

The Church of the Servant King

Survey of the Bible Series – Luke 24 (Lesson 24B – Jesus Commissions His Disciples)

Introduction

In this final study of the book of Luke, we will cover the last several verses of chapter 24. In these verses, Jesus makes His final appearance to the disciples prior to His Ascension. Also, Luke is the only Gospel writer who includes information regarding Jesus' Ascension in His account. Both the book of Luke and its sequel, the book of Acts, includes an account of the Ascension. This is especially interesting since Luke wrote his Gospel narrative as a historical research project (Lk 1:1-4) and did not know Jesus personally.¹ About a third of Luke's Gospel contains information that is unique to Luke.

Why do I think that this is interesting? God used a physician who was not an eyewitness to Jesus' life and ministry to corroborate and record the accounts of all who were eyewitnesses. Luke's writings represent the believer who needs to have a faith that is defensible both against those who are enemies of the faith and that is strong enough to deal with internal struggles. In other words, the writings of Luke are designed to provide believers with the logical and historical basis for their trust (faith). God did not intend the believer to trust Him without a rationale, i.e. "blind trust." God wants us to be able to defend our faith (1 Tim 4:15-16; 2 Tim 4:2).

Luke 24:36-43 – Jesus Appears to His Disciples

In verses 36 through 43, Jesus provides His disciples with empirical evidence of His resurrection. Not only does Jesus stand in their presence and allow them to view and touch His hands and feet, but Jesus also eats food with them. One of the more interesting statements in this passage is when Jesus says "a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have." Evidently, our resurrection bodies will be similar to our present bodies in appearance and be capable of eating and drinking not to mention passing through tangible objects (verses 36-37 cf. Jn 20:19-20). The necessity for Jesus to appear in His resurrection body is all too evident in the fact that they had difficulty accepting that Jesus was really resurrected (24:41 cf. Matt 28:17; Mk 16:14; Jn 20:25-31).

Note: It is interesting that in His resurrection body, Jesus looked like He did in His physical body. He could even eat. In the Messianic kingdom, resurrected saints from all dispensations will rule and reign with Christ in their resurrected bodies. During Jesus' appearances in His resurrected body, He mixed and mingled with those of flesh and blood here on the earth. This fact should dispel the notion held by some that a resurrected body cannot inhabit the same earthly sphere as those of a physical body.²

Luke 24:44-49 – Jesus Interprets the Old Testament in Light of His Resurrection

The "Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms" (v. 44) is a phrase that referred to the three divisions of the "Old Testament" or Hebrew Scriptures in Jesus' day. Sometimes the Hebrew Scriptures were referred to using the phrase "Moses and the prophets" (v. 27).

¹ While Peter was most likely John Mark's mentor, it is very likely that Paul was Luke's mentor since Luke was present with Paul for many of the events recorded in the book of Acts (see the "we" sections of Acts in Acts 16:10-17; 20:5-15; 21:1-18; 27:1-28:16).

² For example, see Alva J. McClain, "The Spirituality of the Millennial Kingdom," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 113:449 (January, 1956): 16-23 in which McClain argues against Louis Berkhof's objections to the "materialistic" view of the Messianic kingdom he believes is held by the premillennial dispensationalist.

Nevertheless, Jesus used different parts of the Old Testament to demonstrate that what had happened to Him was a part of God's revealed plan for Him (e.g. Deut 18:15; Psa 2:7; 16:10; 22:14-18; Isa 53; 61:1). As the Messiah, Jesus had to suffer these things and then rise from the dead (Lu 24:46 cf. 26). Since Jesus' death was essential to God's plan of redemption, then Jews and Gentiles alike should have the opportunity to repent (change their mind) regarding Jesus as the Messiah. This opportunity to repent was to begin in Jerusalem and then spread to all nations. Repentance would occur when 1) Jesus' followers testified to others of having seen the resurrected Jesus and 2) provided proof from the Hebrew Scriptures that the Messiah's death was only part of a previously revealed plan.

Note: A lack of a knowledge and understanding of Scripture was fatal to those who chose to remain in ignorance and unbelief. A knowledge of Scripture provided one the basis upon which the Gospel could be proclaimed with boldness.

Next, in verse 49, Jesus commands His followers to remain in the city of Jerusalem until they were "endued" with power from on high.³ There is no Scriptural evidence that the baptism of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost represented a permanent indwelling of the Holy Spirit as is characteristic of the Church Age believer (Romans 8:9; 1 Corinthians 3:16 cf. Ephesians 1:14; 4:30). [Please note the later date of these writings, i.e. late A.D. '50's to A.D. 60 verses the period covered by the Books of Luke and Acts, i.e. A.D. 30 and after]. The only indication of the nature of the relationship between the believer and the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost is that the believer was "filled" (Acts 2:4).

