

Chapter 4

The Key That Hangs at the Front Door of Church History

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4

The Key That Hangs at the Front Door of Church History

The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, {2} Until the in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen: {3} To whom also he showed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty , and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God: {4} And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. {5} For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many hence.

Acts 1:1-5

We will begin this study at the "front door" of "The Acts of the Apostles." Christian history has been marked by some debate about the title of this book in the Bible. You probably know that the names of the books in the New Testament are not inspired. They were added many years after the completion of the New Testament. Some believe this particular book should be called "The Acts of Some of the Apostles," because only the ministries of Peter, James, John and Paul are referred to. Others think it should be called "The Acts of the Holy Spirit" to highlight the Main Worker and hide the lesser workers. But, everyone retains the word "Acts" in the title. Note that it is not the intentions, or the plans, or the hopes, or the ambitions, or the studies, or the meditations, or the sermons (ouch!), of the Apostles. It is the acts of the apostles. If the apostles had stopped with any of the possibilities mentioned above, the book would never have been written. It is my prayer for us, as we open the front door of the book, that we will get "caught in the Acts"!

We will begin with an extended look at the very first verse. "The former treatise have I made to do and teach." Let me impose an outline on the verse. First, there is a *previous document* mentioned here ("the former treatise"). Then, there is a *personal disciple* identified here (O Theophilus). Finally, there is a *plain declaration* of purpose for writing the previous document; and, by suggestion, a declaration of purpose for writing the present document.

Previous Document Mentioned

The Gospel According to Luke

Let's think of the previous document that is mentioned here. What is that "former treatise"?

The Phillips paraphrase calls it "my first book." The Amplified Bible translates it "the former account which I prepared." The previous document is, of course, the Gospel According to Luke. The Gospel According to Luke is one of the four Gospels in the New Testament. It is comprised of 24 chapters in your Bible, and is roughly constructed around some ten historical facts about the Person of Jesus Christ. The ten facts are: His Virgin Birth; His Sinless Life; His Baptism; His Temptation; His Transfiguration; His Garden of Gethsemane Struggle; His Crucifixion and Death; His Burial; His Resurrection; and His Ascension.

To see how remarkable this is, note the first of these historical facts about Jesus, His virgin birth. Remind yourself that Luke was a medical doctor. Medical doctors don't easily believe in virgin births, but the most extensive account of Jesus' virgin birth in the entire Bible is given by Dr. Luke. He tells us in the first chapter of his Gospel that he had researched the historical data about Jesus perfectly, and that he wrote on the basis of his findings. So, we have another great evidence here for the integrity and authenticity of the story of Jesus Christ.

Who Was Luke and How Did He Get Into the Story?

Who was Luke? And how did he get into the Gospel story? He was a Gentile man, his name indicates this. He was a medical doctor called "Luke, the beloved physician," in Colossians 4:14. Sometimes we have the idea that everyone in the primitive world was backward, largely illiterate, and certainly not as enlightened as we are today. But such is hardly the case. Luke has been often challenged as an historian and as a medical doctor, but "this anvil (Luke and his writings) has broken many a hammer (his critics)." In fact, at every point of challenge, the writings of Luke have stood the test and won the day, both historically and medically.

Entire volumes have been written about Luke, both as an historian and as a medical doctor. For example, Dr. Hobart published a worthy volume entitled The Medical Language of Luke, which concedes the brilliance and accuracy of Luke's technical use of medical terminology in both his books. As usual, when the sciences investigate objectively, they finally catch up with the Bible!

But, how did this medical doctor become involved in Gospel apologetics and the writing of two books which are in our New Testament? Let's combine history, revelation, and reason for a few moments:

Paul and Silas came to the region of Galatia on Paul's second missionary journey (Acts 16:6). While they were there, Paul apparently contracted a very, very serious eye disease (or an earlier disease deteriorated to an extremely incapacitating level). When he wrote back to the Galatians later, he said, "You see how large a letter I have written unto you with mine own hand" (Galatians 6:11, KJV). Goodspeed translates, "See what large letters I make." Knox says, "Here is some bold lettering for you." The New English Bible renders it, "You see these big letters?" So, you see Paul straining with pen over parchment, blocking out gigantic letters because

he cannot see well enough to write normally.

