

September 13, 2020 by Steve Brandon



# Waiting for the Holy Spirit

## Acts 1:4-8

1. Wait for the Promise (verses 4-5).
2. Wait for the Kingdom (verses 6-7).
3. Wait for the Power (verse 8).

Let's begin by reading our text.

### Acts 1:4-8

And while staying with them he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, "you heard from me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now." So when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. 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."

Let me just take a quick and informal survey. How many of you are looking forward to the day when this COVID-19 crisis is all over? How many of you are looking forward to the day when you no longer need to wear a mask when you enter a store? Or when you go to school? Or when you go to work? Or when you go to church? I know that I am. I long for the day when we can stop playing doctor every day! But, until that day, we wait.

And how many of you are waiting for something else in your life? Perhaps you are waiting until you turn 16, so you can get your license. Perhaps you are waiting for graduation, so that you can be finished with school and get on with your life. Perhaps you are waiting for a spouse that you will marry, so that you can get on with raising a family. Perhaps you are waiting for a better job, so that finances won't quite be so tight. Perhaps you are waiting for your retirement, so that you will have the free time to pursue your pleasures. Perhaps you are waiting for your cancer to take your life, so that you will be with Christ in glory.

I could list 100 more things, and still not mention the one thing (or two or ten things) that you are waiting for. Perhaps some specific trial in your life, that you just want to go away. Would the truth be told, we all are waiting for something. In fact, much of life is waiting. And waiting is often difficult. In Psalm 40 and verse 1, we read of David's waiting, ...

### Psalm 40:1

I waited patiently for the LORD.  
He inclined to me and heard my cry.

Now, David doesn't tell us in the Psalm how long he waited. But he said that he waited, patiently. Literally, David writes, "Waiting, I waited." That's the way that Hebrew often describes superlatives. When God told Adam that he could eat of any trees in the garden, he said, "Eating, you may eat" (Genesis 2:16). The ESV translates this, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden" (Genesis 2:16). When God told Adam that if he ate of the tree, he "shall surely die," literally, the Hebrew reads, "Dying, you will die" (Genesis 2:17). That's what David says in Psalm 40:1, "Waiting, I waited." That implies that he was waiting for a while. And his waiting was difficult.

We don't know how long David was waiting. But we do know that eventually, God heard his cry, because of what he said, "He inclined to me and heard my cry" (Psalm 40:1). Whatever it was that David was waiting for, he experienced the LORD's faithfulness to deliver him from his trouble. But that wasn't the end of his trouble. It was simply the end of one of his troubles. As David continued in Psalm 40, we find him waiting again.

### Psalm 40:12-13

Evils have encompassed me beyond number;  
my iniquities have overtaken me, and I cannot see;  
they are more than the hairs of my head;  
my heart fails me.  
Be pleased, O LORD, to deliver me!  
O LORD, make haste to help me!

And at the end of the Psalm, in the very last verse, David writes, ...

### Psalm 40:17

You are my help and my deliverer;  
do not delay, O my God!

Truth be told, this is our lives. We are often waiting, waiting for something. And often, this waiting is difficult. And yet, God always calls us to patience in our wait. But patience is often difficult to obtain, because our waiting is hard. Too often, our prayer is this, "God, give me patience! And I want it now!"

I bring up Psalm 40, because it helps to put forth the application of our text this morning: wait! Wait for God's timing in your life, whatever you are waiting for. My prayer for you this morning is that you would have David's experience in Psalm 40:11.

Psalm 40:11

Your steadfast love and your faithfulness will ever preserve me!

Because when waiting, God's steadfast love is what you need. And God is faithful to preserve you, if you but trust in him.

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Our application this morning is to wait, because, this is what we see the disciples being told to do in our text. They were told to wait. They were told to wait for the Holy Spirit. Indeed, that's the title of my message this morning, "Waiting for the Holy Spirit."

