

Sermon Notes

WORSHIP SERVICE - 2.16.2025

PART 2 - SPIRIT-EMPOWERED WITNESSES

I. INTRODUCTION

- Before his apostles could carry Jesus's message they needed to be clothed with Jesus's power.
- What Jesus had chosen and called them to do could not be done by human exertion—it would require divine enablement.
- In our passage today, we see Jesus's last words to his apostles before his ascension.
- He reiterates the promise of the Spirit that was essential to the success of what they were called to do.
- Main Point: Christ's kingdom plan advances through his Spirit-empowered witnesses.

ACTS 1:6-8

6 So when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" 7 He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. 8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

II. THE NATURE OF THE KINGDOM

- In the forty days Jesus appeared to his disciples, he spoke to them about the kingdom of God (3).
- And here on the last day that he was with them before he was taken up, they asked him a question related to the kingdom.
- "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?"
- Now, we know as we have read the gospels, the disciples and others had hoped that Jesus was the long-anticipated Messiah who would fulfill all of God's promises to restore Israel.
- The question is rooted deeply in OT prophecy and the Messianic hope of the Jewish people.

1. THE OT BACKGROUND OF THE KINGDOM PROMISE

- 2 Samuel 7:12-13, 16 When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. 13 He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. 16 And

your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever.”

- Daniel 2:44 And in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed, nor shall the kingdom be left to another people. It shall break in pieces all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand forever,
- Ezekiel 37:21-25 then say to them, Thus says the Lord God: Behold, I will take the people of Israel from the nations among which they have gone, and will gather them from all around, and bring them to their own land. 22 And I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel. And one king shall be king over them all, and they shall be no longer two nations, and no longer divided into two kingdoms. 23 They shall not defile themselves anymore with their idols and their detestable things, or with any of their transgressions. But I will save them from all the backslidings in which they have sinned, and will cleanse them; and they shall be my people, and I will be their God. 24 “My servant David shall be king over them, and they shall all have one shepherd. They shall walk in my rules and be careful to obey my statutes. 25 They shall dwell in the land that I gave to my servant Jacob, where your fathers lived. They and their children and their children's children shall dwell there forever, and David my servant shall be their prince forever.
- To the Jewish people, these prophecies pointed to God restoring Israel politically and nationally.

- Jesus’s triumphal entry into Jerusalem was seen as the fulfillment of the Messianic Prophecy in Zechariah 9:9, that the coming King of Zion would ride in mounted on a donkey and establish his rule.
- The crowds hailed him as the Son of David, they were ready to watch him overthrow Roman rule and rally Israel to victory and conquest.

- But then Jesus is arrested, crucified and killed.
- We get a glimpse of the sentiment of Jesus’ disciples and their Messianic hope, they “had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel.” (Luke 24:21)
- And for the disciples, who felt all of their hopes crushed by Jesus’s death, his resurrection rekindled their hope that he might now restore Israel’s kingdom.
- “Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?”
- They still anticipate an immediate political restoration and establishment of a physical kingdom despite Jesus teaching that his kingdom is not of this world.
- The disciples still had nationalistic ideas of Messiah’s physical rule, not the spiritual mission Christ was commissioning them to do.
- Also notice the phrase, “the kingdom to Israel.”
- Their view was ethnocentric, they were thinking that what Jesus came to do was limited to Israel, not that he was establishing a kingdom that will reach all nations.

- The problem was the disciples only had part of the picture.
- It wasn’t wrong to expect a kingdom, that is after all what God had promised through the prophets.
- They were missing critical pieces. They had an incomplete view of God’s plan.

2. THE TIMING OF THE KINGDOM’S RESTORATION

- Jesus corrects their misunderstanding and mistaken notions of the kingdom’s nature.
- 7 He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority.