In Galatians 4:13-15, Paul said to them, "You know how through infirmity of the flesh I preached the Gospel unto you at the first. And my trial which was in my flesh ye despised not, nor rejected; but received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus ... for I bear you record, that if it had been possible, *ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me.*" Note that God did not heal Paul of this serious defect. He had something much bigger and better in mind than the healing of His Apostle! He was about to recruit (through Paul's illness) one of His leading spokesmen!

Paul and his team pressed on from SE to NW in the "corridor" of Asia Minor until they came to the city of Troas, a seacoast town on the northern arm of the Aegean Sea. Paul may have had great difficulty sleeping peacefully, for it was here that "a vision appeared to Paul in the night; There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us." Thus, the evangelization of Southern Europe was begun.

While Paul waited, puzzled, at Troas, he knew he needed to see a medical doctor. Some scholars believe that Paul and Luke had become acquainted earlier, because the leading medical school of that day was in Paul's hometown of Tarsus. Others suggest that Paul simply asked about a good doctor and was referred to Luke (who was a brilliant doctor). However it happened, I am convinced that Paul saw Luke to get treatment for his ailment.

While there, Paul (as usual) shared Christ and His Gospel with this brilliant Gentile doctor and "God turned on the lights" in his inner spirit." Dr. Luke became a Christian. He was radically convicted of his sins and converted to the Savior. Of course, Paul immediately began discipling him. But, the time was far too short.

Paul and Silas were "under orders." They were on a mission, and the itinerary and schedule were determined by the Holy Spirit. Paul gently said to Luke, "My brother, we must go now." Luke probably replied, "Go? GO? You just arrived, and you have led me to the greatest thing I have ever known or experienced, eternal life in Jesus Christ, and now you must go? This can't be!"

But when Paul insisted, Luke pondered the situation for some while and then he said, "Paul, how would you like to have another traveling companion on your missionary team?" Paul's spiritual enthusiasm mounted, but he realistically replied, "What a glorious possibility! But what about your medical practice?" Luke replied calmly, "Oh, that wouldn't be any great obstacle. The practice is in great shape. I could dispose of it easily." Now Paul realized how serious Luke seemed to be. "Do you mean that you would sell your practice and come along with us on the remainder of this journey? I can hardly believe it." "But Paul," said Luke, "you need a medical doctor regularly right now, and I need you at least as much as you need me. Yes, I'll do it!"

Do you think I am manufacturing these ideas? Well, I'm not. Up to verse 10 of Acts 16, the historian's (Luke's) narrative says, "They," as he writes *about* the missionary team; but at Luke 16:10 (at Troas, vs. 8), the narrative says, "Immediately we endeavored to go into Macedonia;" and thus the "we sections" of Acts begin. Luke, the writer of the Book of Acts, joined Paul's team at Troas!

Tremendous Devotional Truths

Let me interrupt our story to see some tremendous devotional truths. You see, disciple-making is never a one-way street. While Paul is discipling Titus, Titus is comforting Paul (II Cor. 7:5-6). While Paul is imparting his veteran wisdom to young Timothy, young Timothy is supplying his youthful idealism to the aging Paul. While Paul is discipling Dr. Luke in Christ's life, Dr. Luke is imparting his medical knowledge and expertise to Paul the theologian.

1. The Analogy of the Church as "The Body of Christ"

Did you ever wonder where Paul humanly got his analogy of the Church as the very "Body of Christ"? From a human standpoint, is there really any question? Luke would naturally talk about the marvelous workings of the miraculous human body. He would "undress" and explain the incredible human physical machine as he treated Paul's infirmity—as in other settings as well.

