



Week 4

These weekly studies are loosely based on the previous Sunday's sermon. If you missed it, you will find a recording on our website (www.knaphillbaptist.org.uk). They are designed for both Home Group discussion and/or personal reflection. Don't necessarily try to cover all the questions and discussion topics in your group at one sitting. You may like to think about them later in your own time.

BEING WITNESSES

Read Acts 1:1-8



This is the fourth in a series of studies tracing the Journey from Easter to Pentecost as told by Luke in his two books: *The Gospel of Luke*, and the follow-up volume, *The Acts of the Apostles*. Here, at the beginning of *Acts*, Luke picks up on where he left off in the *Gospel* by reiterating the events described there. Whilst this second volume is popularly known as 'The Acts of the Apostles' it more actually describes the acts of the Holy Spirit working through the Apostles and the other members of the New Testament Church, especially the way in which they responded to the Jesus' exhortation to go and be his witnesses to all the nations of the earth (Luke 24:48). What is emphasised time and again is that we cannot do this in our strength. As we read in Zechariah, "It is not by might or by power, but by my Spirit!" says the Lord Almighty' (Zechariah 4:6). This truth is affirmed here by Jesus himself when he tells his disciples: 'You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you ... and [then, and only then] will you be my witnesses' (Acts 1:8)

Questions and Pointers for Discussion/Reflection

1. The Book of Acts is the second volume of a continuing story that Luke had written for someone called 'Theophilus' (v.1). In the first volume which was his Gospel, Luke had told the story of the life of Jesus upon earth, and now he goes on to tell the story of the Christian Church. There is a sense, however, in which this second volume has no end ... in what sense is this story still being written?
2. 'Theophilus' (which means 'Lover of God') was a pseudonym for someone who wished to remain anonymous. Why did Theophilus wish to remain anonymous? Is it possible to be an 'anonymous Christian'? (See Romans 10:9,10). Can you think of any circumstances where maintaining anonymity might be excusable?
3. Luke tells us here that (prior to Pentecost) the Risen Jesus gave 'instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles' (v.2). What is the difference between the 'Paschal' gift of the Holy Spirit (John 20:19-23) and the 'Pentecostal' gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:1-4)?
4. What were the 'many convincing proofs' (v.3) that Luke tells us here Jesus gave to his followers during those 40 days between his Resurrection and Ascension? See 1 Peter 3:13-22
5. Luke tells us that during this period of 50 days the Risen Jesus not only appeared to his followers but 'spoke about the kingdom of God' (v.3). What does this mean? What do you think he said?
6. When Jesus told his disciples to 'wait for the gift my Father promised' (v.4), what was this 'gift' he referred to? Is there a difference between *waiting for* God, and *waiting on* God? See Isaiah 40:31; Acts 1:12-14
7. What is the difference between being 'baptised with water' and being 'baptised with the Holy Spirit' (v.5)? Why is each important?
8. What do you make of the events recorded by Luke in vs.6,7? What was it that distracted the Apostles so that they didn't hear what Jesus had just said to them? Can you think of another occasion when they got distracted away from what Jesus had told them to do (see Acts 1:15-26)? How can we guard against distraction?
9. The word 'power' here in v.8 signifies the power to live victoriously and witness effectively. Do you have this power? Is this power manifest in our church? See Mark 16:9-20.

Note the ever-expanding circles of witness described in v.8. What are our equivalents today?