about, if you were going to witness to somebody, and they asked you the question, what does it mean, about Jesus being our Saviour? Imagine, not being able to answer, that question, for yourself.

And finally, if they said, where can I find out more, about, this Saviour, that you are talking about.

Imagine, not being able to point, the Scriptures, that would, do exactly what, Peter did, on that day, when the preacher, that, where they would find words, which would make them say, brothers, what must I do, to be saved?

I'm going to close there, I'm going to close with a word of prayer. And then after, I pray, we're going to sing, that song, by Horatio Stafford.

And sing it, in all listening, that we too, might experience, the peace that God gives. And that we can say, it is well, it is well with my soul.

Let's just pray, the brothers, Father, with the children. Lord, we do thank you, and praise you indeed, that when Jesus came, he came, that we might have fellowship, with other believers.

[17 : 37] But most importantly, through prayer, we might have fellowship, with him. Lord, that we might truly, learn to worship him better.

That we might, find the scriptures, those things which give us delight, those things which teach us more, about the Lord. And we pray, that we'll continue, just to walk, in the way, and in the path, that you've set for us.

Lord, be with all of us, who, today, are following you. Thank you, for this, story now, for the time, when you were at work, and your disciples, and the foundations, of the church, were laid.

We pray, that wherever, in this world, people are worshiping, tonight, that they are saints, that you are with them, and they will know, that you are answering their prayer.

That's all these things, in Jesus name. Amen. Amen.