Now, at this point it is helpful to introduce a common issue that we will deal with as we work our way through Acts. Acts is a narrative of historical events. As a result, not all of it will apply directly to us. For instance, in our text this morning, the disciples here in this text were told to wait for the Holy Spirit. But that command doesn't directly come to us today, because the Holy Spirit has already come! (We will learn about this in Acts, chapter 2). In fact, after chapter 2, this command is no longer applicable for the disciples, either. So, we always need to be aware of this historical dynamic in the book of Acts.

Further, we need to be aware of the difference between what is descriptive and what is prescriptive. In other words, just because Luke describes what the disciples did, it doesn't mean that we are commanded to do the same. This will be especially pertinent to us beginning in verse 15 and following, when the apostles chose Matthias by lot to replace Judas. Luke described what they did in selecting his replacement. But that does not mean that we are prescribed to do the same today. So, we need to be careful.

Regarding our text this morning, as the disciples were commanded to wait for the Holy Spirit, I've simply pulled out the principle of "waiting" for us today for application, which, I think, is appropriate for us. We may not be waiting for the exact same thing as the apostles. But, our lives are filled with waiting. So, let's look at our first point. In verses 4-5, Jesus tells his disciples to ...

## **1. Wait for the Promise (verses 4-5).**

You see this here in verses 4 and 5, ...

Acts 1:4-5

And while staying with them he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, "you heard from me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

Here was Jesus, in Jerusalem, meeting with his disciples, "Presenting himself alive to them after his suffering by many proofs, ... speaking with them about the kingdom of God" (verse 3). And he tells them to wait in Jerusalem for the promise. Then he tells them what the promise is. "You will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

Now, this wasn't anything new to the disciples. He had told them this very thing before. That's what Jesus said in verse 4, "You heard from me." Now, nowhere in the Scripture are we told when exactly Jesus told this to his disciples.

Perhaps it was in the upper room, on the night before Jesus was crucified, that Jesus said these words. Because, on that night, Jesus spoke much about the coming of the Holy Spirit. John records in his gospel, how Jesus told them that he was going away. But they would not be left alone. He would send the Holy Spirit to them. Listen to what Jesus said to them.

John 14:16, 18

"I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth. ... I will not leave you as orphans."

John 14:25-26

"These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things"

A little while later, Jesus said, ...

John 16:5, 7

"I am going to him who sent me. ... I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you."

Jesus was telling them that he was going away. But then, he would send the Holy Spirit to them. This is the one that he called, "the Helper," the one who would come alongside the disciples to help them in their ministry. And when the Helper came, he would do supernatural things. He would "convict the world of sin and righteousness and judgment" (John 16:8). And here in verse 5, Jesus is saying something similar. The Holy Spirit would come and help them in their ministry.

Yet, when John records these discussions with the disciples, he doesn't use these sorts of words as he did in verse 5, "for John baptized with

water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now." John includes the same thoughts, to be sure, but not the same words.

These words were not unique to Jesus. Do you remember the words of John the Baptist? During his ministry, people were coming to him, questioning him as to whether he was the Christ. His testimony was this, ...

Luke 3:16

"I baptize you with water, but he who is mightier than I is coming, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire."

This is the very language that Jesus told his disciples in verse 5 of our text. So apparently, at some point in the ministry of Jesus, he told them these things. That's what Jesus said in verse 4, "You heard from me."

Now, I doubt that they understood much about what this actually meant. I doubt that they understood that this meant that the Holy Spirit would come upon them with "tongues as of fire" (Acts 2:3). So that they could "speak in other tongues" (Acts 2:4). In other words, they were given the supernatural ability to speak in other languages that they didn't know before.

But, I don't think that the promise of the baptism of the Holy Spirit ended there. I think it continued with the influence of the Holy Spirit in their lives. They would be saturated with the Holy Spirit.

In fact, that's the picture of baptism. John was in the water of the Jordan river, probably waist deep. And as people were coming to in repentance, confessing their sins, John was taking them and dunking them in the water as a symbol of their cleansing. But just as they were being soaked in the water, so also would the disciples be soaked in the Spirit. Only, this soaking is not a wet soaking, but a soaking of fire (Luke 3:16). They would be on-fire for Jesus.

