



THE LAUNCH

“The Passing of the Baton”

Acts 1:1-11
March 8, 2015

The Writer:

The Recipient:

The Reason:

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- A. The Race Was Not Finished
- B. The Baton Was to Be Passed
- C. The Motivation to Run

2. The Resources for the Race (Vs 4-5, 8)

- A. His Promise
- B. His Performance
- C. His Power
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- C. Responsibility to Reflect His Character

4. The Reminder of His Return (Vs 9-11)

- A. The Lord Ascends

B. The Disciples Are Amazed

C. The Angels Ask

D. The Angels Announce His Return

Questions to Ask:

- ✓ Are you carrying your part of the leg of the relay race?
- ✓ Are you allowing the Holy Spirit to have complete control of your life?
- ✓ Are we as a church family allowing the Spirit to guide, lead and direct to us to grow?
- ✓ What is motivating you to run your race?
- ✓ Are you daily accessing and tapping into the resources God has given you to run the race?
- ✓ Are you daily reflecting Christ's character in your life?
- ✓ Are you living in view of Christ's return?

How Will Respond?

- ✓ Would you accept the greatest gift you could ever receive the Gift of Eternal Life? Would give Him your heart & life today? Remember it is as simple as **ABC!** **Admit** to God you are a sinner, **Ask** for His forgiveness, **Believe** Jesus is God's Son, **Confess** Him as Savior & **Commit** Your Life to Him as Lord. (the Boss of your life)
- ✓ Have you asked Christ into your heart but never made it public. Have you not been baptized? You can come & make that decision today public today. He was willing to humble Himself and be obedient, will you?
- ✓ Are you a part of a church family? If not, you need one! Is the Lord calling you to Petal FBC today? Why wait any longer? Step over the line and join us in reaching this community with the gospel of Jesus Christ! Help us tell others that the King has come and is coming again!
- ✓ Make a fresh commitment today to live under the authority of the Lord Jesus and Be a part of making sure our church is carrying the baton and our leg of the race!

THE ACTS: LAUNCH

“The Passing of the Baton”

Acts 1:1-11

March 8, 2015 AM Service

We begin a new series today in the Book of Acts that will take us right from Vision 2020 forward. We are going to take time to go back and look at the beginning of the Church, the blueprints if you will of the Church. How it launched, what it was like, what we can learn and how do we apply to our Church today. We will divide it into chunks – the Whole Series called The Acts and this section called Launch. This book is entitled The Acts of the Apostles but could as easily be entitled The Acts of the Holy Spirit or even The Acts of the Holy Spirit through the Apostles or the Acts of the Early Church. The Church was working then and I believe with all my heart that the Church still works today! This living breathing organism called the Church is God’s plan for world redemption until Jesus comes back for us, His church.

There is much skepticism of the church today, is it relevant, people on the outside are wary of the church, is it worth my time, why should I go, there are a bunch of hypocrites, seems like the fight there a lot, they are always wanting my money, is it really necessary? Do I have to be a part of a Church, etc.

The first place we start is the reminder that it was Christ who started the Church, He died for the Church and set the Church on it’s course of world redemption. And Anything that Christ starts works, and will continue to work. I believe that the church still has the power of God flowing through it and that God wants to bless the church today!

There is no plan B!! This is it, so we must succeed. We have to!!

It is not an option for those of us who have trusted Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, church is a must, Not an option to go to plan B, to do something else

The church will continue to work until Jesus returns, but one of the things we have to ask and they asked it often in Acts and that is, are we being as effective as we need to be as the church of Jesus Christ?

Yes it works, but at times it can be broken, not functioning properly or as well as it could to operate at maximum potential.

Yes church still works, and we must use God's blueprint for the church in order to be all that Christ is calling us to be.

Two quick truths - So there is a call back to where we started, to understand our heritage, what the church is, how it got started, how it is to work, what was it intended to and embrace it.

