The work and witness of the church

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 16 July 2017

Preacher: Rev.Prof. F. Dalrymple-Hamilton

[0:00] at this theme, the Church in the Acts of the Apostles, what can we learn from it? And in week one we thought about how the Church takes its place or is formed in your life and mine. Week two we thought about the giving of the Spirit and how necessary it is to be anointed and filled with that Spirit even today. And so now we consider the third, which deals with the work and witness of the Church. And there are two readings, the first of which is the favorite from Acts chapter 1, reading from verse 1 to verse 11. Acts 1, 1 to 11.

Amen. In the first book of Theophilus I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach until the day when he was taken up after he had given commandment through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. To them he presented himself alive after his passion by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking of the kingdom of God. And while staying with them he charged them not to depart from Jerusalem but to wait for the promise of the Father which he said, you have heard from me. For John baptized with water but before many days you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit. 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 the times or seasons which the Father has fixed by his own authority. You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth. And when he had said this as they were looking on he was lifted up and a cloud took him out of their sight. And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold two men stood by them in white robes and said, men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus who was taken up for you into heaven will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven. And then right at the end of Luke's gospel chapter 24 reading from verse 44 to the end. Then Jesus said to them, these are my words which I wrote spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.
Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures and said to them, thus it is written that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached in his name to all nations beginning from Jerusalem.
You are my witnesses of these things and behold I send the promise of my father upon you, but stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high. Then he led them out so far as Bethany and lifting up his hands, he blessed them. While he blessed them, he parted from them and was carried up into heaven. And they returned to Jerusalem with great joy and were continually in the temple blessing God. Amen. May the Lord bless those readings, may it be to his praise and to his glory.
[4:25] This evening I want to look at really just one verse, two verses in chapter one, verses seven and eight. Jesus said to them, it is not for you to know the times or seasons which the father has fixed by his own authority, but you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you. And you shall be my witness in Jerusalem and in all Judea and in Samaria and to the end of the earth. Now, look, the writer is recording accurately what Jesus said to his disciples before the day of the ascension. And the gist of it is this, that these first disciples would receive power when the Holy Spirit would come upon them.

Now, what is this power that he's talking about? The Greek word here used, the dunamis, from which you get the English word dynamite. It means power, strength, act of power, or miracle. So, what is being spoken about here isn't so much miracle, but powerful service. Since it's only when the Holy Spirit has come upon them and us that we can become truthful witnesses to the gospel. Now that they were truthful witnesses, Peter makes the claim on the day of Pentecost. He says this, Acts 2, 32, this Jesus God has raised up and of that. And of that we are all witnesses. This is an

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host - 2026-09-15 02:51:48

outstanding claim to make. We read the gospel records and the only individuals who were present at the resurrection of Jesus were the angels.
So, how can he now say we are witnesses of this resurrection? And the answer is this, because he's had a personal revelation of Jesus Christ. Now, as far as these early disciples were concerned, of course, they saw Jesus resurrected in the flesh. We don't see that. But we nevertheless have a genuine experience of the grace of God, which tells us in the very depths of our being that this Jesus, God has raised up. And the proof of this is that on the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit was outpoured. Now, if you want proof of that, look at the condition of the disciples before the day of Pentecost.
John 20, verse 19, we read that on the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being shut where the disciples were for fear of the Jews.
They were shut away, locked away, not knowing what to do, not knowing how it was going to pan out, as it were, for fear of the Jews. But now, there's a tremendous difference. The Holy Spirit has come, and they've lost that fear, and instead of that fear, they've got a holy boldness to witness to the truth of the gospel. So, the Holy Spirit has been outpoured upon them in order to give them power to witness.
[8:26] What is it that they're being given power to do? In this great sermon, which is recorded for us in Acts 2, Peter makes reference to the outpouring of the Spirit, which was being mocked by certain people.

This is 15 and 16, he says, These men are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day. But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel.
So, in other words, this outpouring of the Spirit is a fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. And he goes on in the next two verses and quotes it.
In the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and daughters shall prophesy, your young men shall see visions, and your old men dream dreams.
And on my men servants and on my maidservants, in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy. That's quoted from Joel 2, verses 28 to 29.
[9:43] If you look at the activity of prophecy in the Old Testament, it's clear that it happened to a select number of individuals.