I say this, because this is what we see in the book of Acts. The Holy Spirit comes upon the disciples and they are transformed! They are empowered! They go out as witnesses of the resurrection. They willingly suffer persecution and even martyrdom! Why? Because of the presence of the Holy Spirit in their lives!

But back to our text, at this point in redemption history, the disciples were commanded to wait. They were to "Wait for the Promise" (as I have said in my first point). And the application comes to us as well. We may not be waiting for the Holy Spirit quite in the same way that the disciples were. But, we are to wait upon the promises of God (note the use of the plural). Like the disciples, we may not fully understand how God's promises to us will be fulfilled. We simply need to wait.

We need to trust the promises like the following:

Lamentations 3:25

The Lord is good to those who wait for Him, to the soul who seeks Him.

Isaiah 41:10

Fear not, for I am with you;  
be not dismayed, for I am your God;  
I will strengthen you, I will help you,  
I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.

2 Corinthians 12:9

My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.

Matthew 11:28

Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

These are a few of hundreds that we could pull from the Scriptures. These are promises that we can trust.

Let's just spend a few moments looking at the last one, Matthew 11:28. Jesus said, "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Here's the great promise of the gospel. It tells us that we who are weary in our works, who are weary in our striving, we who are weak in our strength, can come to Jesus and find perfect rest in him. We can rest that he loves us. We can rest that our sins are forgiven. We can rest that we come to Jesus by faith alone. We can rest that we are waiting for him.

Let me give you one last promise. It's the promise that governs all promises. It is found in Hebrews 13:5.

Hebrews 13:5

I will never leave you nor forsake you.

Despite how dark things are, despite how bad it looks, despite how long you have been waiting, The promise is true: God will never leave you nor forsake you. All of the promises in Jesus are "Yes and Amen." And so, church family, I exhort you: wait for that promise to come true in your life. Wait for the promise of the faithfulness of God.

Let's move on to our second point. The disciples were told to (1) Wait for the Promise (verses 4-5). The disciples were also told to ...

## **2. Wait for the Kingdom (verses 6-7).**

This is the thrust of verses 6 and 7.

### Acts 1:6-7

So when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority."

The disciples were gathered together for another opportunity to interact with Jesus. The kingdom of God was on the minds of the disciples because Jesus had been "speaking [to them] about the kingdom of God" for the forty days that he appeared to them after the resurrection (verse 3). And when Jesus said that the Holy Spirit was soon to come upon them, I think that it was natural for them to think about the coming kingdom. After all, if the Spirit was about to come, didn't that mean that the kingdom would soon to follow? I think it's all understandable. So, they asked him, "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" (verse 6).

Now, there are some things to commend the disciples' question. Their question was filled with **faith**. They believed that Jesus was building his kingdom. They were very eager to see it built. Further, their question was filled with **zeal**. They longed for the kingdom of God to come. They were eager for it to come. They were saying with John at the end of Revelation, "Come, Lord Jesus! Build your kingdom!" (Revelation 22:20). Their question was also filled with **love** for Jesus. He said that he was going away. But the disciples wanted to be with him. They wanted to be with him now, in his kingdom, with him!<sup>[1]</sup>

But, as much as we can commend the disciples for their question, they got it all wrong. As John Calvin commented, "There are as many errors in this question as words."<sup>[2]</sup> They were looking for the kingdom to be "**restored**." That is, they were looking for the kingdom to be returned back to the way that the kingdom once was. They didn't realize that the kingdom Jesus was bringing was a new one, not an old one. They were looking for a natural, political kingdom, "**the kingdom of Israel**." They didn't realize that the kingdom Jesus was bringing was a spiritual kingdom. They were looking for the kingdom "**at this time**." That is, they wanted it now. That is, they wanted the victory before the battle. They didn't realize that the kingdom Jesus was bringing would come later, only after a long battle of suffering and tears.

I love the answer of Jesus.

### Acts 1:7

He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority."

This shows another error of their question. They were looking for knowledge about the timing of the kingdom. Jesus said that it just not for the disciples to know. It's for God alone to know. And God knows. God knows the day when he will send Jesus as the one to take his to establish God's kingdom by his might. God has determined these things "by his own authority" (verse 7).