We must constantly be about reaching out and expanding to reach the world.

One of the reasons we need to understand that church still works today, is that there are no excuses. And that is what Acts reminds us of that there is a clear call and command given and we can give excuses but there are none that are acceptable or reasonable.

The Writer: **Luke** another name, Luke Volume 2

Luke 1 He was a physician who began to hang out with the disciples about the time of Jesus' death.

He was a traveling companion of a number of the disciples

He wrote down what he learned about Jesus, as he heard those accounts from the disciples, what he saw in the work of the Holy Spirit by being there with the apostles [Luke 1:1](#) & [Luke 24:36-53](#)

Write to you everything I learned about the life of Jesus

Let me pick up where I left off last time

Possibly written in around 64 – 65 A.D. or 70-80 A.D.

The Recipient: **Theophilus** – the name meant lover of God, loved by God, or friend of God - Called him the most excellent. Quite possibly was a high ranking roman official, good chance he was a new Christian, but even if not, open minded to see and recognize the church and what is what about. Establish the credibility of the church to them

The Reason: To give us God's plan for world redemption through the power of the Holy Spirit through His Bride, the Church

There are lots of reasons the Book of Acts was written,

[Acts 1:8](#) shows us the Concentric Circles beginning in Jerusalem and moving out to the ends of the earth. This was the plan.

A. Concentric circles

B. The spreading of the Word of God unhindered, the work of the Holy Spirit.

C. The multiplication of the disciples, the growth of the church.

D. We see lots of 1sts – the 1st Church, first deacons and church leaders, first missions movement, first Gentile Christians, first Spiritual Gifts, first persecutions and first martyrs

Chapters 1-6, Jerusalem, the first circle (6:7)

Chapters 7-9 (9:31) 2nd concentric circle – Judea & Samaria

Chapter 13 – To the Ends of the Earth

Chapters 12, 16 and 19, and finally 28:30-31

The Primary character is Paul, in house arrest in Rome (where it was, the ends of the earth in biblical time, the capital of the world) as far as Jewish life was concerned, it was the ends of the earth.

About a 30 year period covered in the book of Acts

The concentric circles of now been completed,

The Word of God was unhindered

BY the power of the Holy Spirit it can go forth from every place it starts and for the church and disciples to multiply, It tells us that when we are faithful to embrace the Word will go forth unhindered

The church will grow as a result

So many churches of resigned to the assumption they can't grow, excuses made nobody to reach, it is too hard, not enough money, etc.

We don't have this, don't have that

Over 70% and perhaps higher in our SBC are plateaued and or declining.

And yet the Word of God says, in Jesus Christ's plan, the Word of God will go forth unhindered and as a result, the church will grow.

The Passing of the Baton to the Church

Ogilvie The Church has been for many people no more than comfort and inspiration, but little challenge to our lives! The problem is that the Gospel has been domesticated to suit our culturally conditioned lives rather than dramatized as the ultimate purpose which gives mean and direction to all other secondary loyalties. May there be a sense of great dissatisfaction and unfulfillment in our lives because the job is not done!

ILLUS: Relay Race Olympic Race *Get three others to help*

Different from regular race, 4 people make up the team

the winner is not the team whose runner crosses the finish line first, it is the one whose last runner crosses the finish line with the baton!

Highlights the magnitude of this instrument

The exchanges or hand offs of the baton are crucial, can lose time, drop it, etc. [Acts 1:1-11](#) is about the passing of the baton to the disciples and then hand it to our church today, and specifically you and me

1. Luke's Recap of the Race (Vs 1-3) A summary, the big picture

A. The Race Was Not Finished

Vs. 1 All that Jesus began, there is still more to follow, it was just the start, the work of Jesus Christ is not yet finished, not talking about redemption, Christ on the cross, NO! In the Gospels Jesus models Christianity, in Acts it's the disciples and everyday ordinary people. In the Gospels, we are Christ's admiring audience, in Acts we are the ones on the stage. **"In the Gospels He did it in His own physical body, but in the Book of Acts he is doing it through the bodies of men and women who are indwelt by His life. Whether in the Gospels or in Acts, incarnation is the secret strategy by which God changes the world."** Ray Stedman

We see the Son of Man offer His life in the Gospels, and here in Acts we see him give His power.