Perhaps he said one day, "Paul, how much *intelligence* do you have in your body *below your chin*? How much *wisdom* do you have in your body below the *head*?" Paul would reply, "I hadn't thought much about it previously, but the obvious answer is 'none.'" "That's correct," said Luke, "but then how do the members of your body below the chin know what to do if they have no wisdom or intelligence in themselves? The answer is another miracle in the body.

You see, you have a system of nerves in your body which connect the members with the brain. The nerves which go out from the brain to the body members are called 'afferent nerves.' The brain flashes orders to the members, and if the body is healthy, the members obey instantly and flash an unconscious message back to the brain, 'Mission accomplished.' See my right hand extended here just now? The palm is up and the fingers spread. And it will maintain that posture until I release it to do otherwise. Why? Because the neurological connection between mind and member is healthy and functional."

All the time Luke is speaking, the Holy Spirit is mightily moving in the mind of Paul. Suddenly he says, "That is precisely the way the church operates, also. Just as your body is the vehicle of your self-expression, the Church is Christ's Body, and is the vehicle of His self-expression." And the Holy Spirit continues to expound the doctrine of the Church as Christ's Body to Paul, the theologian, through Luke, the first medical missionary!

2. Luke Wrote Two Incredible Documents

Some long time later, this Gentile medical doctor, Luke, disciplined personally and extensively by the great Christian statesman, Paul, wrote two incredible documents which are found today in our New Testament. How did this happen? And what does it reveal to us about the disciple-making mandate of the Great Commission?

Get ready for this massive truth: Though Luke wrote only two documents of the 27 in the New Testament, *those 2 documents make up roughly one-fourth of the volume of the New Testament*. What were they written for? Did Dr. Luke have an idea that these two documents would ever appear in a Bible? In the New Testament? Surely not, for he didn't even know a "New Testament" was to be published. Then why did he write these two incredible documents?

<Illustration: Because he was 'the awfulest' looking baby in...>

Personal Disciple Identified

One-Fourth of the New Testament Was Written to One Person!

Let's consider, secondly, the Personal Disciple to whom both these documents were written. The disciple's name is Theophilus. This name sounds peculiar to us. In fact, names are often peculiar to us. One little boy was asked his name by his first grade teacher. He replied, "6-7/8." Astonished, she asked, "Where did you ever get a name like that?" He answered, "My Daddy just drew it out of a hat." Another teacher asked a lively little boy his name; and he answered, "My name is Johnny, Don't An Indian chief ode went into the nearby township and said to the judge, "Me wantum change name." Judge: "What is your present name?" "Chief Screeching Train Whistle." "And what do you want to change it to?" "Toots."

This man's name, Theophilus, is a compound Greek word. The first part, "Theos," means "God." The last part, "philos," means "love." So, his name either means "lover of God," or "beloved of God." Because of this meaning, some interpreters have said that this is likely not an individual person at all, but rather a category of people. But this simply is not so. The recipient is carefully described as a person in the first chapter of the Gospel of Luke.

Remember that the Gospel according to Luke and the Book of Acts both had the same *writer*, the same *recipient*, and essentially the same *subject*.

Now our second massive truth: *One-fourth of the New Testament was written to one person!* Here is the genius of the Gospel of Christ in boldfaced print! The Gospel of Christ maximizes the value, the purpose, the meaning, the usefulness, and the responsibility of each individual. If you want to see how far we have strayed from the ideal and impetus of the Biblical Gospel, ask yourself this question: Have you heard of anyone recently who has written a document of any length and sent it to just one person to reach that person for Christ?

Why Did Luke Write These Two Documents to One Person?

Back to our earlier question: Why did Luke write these two documents to this one person? Do we have any way of knowing? Yes, we do.