There are many today who could take heed to this admonition: it's not for us to know the timing of the coming of the kingdom. I say this because there are many who are seeking to know the timing of the kingdom. And they are delving into the mysteries of God mysteries that we have no business looking into.

I fear for many who do this, because they are always looking for signs. They are always researching, scouring the internet and surfing the web, looking any clue that they might have of what's happening in the Middle East. They are seeking out any knowledge they might get. And that's often where it ends: knowledge! With looking into all of these things, they think that they are "in the know" and everyone else is "in the dark."

It's no accident that those who are most captivated by studying and researching and searching out and knowing the timing of God's coming, are often the very ones who embrace conspiracy theories. Because conspiracy theories are fueled by the desire to really understand the world. Then, when you see it in a special way, you think that you are elite in your understanding. It builds up your sense of self. "The whole world is 'in the dark.' But I'm one of the few who is really 'in the know.' I'm one of the few who really understand what's going on!"<sup>[3]</sup>

Jesus says, "It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority" (Acts 1:7). In other words, "Wait for the Kingdom (verses 6-7)."

There is a posture we must take as we think about the end times. We are not to be pre-occupied about when the kingdom comes. But we should be pre-occupied about what the kingdom will be like. For those who trust in Jesus, the kingdom will be like a great inheritance that you receive. Only this inheritance is imperishable and undefiled and unfading (1 Peter 1:4). This inheritance is a city with streets of gold and gates of silver (Revelation 21:21). This inheritance will be a joyful place, with no more crying and no more tears (Revelation 21:4). Best of all, we will be with God in his kingdom! He will dwell with us for eternity! Consider Revelation 21:3, ...

### Revelation 21:3

Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people; and God himself will be with them as their God.

The kingdom will come when God releases Jesus to come back upon the earth as the Lion of Judah. He will come upon a white horse as a conquering king! And all the world will know that Jesus is taking claim over his kingdom! "As the lightning comes from the east and shines as far as the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man" (Matthew 24:27). It will be a great day when Jesus comes to judge the earth. He will gather his friends to himself. He will cast his enemies into the lake of fire. Both Psalm 96 and 98 call the entire earth to rejoice at the coming judgment of the LORD upon the earth.

Now, when this all will happen, we don't know. But we should long for it. In fact, Jesus told us to long for it. He taught us to pray, saying, ...

### Matthew 6:9-10

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed by Thy name.  
Thy kingdom come!

Thy will be done!  
On earth as it is in heaven.

We should long for the kingdom. We should anticipate the kingdom. So pray for the kingdom to come! Wait for the Kingdom (verses 6-7). Let's look at our last point this morning. My exhortation comes from verse 8.

### 3. Wait for the Power (verse 8).

In verse 8, Jesus tells his disciples, ...

Acts 1:8

"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."

We looked at this verse on the very first day that we looked at the book of Acts, because this verse is a good overview of the entire book.<sup>[4]</sup>

Acts 1:8 speaks of the spread of the gospel. It begins in Jerusalem, then spreads out to the regions surrounding Jerusalem. Then it goes beyond, even to the ends of the earth. The geography of this verse gives us a good outline of the book of Acts, as the kingdom of God spread out throughout the world.

- Jerusalem (chapter 1-7).
- Judea and Samaria (chapter 8-12).
- The end of the earth (chapters 13-28).

The book of Act ends with Paul "proclaiming the kingdom of God ... with all boldness and without hindrance" (Acts 28:31). And today, the kingdom of God continues to be built as we give witness to God's work in our lives. In fact, this is the theme of the book of Acts, "Be My Witnesses." This is what Jesus says in verse 8, "you will be my witnesses." And that's the great application of the book. Just like all of the apostles were witnesses to Jesus, just like Peter and John and Stephen and Paul and Barnabas and Silas and Timothy all gave witness to the risen Christ, so also are we called be witnesses to a lost and dying world.

But as we look at this morning, we are looking at it through the lens of waiting. Because, that's what the disciples were told to do. They were "Waiting for the Holy Spirit." And essentially in verse 8, they were waiting for the power of the Holy Spirit.