- Their job is not to know the dates, seasons or timing of the fulfillment of God's plan.
 - Many get obsessed with trying to calculate the return of the Lord or when the end will come.
 - Jesus said ""But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only." (Matthew 24:36)
 - Don't get obsessed with end times stuff.
 - We are called to faithful obedience not speculative timelines of his return.
- We should long for his return, live in light of his return, but not obsess about the timing of his return.
 - Many grow weary and impatient when they don't see the immediate fulfillment of the promises of God.
 - 2 Peter 3:9 The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.
 - We must remember that God is working out his kingdom purposes on his timetable, not ours.

Jesus's response is a reminder that the:

- a. The kingdom of God is spiritual.
 - It's not a territorial concept. It cannot be located on a map and defined by geographical boundaries.
 - There will come a time when Jesus will establish a physical kingdom at his return.
 - Many Christians mistakenly equate political victories with kingdom victories.
 - The kingdom of God is expanded NOT through political means and governmental rule but through faithful gospel proclamation by Spirit-empowered witnesses.
 - We faithfully pray for the furtherance of God's kingdom in the Lord's Prayer, "your kingdom come your will be done on earth as it is in heaven."
- b. The kingdom of God expands gradually.
 - The disciples were expecting a fully grown kingdom, but Jesus describes the kingdom as starting small and gradually growing.
 - In Luke's gospel, Jesus tells the parable of the Ten Minas right before his triumphal entry into Jerusalem.
 - Luke 19:11 As they heard these things, he proceeded to tell a parable, because he was near to Jerusalem, and because they supposed that the kingdom of God was to appear immediately.
 - The apostles asked if Jesus would do after his resurrection what they had hoped he would do in his lifetime; and asked if he would do it immediately.
 - The parables of the Mustard Seed and the leaven - the kingdom of God starts small and grows into something large. (Luke 3:18-21).
- c. The kingdom of God is universal.
 - His kingdom will extend to the ends of the earth.
 - The disciples were focused on Israel, Jesus expands their vision outward from Jerusalem to the uttermost parts of the world.
 - The gospel is to be taken to all nations.
 - Matthew 28:19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations...
 - We need to have a global mindset for the kingdom of God.
- The disciples had a different blueprint for the kingdom than Jesus did.
 - They expected an immediate, visible kingdom, with Jesus on an earthly throne, but Jesus was laying the foundation for a global and spiritual kingdom first.

- The kingdom of God doesn't expand through political power.
- It expands through the gospel not governments.
- We should reflect on this as we have the same human struggle that the apostles had.
- We want immediate results, we want earthly power, we want instant justice, cultural transformation and tangible fulfillment of God's promises now.
- But God's kingdom unfolds not according to our timetable, but God's.
- It unfolds according to His perfect plan, not our expectations.
- This is where we have to trust in God's providence.

III. THE POWER FOR THE MISSION

- Jesus's response in v7 is more of a "no, not now," its physical establishment isn't immediate.
- But after the rebuke about timing, he answers their question in v8, "yes, now, but like this"
- 8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."
- This is one of the most important verses in Acts.
- The promise of the Spirit's power is part of his reply to their question about the restoration of the kingdom.
- This is how the kingdom of God will be established; this is how the kingdom of God will grow.
- Let's look at what Jesus says about the restoration of the kingdom.
- It entails three elements:
- First, How they will do it.
- But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you...
- The exercise of power is inherent to any kingdom. Kingdoms are established and grown through the exercise of power.
- But power in God's kingdom is different from power in human kingdoms.
- The apostles will further the kingdom's objectives only after having received power.
- They will need divine strength; divine enablement.
- What they are being commissioned to do cannot be accomplished by human ability but by supernatural enablement of the Spirit of God.
- This is not the power of an army, but the power of God coming upon the apostles through the Holy Spirit.
- God's kingdom restoration and expansion plans can only be furthered through the power and divine influence of His Spirit.
- We see this Spirit-wrought power through the apostles mirroring the word-deed ministry of Jesus as they testify to him.
- Acts 4:7-8a, Peter healed a lame man and was interrogated by the religious leaders, "By what power or by what name did you do this?" "Then Peter filled with the Holy Spirit..." begins to testify of the risen Christ.
- Acts 4:33 And with great power the apostles were giving their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all.
- Acts 6:8 And Stephen, full of grace and power, was doing great wonders and signs among the people.
- The Holy Spirit will empower them for the mission and equip them for bold proclamation.

