

A Bird's-Eye View for Me and You

Acts

You know, the Bible says the joy of the Lord is my strength, and I also receive joy each week that I'm able to come to you and share with you the Word of God. Thank you for joining me today.

Last time, we looked at a study concerning the book of John. Let me remind you that we're studying through a series called "A Bird's-Eye View for Me and You," the books of the New Testament. My goal is not to go into these books in depth; that's for another time, but my goal is to help us to see the New Testament with a bird's-eye view, in other words, an overview, helping us think our way through the New Testament.

Last time we looked at the study of John. There are a couple of things I'd like to add to that study today that I did not mention. Maybe I did mention it in passing, but a couple of things that we need to understand about the book of John is first of all, that book tells us that Jesus is alive.

Remember, we talked about Thomas, the old doubter. He said, "I'll not believe." And in John chapter 20, verses 24-28, it says, ²⁴*But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. ²⁵The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them—This is Thomas speaking— Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe. ²⁶And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you. ²⁷Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing.* And verse 28 of John chapter 20 says, *And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God.*

And we understand also, comparing Scripture with Scripture, that Jesus told him, "You're blessed because you've seen. Well, blessed are those who have not seen but yet believed." And that's us. That's those people who have trusted on Jesus Christ without physically seeing Him but studying and reading the Word of God and hearing the Word of God and believing in faith that Jesus is who He says He is. And we need to learn this from the book of John. We need to learn discipleship. Continue to follow Jesus for who He is, according to John chapter 6. We need to abide in Jesus' Word. And remember, a disciple is a learner. We must study the Word of God in order to grow spiritually.

And then, love one another as Jesus loved us, according to John chapter 13. There are so many things that we could study in these books, but we're not going into an in-depth study here. Once again, my goal is to help us to understand the bird's-eye view, have a bird's-eye view of the New Testament and help us to think our way through and see what God has for us as His children.

Today, we want to look in the book of Acts. Acts chapter 1 and verse 8, I believe, is the key verse here. Acts 1:8 says, *But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.* Well, some of the background of this book is this. The author is Luke. This would be the companion of Paul.

Remember, we studied about Luke, or we looked at the book of Luke in the bird's-eye view, the book of Luke was also written by the physician, and when you look in Acts chapter 1, verses 1-5, the first part of that says, "the former treatise," and this word is used. "The former treatise" would be, of course, referring to the Gospel of Luke. And this is addressed to Theophilus, as well. The writing would

have taken place around 62 to 65 A.D., and the events that are covered here would be A.D. 29 through 65. It's a period of time there, and the setting is this. The Acts is a continuation of the account given in Luke's Gospel and was probably written during Paul's first imprisonment at Rome.

Now, I've said this before in speaking, that Paul the apostle was mistreated throughout his life as an apostle. He was mistreated by those who hated Christ, but we also see that God supplied needs in his life, as well. He even supplied his own physician to travel with him, and, of course, that would be Luke. Luke accompanied Paul on many of his trips, and I would say that Paul needed a physician as many times as he was shipwrecked, beaten, and stoned and everything else that happened to him. He needed a physician with him at all times.

Well, what about the purpose of the book of Acts? The aim is to show the spreading of the Gospel throughout the world, beginning at Jerusalem, according to Acts chapter 1 and verse 8. And then the outline of the book would be this: the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Notice in Acts chapter 2, verses 1-4, it says there: ¹*And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.* ²*And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting.* ³*And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them.* ⁴*And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.*

We see in this chapter and in this book of Acts not only the Holy Spirit coming on the day of Pentecost, but we see prophecy unfolding here. If you'll read Acts chapter 2 and verses 14-20, it says, ¹⁴*But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judaea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words.* And he goes ahead to describe what was written in the Old

Testament in the book of Joel how that certain things would come to pass. And this, he was telling the people present there on the day of Pentecost that this was something that was prophesied of way back in the book of Joel. Not only do you see the prophecy unfolding there, but you also see in the book of Acts the power of the Holy Spirit confirmed through the people.