Acts 1:8

"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."

Certainly, this came about in the book of Acts. On the day of Pentecost, the disciples were filled with the power to speak other languages. Peter was filled with **power to preach** the word, so that thousands believed in Jesus! Peter continued his powerful, witness-bearing preaching. Stephen was filled with power in his preaching. Paul was filled with power in his preaching. Acts 4:33 is a good summary verse of this phenomenon:

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.

But I don't think that the power was only in the preaching. The power was also demonstrated in their **healing power**. When Peter and John healed the lame man, the religious leaders brought them in to stand before them to give account for what they did. They asked, "by what power or by what name did you do this?" (Acts 4:7). They recognized that they had a healing power! Where did it come from? It came from the Holy Spirit in their lives.

The power of the Spirit was also demonstrated in **prayer**. When Peter and John were released from prison, the disciples gathered together and lifted their voices together to God, praying together. And when they finished praying, "The place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness" (Acts 4:31).

The power of the Spirit was also demonstrated in their **community**. Their love and care for one another was seen and known by all. Listen to the testimony of the early community of believers:

Acts 4:32, 34-35

Now the full number of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things that belonged to him was his own, but they had everything in common.... There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold and laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need.

I believe that this came about because of the direct power of the Holy Spirit in their lives. The Holy Spirit continues his acts in our **sanctification**. Have you ever considered that the fruit of the Spirit that Paul puts forth in Galatians 5:22-23 is the fruit of the Holy Spirit working in our lives?

Galatians 5:22-23

The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.

In other words, it is the Holy Spirit that works in our lives to love others. It is the Holy Spirit that fuels our joy in good times and bad. It is the Holy Spirit that gives us peace in the midst of a world of turmoil. The Holy Spirit enable us to act and respond in kindness and goodness at all times, even when others are at odds with us. The Holy Spirit gives us ability to endure toward others in faithfulness. The Holy Spirit stirs us to gentleness toward everyone. Finally, the Holy Spirit works in our lives to life in self-control in all things. When it comes to our sanctification, we should wait upon the Lord for these things in our lives.

We may not quite be in the position of the apostles, who waited for the power of the Holy Spirit to come and spoke in tongues. We may not have the power to command lame people to walk (Acts 3:1-10) and dead people to rise from the dead (Acts 9:36-42). Yet, we are still in a position to "Wait for the Power" of the Holy Spirit in our lives to have boldness in our preaching, conviction in prayer, and victory over sin.

I love how Paul finishes talking about the fruit of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

Galatians 5:22-23

The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control, **against such things, there is no law.**

In other words, exhortations to holiness won't stir us to godliness. On the other hand, the Spirit will empower us to conquer sin far better than any law or rule or command. We are dependent upon the Holy Spirit to work in our lives to overcome sin. Similarly, it's not enough to learn how the technicality of preaching in a seminary to preach to preach with power. Savvy and tact in our conversations won't give us power in speaking with our neighbors about Jesus. Willpower alone will not give us endurance in prayer. In all these things, I encourage you to wait for the Holy Spirit to work in your life!

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on September 13, 2020 by Steve Brandon.

For more information see [www.rockvalleybiblechurch.org](http://www.rockvalleybiblechurch.org).

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[1] I am indebted to Ray Prichard for these three commendations (faith, zeal, and love) of the disciples in his sermon on this text entitled, "Is It Time Yet? Don't Forget the First Rule of the Spiritual Life." You can read it here: <https://www.keepbelieving.com/sermon/1998-03-08-Is-It-Time-Yet-Dont-Forget-the-First-Rule-of-the-Spiritual-Life/>.

[2] You can read the context of Calvin's comments online here: <https://www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/calcom36.viii.iii.html>.

[3] After preaching this message, I came across the following article, which posited much of the same reasons I put forth: "Why Do We Believe in Conspiracy Theories?" (<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-savvy-psychologist/202007/why-we-believe-in-conspiracy-theories>).

[4] You can read and listen to the sermon here: <http://sermons.rvbc.cc/sermons/2020-031>.