- Second, What they will do.
 - ...and you will be my witnesses...
 - What is a witness? Someone who testifies to something important. They are eyewitnesses to an event and they report what happened.
 - The term “witness” links to Isaiah’s prophecy of God’s servant, the Messiah, and his task.
 - Isaiah 43:10 “You are my witnesses,” declares the Lord, “and my servant whom I have chosen, that you may know and believe me and understand that I am he. Before me no god was formed, nor shall there be any after me.
 - What are they witnesses to? The powerful resurrection of Jesus.
 - When they are selecting the apostle to replace Judas, Peter says that it must be someone who “must become with us a witness to his resurrection. (Acts 1:8)
 - Jesus’s physical resurrection authenticated every claim to his messiahship, divinity, and authority. It authenticated every one of his teachings.
 - That’s why when Peter stood up on the day of Pentecost he boldly declared, “This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses.” (Acts 2:32)
 - John Stott, The Message of Acts, “The kingdom of God is his rule set up in the lives of his people by the Holy Spirit. It is spread by witnesses, not by soldiers, through a gospel of peace, not a declaration of war, and by the work of the Spirit, not by force of arms, political intrigue or revolutionary violence.”
- Third, Where they will go.
 - ...Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.
 - This is like a second Great Commission, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations.” (Matthew 28:18)
 - It starts in Jerusalem. That’s why Jesus told them not to depart from Jerusalem. (4)
 - The blessings to the nations will come from Jerusalem as God promised to Abraham. From his descendent, all the families of the earth would be blessed. (Gen. 12:3)
 - This is a fulfillment of Isaiah 49:6 I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.”
 - We can track the movement of the apostles as they travel from Jerusalem to the outer reaches of the Roman Empire.
 - Primarily, the gospel spreads through Jerusalem in Acts 2-7.
 - Then to Judea and Samaria in Acts 8-12.
 - Lastly, the gospel reaches Gentiles and the Roman world in acts 13-28.
 - This is the answer to the disciples misplaced focus in v6.
 - The gospel of the kingdom is to be taken to the ends of the earth, it is for all peoples!

CONCLUSION

- Jesus declares to his apostles that the restoration of the kingdom of Israel comes about by the power of the Spirit, through the witness of the apostles, and throughout the whole world.
- Christ’s mission cannot fail. He has attended to its success by furnishing his people with power from the Spirit.
- The apostles will take the gospel to the ends of the earth, which was accomplished in their time.
- And the mission to take the message of the kingdom to the ends of the earth continues in our time.
- It’s happening right now, as Christ’s Spirit-empowered witnesses boldly testify of the risen Christ and his present rule.

- While this promise of power was primarily for the apostles in their time, it is for us generally now in our time.
 - The same power that came upon the apostles is the same power available to every believer today.
 - We are not apostles, but we too are commissioned and sent out to be Christ's Spirit-empowered witnesses.
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- We are all called to be a witness, first in our homes and workplaces, then in our communities, and then beyond.
 - But we can't be his witness in our own strength.
 - Pray for the Spirit's empowerment and ask Him to lead you in gospel conversations.
 - And trust in the success of Christ's mission.
 - We should have confidence in proclaiming the good news, knowing that the success of the kingdom's expansion is not done in our strength or by our power of persuasion.
 - The success of the kingdom's expansion is accomplished in the power of the Spirit of the risen Christ who is presently ruling and continuing his ministry of kingdom advancement and expansion through Spirit-empowered witnesses.

APPLICATION AND REFLECTION

In light of today's message....

- What did I learn about the gospel?
- How can I apply what I learned about the gospel to my life?
- With whom can I share the gospel this week?