There is a great similarity between the Type #1 filling and the enduement of the Holy Spirit characteristic of the Age of Israel believer. Believers on the day of Pentecost manifested actions more closely associated with the enduement of the Holy Spirit and the "filling" associated with enduement (see Exodus 31:3; 35:31 cf. Psalm 51:11) than the Type #2 filling described by Ephesians 5:18.⁴

The Pentecost event was characterized by an Age of Israel type relationship with the Holy Spirit because it was the initial fulfillment of prophecy that related to the "last days" (Acts 2:17) of

³ The word translated "endued" in verse 49 is the aorist, middle or passive, subjunctive of $\epsilon\upsilon\delta\upsilon\omicron\mu\omicron$ (*enduo*). A.T. Roberson notes in *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1930), Luke, Volume II, 297 that as an aorist, middle, subjunctive that the indirect middle means to "put on yourselves power from on high as a garment." This interpretation points to these believer's responsibility in the activity of the receipt of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost and indicates the nature of the Holy Spirit's relation to these believers, i.e. clothing like a garment. Walter Bauer in *A Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 264 sheds further light upon the meaning of this word. In the middle voice, the word means to "clothe oneself in, put on, wear" and on many occasions it carries a figurative connotation referring to the "taking on of characteristics, virtues, intentions, etc." Furthermore, Bauer notes that the middle sense "is not always clearly right, the pass. is somet. better...be clothed w. power fr. above Lk 24:49." Needless to say, there is a distinct difference between "endowment" and "indwelling," i.e. temporary verses permanent, Israelite-ish relationship to the Holy Spirit verses Church Age relationship.

⁴ As we have studied, the Type #1 filling [*pimplemi* (verb) + *pneuma* (genitive case noun)] was instantaneous, associated with service, and could be lost (Luke 1:15, 41, 67; 4:1; Acts 2:4; 4:8, 31; 6:3, 5; 7:55; 9:17; 11:24; 13:9, 52). In the case of a Type #1 filling, the Holy Spirit Himself is the content with which the believer is filled. The Type #2 filling [*pleroo* plus the dative of *pneuma*] found only in Ephesians 5:18 is associated with Christian character. In the case of the Type #2 filling, the Holy Spirit is the mechanism used to fill the believer with the character of Christ.

the Age of Israel. J. Dwight Pentecost notes that Acts 2:17 is a reference to the “last days” for Israel and that when this phrase is “used in reference to Israel’s program it can not refer to the program for the church.”⁵ Israel was being given her opportunity to accept Jesus as the Messiah after His mandatory death (see Peter’s message in Acts 3 with emphasis on Acts 3:19). This is the key point necessary to understand Jesus’ instructions in Luke 24:46-49.

Note Regarding the “Great Commission” – As recorded by Matthew, Jesus’ command seems to imply that the disciples were to immediately (even prior to Pentecost) begin making disciples and baptizing them. However, when the parallel accounts are examined, we can see that Jesus expected the disciples to tarry for a period. In Luke 24:49, Jesus commands His disciples to “**tarry** in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high.” I believe that the “Great Commission” in these verses was given to the disciples in anticipation of the extension of the offer of the kingdom through His disciples after Jesus’ resurrection. This is the subject of the early chapters of the book of Acts. Therefore, if I am correct, the “Great Commission” is not directed to the Church (as in the body of Christ and Church Age), but is directed to Jews and Gentiles of the transition period of opportunity prior to the beginning of the Church Age.⁶ This is a technical point and doesn’t diminish our responsibility as Church Age believers to evangelize the world and be witnesses.

The Ascension – Luke 24:50-53

Jesus will return at His Second Advent to this very same Mount of Olives from which He Ascended into heaven (Zech 14:4). After observing the Ascension, it is important to note that the disciples did not desert the Temple and Mosaic customs. There was no break with the Temple until after Paul received the mystery doctrines of the Church Age.⁷

This passage records Jesus’ final appearance prior to His Ascension; however, this was not Jesus’ final appearance in His resurrection body. The Apostle Paul indicates that he too saw the resurrected Lord (1 Co 15:8). Paul received the revelation contained in His epistles by being caught up into heaven and to keep him humble, Christ gave him a thorn in the flesh (2 Co 12:1-7).

⁵ J. Dwight Pentecost, *Things to Come* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1958), 154.

⁶ For similar comments, see Charles F. Baker, *Understanding the Gospels* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Grace Publications, 1978), 288-290.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 291.