Not all of the work of Chris was completed, the expansion of His kingdom throughout the world through the church.

B. The Baton Was to Be Passed

Jesus only ran the first leg, the hardest leg by far, paid the price

Baton handed to the disciples, then to use

What the baton was – the life, ministry, and teaching of the Lord Jesus

Why we have SS, sermons, quiet times, bible studies, memorize His word, we are learning about the life and teachings of Jesus. Both teach and do!!

Just having information is not enough, it is about lives who live out, flesh out the teachings and life of Jesus to others. It is a change in our attitudes

and actions, It what we are passing how live, how flesh out the teachings of Jesus, that is what we are passing on the next generation! It is so

critical! It is not just about knowing it, we have lots of people in the church today who know a lot, but yet they do little if anything about it!

What good is information if it does not change your life!??

Man upon the sand and the rock ([Matt 7](#)) **We saw it in Hurricane Katrina**

Heard the Word of God but who did it!

C. The Motivation to Run

Vs 3a Tells them about his suffering and proves to them, shows them

miracles, that He was alive – Appears to them over a period of 40 days. He gave them proofs He was alive and it was real. Remember 40 days was a significant number in the Bible – Moses, Elijah’s journey on Mt. Horeb, Jesus in the wilderness, and now these 40 days – preparation for something amazing and God-sized.

Why? 10 of the 12 disciples who die a martyr’s death

People don’t give their lives to die for something that is might be, or hope it is, were not convinced of, Jesus had to convince them that it was real, that is why they were willing to go and spread the gospel and even ultimately give their lives because they were convinced that he was the Messiah, the Savior, the King of the World!

Vs 3b He Spoke to them about the kingdom of God - between the resurrection through the ascension. This message was their message – the rule and reign of God here on earth and in particular in our lives. This message has radically changed their lives forever and for the better and they were motivated to share what had changed them! Are we?

2. The Resources for the Race (Vs 4-5, 8)

Not left you untrained without resources

What is the primary resource? The Holy Spirit, His presence

What He tells them is to wait in Jerusalem, the gift of the Holy Spirit.

A. His Promise

Go all the way back to the gospel of John, the promise of the Holy Spirit, not just my presence oozing around everywhere, but my very presence will come to live inside of you. [John 14:12-21; 15:26-27, 16:7-15](#)

Replace my bodily presence with my spiritual presence – far greater!

B. His Performance

Passive voice here, you shall be baptized – Referring back to John the Baptist and his baptism of water.

How God acts on your life and mine, after this point Scripture tells us here and throughout the Spirit comes when we ask Jesus Christ into our live, don’t go pray for it, seek it, ask for it, earn points for it, go to Jerusalem, and wait. God will act on Your life – it is God’s doing – it’s our job to receive it and then do something about it! **ILLUS: Not like the Dead Sea!**

C. His Power

dynamite, more like gasoline, not an explosive type of energy, but an

ongoing source of energy that provides what is necessary for effective operation.- Resurrection power is available to us each and every day! The task as we seen in the next point is the purpose. This task is simply impossible unless we are full of the Holy Spirit and rely on Him completely to do this work in and through us! We have to have the power in order to complete the task! It is too great and large a task – and He intended it to be that way – for us to have to rely upon Him!

D. His Purpose

Why did He give the Holy Spirit, to give us gifts, no that happens, but not primary reason, to feel His presence, no that happens, but again not the primary reason, so we can have some great spiritual high experience, that happens from time to time, but that is not the ultimate purpose,

The ultimate purpose was to make you and me a witness in our own backyard and to the ends of the earth. And by the way let me clearly say, we must 1st be burdened about our neighbor before we can truly be burdened for those halfway around the world!