What was the condition of Theophilus when Luke wrote his Gospel to him? He was quite apparently a lost man, an unsaved sinner. Luke addresses him as "most excellent Theophilus" (Luke 1:3). This is a Greek nobleman's title, so Theophilus was a Greek nobleman, a man of rank and position. *No Christian is ever addressed by such a title in the New Testament*, so this man was a lost man. He had apparently heard the Gospel (Luke 1:4), but was unconvinced. Remember that "the Greeks seek after wisdom" (I Cor. 1:22), and are not easily convinced of ideas which may sound so humanly unreasonable as the Gospel (on first consideration). So, Theophilus balked at the truth when it was presented to him. But Luke was also a Gentile, and Luke, had also, had intellectual problems with the Gospel. But Luke also had become perfectly convinced of the authenticity and integrity of Jesus Christ and His Gospel, so he undertook to write an orderly presentation of the facts of Jesus and the Gospel.

What was Luke's purpose of writing? *To win this one man to faith in Christ!* Perfect research, laborious work, and tedious writing—*all for one man*—that he might "know the certainty of those things, wherein he had been instructed." Did the Gospel of Luke accomplish this purpose? Yes, it did! How do we know? Because in the very first line of the second document, Luke drops the title of rank and simply calls him "Theophilus." So, the great task of evangelism was accomplished in this case in this peculiar way. One Greek medical doctor, a brilliant professional man, researched the Gospel perfectly and wrote an apologetic Gospel to a serious Greek nobleman to convince him about Jesus and to bring him to Christ and salvation. And it happened.

Then why did Luke write this *second document*, the Book of Acts (another 28 chapters in your New Testament)? If the man was won to Christ by the first document, then why is a second one necessary? Friends, the answer to this question discloses the tragic sinful default of the modern church. The purpose of Christ has but *barely begun* when a person is saved! It is His intention to implicate each of His followers, all born-again believers, in *world-visionary, world-impacting disciple-making*. It is His design that each believer be a *reproducer of reproducers* with the "uttermost parts of the earth" continually in mind. It is His intention that we follow His pattern —*to see the masses through the man, and build the man to impact the masses*. So, the Book of the Acts was written by Dr. Luke to introduce Theophilus, in concept and conduct, to the world-moving strategy of Jesus.

Did it work? Did Theophilus become a visionary disciple maker, a reproducer of reproducers? We simply don't know, and that is all the better, because it means that every believer must be given maximum chance *through personal enlistment, personal equipment, and personal deployment*—whether he "produces" or not. So, Luke wrote a second lengthy document (28 chapters in your Bible) to indoctrinate the mind and infect the heart and invite the participation of *one man* in the greatest work in the world.

If the Holy Spirit of God models this qualitative involvement in the lives of individuals in the New Testament, should I not continually have at least a small group of individuals into whom I am pouring my life and my vision? Should I not live with a burning Great Commission consciousness and seek to share it qualitatively with groups of "faithful men who will be able to teach others, also"?

Personal Testimony

I will risk a personal testimony at this point. With a vision that has been erratically enlarging for about a quarter of a century, I have spent large amounts of time with many individuals, with many small groups, with groups of pastors and missionaries, and with many entire churches, seeking to impact this standard. I have seen magnificent successes so that people whom I have influenced are now in far-flung parts of the world—winning and training disciples; and I have sadly seen numerous failures (and have failed myself in ways which surely have grieved the Holy Spirit). I could fill many pages with easily verifiable accounts of disciples who have gone out to reproduce this standard in their fields of service. Quite a number of them are pastors (and I have had the great privilege of teaching and encouraging many more pastors who are established in the ministry), some are missionaries to foreign countries, and many are "lay people" with a living vision to make disciples where they live, work, and worship. I am grateful to God for this matchless privilege, and am more committed today than ever before to "turn men into disciples."