But this is not going to happen to a select number of individuals. Indeed, God is going to ensure that all who receive the Holy Spirit will prophesy.
Now, what does he mean by that? Well, the result of this prophetic activity is again stated in Acts 2, verse 21. It shall be that whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.
So, the idea behind this moving of the Spirit on that day and in today's day is that the message of the gospel will be preached or prophesied to all peoples.
This is what our Lord had in mind when he said to them. He charged them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father.
[10:58] Prior to his ascension, Jesus had given them the challenge at the end of Mark 16. Go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation.

He who believes and is baptized will be saved, but he who does not believe will be condemned.
Without the Holy Spirit, they couldn't have done this task.
But now that the Spirit of God has come and fallen upon them, they have become able witnesses, able preachers of the resurrection of Christ.
Secondly, there's a challenge. It is not for you to know the times or seasons which the Father has fixed by his own authority, that you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth.
There's a connection between the two statements. When the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you shall be my witnesses.
[12:19] Now, when this was being said, the disciples were at a stage they weren't actually witnesses in the sense that Jesus meant. So how could this come about?

The Feast of the Tabernacles, I referred to it last week in John 7, Jesus said this, He who believes in me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water.
Now this he said about the Spirit which those who believed in him were to receive, but as yet the Spirit was not yet given because Jesus was not yet glorified.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host - 2026-09-15 02:51:48

So here is a direct statement as to how this prophecy of the believers and apostles being turned into credible witnesses will take place.
It is that when the Holy Spirit comes, rivers of deliverance and salvation will flow through them.
[13:30] Now that in itself is a fulfillment of what Isaiah the prophet said in Isaiah 44, 3. I will pour water on the thirsty land and streams on the dry ground.

I will pour my Spirit on your descendants and my blessing on your offspring. So what Jesus is now saying is that this word of prophecy will be fulfilled fulfilled not only through but upon his disciples. Now it's not history. It's actual experience. Because this is a promise based on Isaiah 44 that is still fulfilled today.
And the way it's fulfilled is that there are rivers of living water flowing through your life and mine. More importantly these rivers are flowing through this church into the surrounding area. A river of blessing. A river of deliverance.
[14:53] A river of salvation. This is all down to the fact that the Holy Spirit is given now that Jesus has been glorified.

For them this happened on the day of Pentecost. For us it happens at the moment of our conversion. And so it is the case that Paul writes to the Corinthians and says by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body Jews or Greeks slaves or free and were all made to drink of the one Spirit.
Now what he's talking about there is how you come to function in the body of Christ. And the way you function in the body of Christ is a result of your new birth.
of your direct relationship with Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. If you look back on your life as to what you were prior to your conversion you were not a credible witness.
You did not have a river of blessing flowing through you. But now you do. this Jesus God has raised up and of that we are all witnesses.
[16:32] So there's a connection between these two statements. When the Holy Spirit has come upon you and you shall be my witnesses.

Now how did this come about? There's two things that happened in the life of that early church which I referred to in week one.
One is that they gave complete attention and obedience to the teaching which Jesus had given them.
So in Acts 1 and 1 we read I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach.
Now all this business of what Jesus began to do and teach is not limited to his teaching recorded in Matthew, Mark, Luke, John.
[17:36] That is during the days of his incarnation. incarnation. But his teaching continued right on after his resurrection until the day of his ascension.

And there is a fact here that God's teaching in Jesus continues today. It continues as we listen to the word of God being preached Sunday by Sunday.
And if we would seek apostolic prosperity in the literal sense of that word the first thing that we have to do is to pay attention to what Jesus today is teaching us and doing.
There's a second thing they did and that's prayer. Acts 1 and 14 all these with one accord devoted themselves to prayer together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus and with his brothers. They devoted themselves to prayer. That was their number one thing that they did. And if we would seek that apostolic prosperity, let us make sure that we devote ourselves to prayer.
[19:14] prayer. I want to turn thirdly to the locality.

You shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth. You shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem.
Jerusalem. So what is Jesus saying here? He's saying here there's a gospel message for a city. A gospel message for the rich. A gospel message for the poor. A gospel message for those that have not as well as for those that have.
A gospel message for those who will be deemed to be religious and have some kind of faith. A gospel message for those who have no faith at all.
[20:22] You shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem. Jerusalem. The meaning of the Hebrew name means possession of peace.