Look what happened when they obeyed the Gospel – the Church exploded and multiplied! Barclay

2:41, 2:47 ; 5:14; 6:7; 9:31; 11:24; 12:24; 16:5; 19:20

The tragedy is if we do not share, we are denying the Holy Spirit's major role in our lives. To empower us to share the Gospel and see many people come to faith in Christ Jesus!

3. The Responsibility of the Runner (Vs 4, 6-8)

A. Respond to God's Conditions

The Disciples -- It was to stay put

Had to be hard to do, turn us lose, let us go and share, and Jesus realizes, it is not going to work without His power in their lives, so go back to Jerusalem and wait. Just stay put. Stay in Jerusalem

Why wait? What is God up to? We realize that it's in the waiting times that He prepares us for the next phase of our life in Him, the next journey. Until we are full dependent upon Him, completely open to do His will, and unreservedly willing to act on His timing, He cannot use us.

Let's not rush off into ministry unprepared – we will fail. We need to wait and be full of the Spirit. Let's be prayed up and ready.

We have the Spirit already in us, they had to wait for it but we don't!

Do you know what the condition is today?
Accepting Christ into your life, ABC's

B. Remembering His Concern

Asked in [Vs 6](#), is this where the earthly kingdom you've been talking about, is it time, right here, right now? Valid question though Jesus had told them over and over again it was not the time – but what was ingrained in them – seemed like a perfect time for it to happen!

Jesus said it's not for you to know, the specific timing, place, etc.

This part is a mystery, don't need to be concerned about it, try to figure it out,

What my concern is, when the Spirit comes upon you, you be my witness!

Left Behind Series, love them, pretty accurate I think

But if that or any other thing gets us to the point where we spend too much time trying to figure it out, sit around analyzing it, we then miss the concern of Jesus, is to remember His concern, and that is that we are to be witnesses, not to spend time trying to figure out when the end is coming, how it will happen, etc.

How can I move the kingdom forward? That's the question to answer!

C. Responsibility to Reflect His Character

You shall be MY witnesses. We simply tell people what we have experienced. The disciples got this – they were to be a witness. [See Acts 2:32, 3:15, 10:39, 22:15](#) **ILLUS: Chinese Farmer - Anders**

By the way it's where we get our word martyr from – the word witness became synonymous with witnesses because so many died for their faith!

Again, most if not all of us will not have to die for our faith, but we do have a call that for many of us is harder – to die to ourselves everyday!

We are all witnesses, the question is what kind of witness are we?

We are not called to be salesmen or women who go out and peddle a product, nor are we recruiters trying to get people to join some club. If we do it this way, we become a false church and lose our power. **“The mark of a carnal church is that it loves to talk about itself. These early Christians never witnessed about the church at all; they witnessed about the Lord – what He could do, how He would work, what a fantastic person He was, how amazing His power was, and what He could do in human hearts!” Stedman**

We represent Jesus to other people who do not know them

We take on His character, His nature, and His likeness

ILLUS: Sir Henry Stanley the great explorer gave David Livingstone – one of the 1st missionaries to Africa – after he found him living in central Africa – “If I had been with him any longer, I would have been compelled to be a Christian and he never spoke to be about it all.”

When Christ takes over our lives and the Spirit is given we become a new Creation, a different person – or motivations and purpose in life changes.

We are given a new name – little Christ – Christian – Christ Follower.

ILLUS: Air Force One Movie

Changes call signs from Liberty 24, to Air Force One

When the Holy Spirit comes into our lives, everything changes

It's not about us! It is all about us being His witnesses reflecting His character, our whole call sign has been changed, to be His witness!