Plain Declaration of Purpose for Writing

All That Jesus Began Both To Do and To Teach

Now we consider the final division of our outline of Acts 1:1, the *Plain Declaration of Purpose* for writing the first document, the Gospel of Luke. Luke says that it concerned "all that Jesus began both to do and to teach." Note the three verbs, "began," "do," and "teach." The last two verbs form a descriptive overlook of Jesus' entire ministry. Jesus is the only person in history who had perfect balance between the Divinely-desired doing and teaching. In every other ministry, whether that of a church or that of an individual Christian, there has been some measure of imbalance between the two.

Think of the churches you are acquainted with. Some are heavily over-balanced in favor of *doing*. Their modus operandi seems to be "get saved and get busy." They are heavy on activity but light on *academics*. They are forward on *performance* but backward on *principle and precept*. One man expressed to me a caricature of his own church by saying, "Brother Herb, you'll find that our church is about 5 miles wide and about a quarter of an inch deep." He meant that rushing activity is constantly enlarging the numbers in the church, but that spiritual depth has not kept pace with the numerical growth.

On the other hand, there are churches that are heavily overbalanced in favor of *teaching*. They are constantly being fed on the Word of God, but there is no suitable balance in aggressive active ministries. The members of these churches tend to develop "hardening of the hearteries," a kind of sluggish smugness that may tilt over into articulate self-righteousness. These churches have some salving growth, but the Great Commission is certainly not the overwhelming agenda in them. They will argue the identification of the third toe of the left foot of Daniel's image, but give no real attention to the billions of people who remain unevangelized in our world.

Jesus had perfect balance between doing and teaching in His ministry, and each of us should prayerfully seek for this balance in our lives and in the churches which we attend and in which we serve.

This brings us to the "big" verb in Acts 1:1, the word "began." The Gospel of Luke concerned "all that Jesus *began* both to do and to teach." Those historical events in the life of Jesus which are mentioned earlier are only a beginning! Presumably then, if the "former treatise" concerned what Jesus "*began*" to do and teach," then the present document, the Book of Acts, will be about all that Jesus is *continuing* to do and teach. But this creates an immediate problem. Midway in the first chapter of the Acts, the "doer and teacher," Jesus, disappears from sight! Then how did He *continue* to do and teach through 27-1/2 more chapters if He is gone from their sight?

What is Jesus Doing Now?

Let's enlarge the question. What is Jesus doing now? He is continuing to do and teach to the level of His intent and purpose in our world today just as He did when He was here in the days of His flesh. But how is He doing it if He is not visible? He is doing it in the same manner He followed when He was here in His own physical body. What was His method then? We call it "incarnation," which means that "the Word (the "logos," the logic of God) became flesh and dwelt among us." So, God came down to our level in the human Person of His Son, Jesus, and did and taught among men. What is His method today? Exactly the same, with these modifications:

1. He occupies the bodies of *all born-again believers for the purpose of His extending, His doing and teaching through them;*
2. *Unlike Jesus, each of them (us) is a sinner;*

3. *There is a qualitative difference in that none of us is Jesus.* He is uniquely the only-one-of-a-kind Son of God.

With these modifications, each believer is to be an extension of the incarnation of Jesus Christ! The instant a sinner is saved, Jesus Christ enters that person's inner life by the Presence and power of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit has been described as "Jesus' Other Self," and may be loosely understood as "Jesus without a body." So, each believer is a living container of the Personal Presence of the Son of God, and a primary purpose for this is that the believer may be an ongoing extension of the doings and teachings of Jesus.

What Kind of Persons Did Jesus Use

This raises another question, a very vital one. What kind of persons did Jesus use in the Book of Acts to continue His doings and teachings after His Ascension? Interestingly enough, the opening verses of the Book of Acts provide a perfect answer to this question. These verses provide an excellent profile of Christ's earliest followers. Lets reconstruct a portrait of His first followers:

1. Common Men

First, they were *common* men. We have only to be reminded of all we know of them from the Gospels to know this. They were a cross-section of society, the most common of men. All except one were from Galilee, and that one exception was "the rotten egg in the dozen," Judas Iscariot. Galilee was a despised tiny province of the Roman Empire, and eleven of Jesus' first men originated there. They were "a bunch off zeroes," and out of them He made His heroes. This should make each of us very comfortable, because Jesus Christ does not require anything of us for the accomplishment of His purpose through us except the yieldedness of our common clay.