If you study the history of Jerusalem down the centuries, it's never been a possession of peace. But here in the first time, there's a possibility that this could happen.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host - 2026-09-15 02:51:48

A gospel message for a city. What does Jesus say of Jerusalem? O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, killing the prophets and stoning those who have sent you.
How often I would have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not. Now, Jesus had not much time for the Pharisees.
The term Pharisee is denoted from or derived from the Hebrew verb parash, which means to separate. And that's how they regarded themselves. They regarded themselves as those that were separate, those that were holy, those that didn't deal with things that were unclean.
[21:49] And the reason that Jesus didn't have much time for them is that they had a defective doctrine of sin. Now, the Bible clearly teaches something called original sin, i.e., we are sinners because Adam, in the first place, sinned, and we have inherited that nature.

But they didn't regard that like that. They took the view that they, and perhaps others, could be sinless.
God did not accept the gospel, there were exceptions.
One of the exceptions is found in John 3, 1. There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. this man came to Jesus by night and said to him, Rabbi, we know you're a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs except God is with him.
So he was somebody who that message had touched, and there were others. Because we read in John 12, 42, many even of the authorities believed in him, but for fear of the Pharisees, they did not confess it, lest they should be put out of the synagogue.
[23:26] Yet, a gospel message for them. What about the poor? When I was preparing this, I started to think about there must have been a poor quarter in Jerusalem, and there was.

It was on the southeast hill, the city which had formerly been founded by David, that part of the city, the old city of Jerusalem, David's borough, as somebody called it.
And it's referred to in Psalm 122.3, Jerusalem built as a city which is bound firmly to together. And what the psalmist is getting at is that the streets down there were very narrow.
House bordered house upon house without you being able to get past them. Jesus referred to it in his teaching when he said, it is easier for a rich man to go through the eye of a needle.
door. The eye of a needle was a gateway in that old part of Jerusalem through which a camel could not go.
[24:53] And if you read your Old Testament, you will find there's no mention of streets in Jerusalem. them. You have mention of housetops because on the housetops that's where the household gods and idols were erected.

When invading armies came, they fought on the housetops. Now, originally, this narrow street business had the idea of security.
But in the days of Jesus, it had degenerated into a slum. No rabbi, priest, Levite, Sadducee, would ever go down there.
Crime was widespread down there. That's where all the robbers and the brigands lived. But what does Jesus say? A gospel for a city.
A gospel for the poor. A gospel for the have-nots. A gospel for those that have been wronged by society.
[26:12] That's what Jesus says, beginning in Jerusalem. And that is much to teach about what we're doing today. But then we go from a city to a region.

You shall buy my witnesses in all Judea and Samaria. In the passage that we read from Luke, we read that repentance and forgiveness of sin should be preached in his name to all nations beginning from Jerusalem.
So Jerusalem is to be the springboard for an international mission. and there now lie the regions of Judea. In the days of Jesus, the region of Judea didn't extend very far from Arimathea in the north to the city of Hebron in the south.
And the Acts of the Apostles mentions that there were evangelical campaigns in the towns around about Jerusalem. Samaria, somewhat different.
it extended from Shechem in the south, right above the Sea of Galilee where the disciples came from, Capernaum and so on.
[27:31] And Samaria had been visited by Jesus. We read of it in John 4. The Samaritan woman said to him, how is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria, for Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host - 2026-09-15 02:51:48

The territory that was occupied by the Samaritans had once been occupied by the northern part of Israel. But because of idolatry which the prophets had warned against, they were carried away into Assyria in 722, never to return.
And the territory was then repopulated by the Assyrians who became in time the Samaritans. Jews had no dealings with them because they considered that they were not real Jews.
Now, are the Samaritans still with us? Probably literally not, but spiritually they are. What about those that are outside the area of respectability?
what about criminals? What about those in prison? They're the Samaritans of today.
[28:58] And if we are following the teachings of Jesus, we will make sure that we extend at very least the hand of friendship to them.

why should that be? This reason. And Paul talks about it in 2 Corinthians. God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.
not just to those that we want to give it to, but to scores of people who are outside, who are the needy, who are the Samaritans of today.
We have that word. We have that word that can bring them the deliverance, the salvation, the forgiveness.
peace. And what is it the apostle says in the next chapter? Now is the accepted time.
[30:23] Now is the day of salvation. Now is the day for the river to flow. Now is the time to extend the hand of friendship.

Now is the time to be devoted to prayer. And now is the time to allow God's blessing to come amongst us.
Amen. We sing in conclusion.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host - 2026-09-15 02:51:48