And we are to have this overwhelming burden for Petal and all the needs and opportunities that are here to meet needs, love people and share the Gospel with them. A burden for the state of MS, for our nation, for people that are different than we are, and for the ends of the earth. We must have a heart for the whole world! We are called to spend and to be spent. We must have a deep undying passion that will take us to Haiti, to the jungles of Indonesia, to the city of Toledo, to the city of Jackson, and to those right here in our own backyards. And it is going to require sacrifice which means things will need to change. Many I pray and believe will hear the call and reorient their lives in a different direction to see it happen! Why? It's Christ call to us and to please Him far outweighs anything else! It is a call to spend and be spent – it is a calling to a benevolent war!

Nichayev – a 19th century disciple of Karl Marx was thrown into prison for his role in the assassination of Czar Alexander II. Prior to his death he wrote, “The revolutionary man is a consecrated man. He has neither his own interests or concerns nor feelings, no attachments nor property, not even a name. All for him is absorbed in the single exclusive interest in the one thought, in one passion, the Revolution.”

4. The Reminder of His Return (Vs 9-11)

A. The Lord Ascends

We are reminded of Enoch and Elijah – clouds often associated with God moments when He would appear. We are reminded of the Transfiguration where a cloud covered Him – the Shekinah Glory of God appears – a visible representation of the pleasure and presence of God! This was a significant moment to mark the end of Jesus' time here on earth in a powerful way and to mark the beginning of a new age – the time of the Church to be unleashed.

B. The Disciples Are Amazed

Can you picture the disciples in this moment, Jesus was leaving them They were gazing the Bible says, to be fixed upon, as if Jesus was exiting them, leaving them forever!

Indicates they were standing there for a long time – almost get the idea the angels appeared and they didn't notice and stood there looking with them for a moment

C. The Angels Ask

Almost the same questions they asked the women at the tomb- why are you seeking the living among the dead, why do you stand here looking at the sky as if this is the end, oh no this simply the end of the beginning!

D. The Angels Announce His Return

the two angels tell them, guys why are fixating on that – turn your attention to living with knowledge and understanding that He will come back just the same way that He left - He's coming back! [Rev. 19:11 ff](#)
It should give us great urgency as it did them!

It is an issue of motivation, Jesus gave His disciples a motivation for continuing the work, being about the business and running their leg of the race, and that motivation was I'm gonna be at the finish line when you cross it, I'll be there! Same motivation for you and me today

What is the call upon our lives? For most of us...

It is not a call to get the Holy Spirit for us, He is already on board
Why then do so many Christians live powerless lives, don't share their faith, not driven with the motivation of His return, why are so many churches plateaued and declining?

It really doesn't matter if the President is on the plane or not if nobody recognizes His authority

It's not a problem that His presence lives in us, or that our identity has been changed, **the problem comes when we fail to acknowledge His presence and His authority in our lives.**

Church works, we will start to see this blueprint unfold before us as we take the baton that has been handed to us, and our responsibility is take the baton and to recognize His authority in our lives, and let Him do with us as He wants to do with us and our church.

Questions to Ask:

- ✓ Are you carrying your part of the leg of the relay race?
- ✓ Are you allowing the Holy Spirit to have complete control of your life?
- ✓ What is motivating you to run your race?
- ✓ Are you daily accessing and tapping into the resources God has given you to run the race?
- ✓ Are you daily reflecting Christ's character in your life?
- ✓ Are you living in view of Christ's return?
- ✓ Are we as a church family allowing the Spirit to guide, lead and direct to us to grow?

How Will Respond?

1. Ask Jesus Christ to come into your life filling you with the Holy Spirit!
2. Make a fresh commitment today to live under the authority of the Lord Jesus.
3. Begin to daily access the power and purpose given to you through the Holy Spirit.
4. Make certain that you are carrying your leg of the race, if not do something about it!
5. Daily ask yourself am I reflecting Christ's character in everything I do.
6. Live with the finish line in view everyday!
7. Be a part of making sure our church is carrying the baton and fulfilling God's blueprint for the church!