In Acts chapter 4, verses 31-33, it says, ³¹*And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness.* ³²*And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common.* ³³*And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all.*

Well, what does this prove? It proves the power of the Holy Spirit. The power was confirmed through the people. They prayed and the place was shaken. God had sent down His Holy Spirit. Now, the Holy Spirit has always been here, but the Holy Spirit's ministry changed at that point. He came upon the people. He comes upon us today. He comes within us to live within us to dwell with us. According to the Bible, we are sealed unto the day of redemption by the Holy Spirit.

But notice prophecy unfolding in Acts chapter 2, the power of the Holy Spirit confirmed in Acts chapter 4 and Acts chapter 5, and then we see the church established in Jerusalem. Now, there may be some people who do not believe that the church was actually established here. I believe this was a confirmation of the church. I believe this was God's hand saying, "This is my church." In the book of Matthew, He says, "I will build my church." So, the church was not in existence at that time when Christ was walking upon this earth. The church came into existence, I believe, in its fullness—the called out assembly who named Jesus as Savior is found in

Acts chapter 2, verses 36-47, and I'm not going to read those verses. Let us read Acts chapter 4, verses 10-13. It says, ¹⁰*Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole.* ¹¹*This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders—speaking of Jesus—which is become the head of the corner.* ¹²*Neither is there salvation in any other—speaking of Jesus—for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved—speaking of Jesus. Verse 13 says, Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus.*

Well, you can be with Jesus. You say, "Well, how can I do that? I don't see Him physically." You can be with Jesus by studying His Word, by getting into the book, by letting God speak to your heart. As you study the Word, you become more and more like our Lord and Savior. Now, I'm not talking about sinless perfection. I'm talking about you taking on the characteristics. You know, we're told that we are what we eat, and if you study the Word of God, you become more and more like Christ each day of your life. And one day, we're going to look up and He's going to say, "Come up hither," and we'll be with Him forever.

Now, that day may not come for some of us. We may be planted in the ground. We may go before the Rapture of the church takes place, but either way, we're going to be caught up with Him. We're going to be taken up with the Lord because he is our Lord and our Savior.

Well, persecution came to the church. The Gospel was preached, and Peter preached to the Gentiles. Paul preached to the Gentiles. Paul carried the Gospel to Rome, and we also see that the appearance of the resurrected Christ took place. The apostles saw Him. Paul saw Him on the road to

Damascus. Faith came to those people who saw Him physically and, as well, those people who did not see Him physically but believed upon the words of those people who had seen Him physically.

And there are many other things we could point to in the book of Acts, but the main thing is that we need to understand that the Christians continued steadfastly in the apostles' teaching according to Acts chapter 2 and verse 42. The early church shared material possessions with each other. They were not always arguing and against each other. Believers were united. Believers went everywhere preaching the Gospel, according to Acts chapter 5.

Do you know Him today as your Savior? Have you trusted Christ today? Do you know Him? Have you asked Him to come into your heart? May I invite you to do so right now. You could pray something like this: "Lord, Jesus, come into my heart. I receive you as my Savior right now. Save me so I can go to Heaven and be with You." If you'll pray a prayer like that—my prayer won't save you—but your prayer will if you'll trust Him to come into your heart. Receive Him as your Savior today.

And if you are saved and you're not doing everything that you can to spread the Word of God, you need to ask God's forgiveness and go out and share the good news that Jesus died for people of this world so that they could be saved and on their way to Heaven. Ask Him to help you and give you the boldness that you need.

Well, don't forget to go to our website, www.LRWM.org. On that website, you'll be able to download this message, as well as transcripts of this message free of charge. You can also write to me, Lewis Woodard 497 Judith Avenue, Fruitland Park, FL 34731. It's always a joy to be able to share with you the Word of God. Please pray for this program. Pray for me. And I will lift you up in my prayers.

Until this next time when I'll say, "It is a good life," may the Lord bless you richly is my prayer.