2. Chosen Men

Then, these were *chosen* men. Look at verse 2 in Acts 1. His first men are called "the Apostles whom He had chosen." What were they chosen for? The word "*apostles*" gives us a great insight. The word "apostle" means "one sent on a mission." He chose them so that He could send them wherever He wanted them to go in order that they might be, say, and do anything He wanted! And this is why He chose you and me! Note the word, "chosen," at the end of verse two. Every Greek verb "travels" in one of three voices: the active voice, the passive voice, and the middle voice. In the active voice, *the subject acts through the verb*, such as "I run," "I stand,"—"you walk," "you talk." In each case, the subject acts through the verb. The passive voice means *the subject is acted upon through the verb*, such as "I was run over"! The middle voice combines the other two voices so that the *subject acts through the verb*, but in such a way that *the result of the action comes back to the subject himself*. The action is like that of a boomerang when it is thrown. I heard of a man who bought himself a new boomerang—but he killed

himself trying to throw the old one away!

This verb, 'chosen,' is a middle voice verb and presents to us a stupendous truth. It means that when God chose you, He chose you, not merely for your own advantage— your health, wealth, and happiness, but for *His own sake!* You are saved *for God's sake!* You are a Christian *for Christ's sake!* You are alive for His sake! So, you are not a Christian to get your needs met, or to *gratify* and satisfy yourself, but to be employed and deployed by Jesus Christ as a continuation point of His ongoing doing and teaching.

Illustration: When I was a boy, my father taught me a great love for the game of baseball. My awareness of the game came from my father, and my competitiveness came from my mother. The neighborhood boys often played baseball on Saturdays in the vacant lot next to our house. I can remember my anger at the team captains when week after week I didn't get chosen and, thus, didn't get to play. But, I also remember the first day I got to play. There were not enough players and someone had to choose me! It didn't take me long to figure out that the captain who chose me didn't choose me just because he *liked* me. *He chose me primarily because he felt that his choice of me would help his side win the game.*

Do you see the application of the illustration? Jesus Christ does love me, and there is nothing I can do to cause Him to stop! He doesn't love me because I am loveable, lovely, or loving. He loves me because He is love—period. But, He did not choose me merely because He loved me, as massive as His love is. He chose me (also) because He felt that His choice of me would help His side win the game! Is my participation in His global mission such that it would "justify" His choice of me? Or am I "at ease in Zion," a total misrepresentation of Christ's global purpose?

Every Christian reading these words should pause right now and say to himself, "I have been picked out by the King of all Kings! I have been hand-selected by the Lord of glory! Am I fulfilling the purpose for which He selected me?"

3. Convinced Men

Then, they were *convinced* men. Acts 1:3 says that "Jesus showed Himself alive to them after His death by many infallible proofs (unanswerable evidences), being seen by them forty days." The word "seen" translates the Greek word from which we get our medical terms "ophthalmia," "ophthalmology," and "ophthalmologist." It is the technical root word for the human eyeball. So, it could be accurately translated, "Jesus was *eyeballed* by them forty days"—after His death and resurrection! Later, one of them wrote, "We have seen with our eyes the Word of Life (1 John 1:1).

Also, there is another feature of this brief phrase from Acts 1:3 that needs careful

attention. There is a tiny preposition in the text that is very difficult to translate in English. It is the Greek word "dia," and is translated "between." Jesus was "seen by them *between* forty days." What a peculiar expression! What does it mean? It means that His visibility to the apostles was not continuous for the entire 40 days. He appeared and dis-appeared at His own will for those forty days. He materialized to sight and de-materialized to invisibility as He desired during those forty days.

Suppose that I and a friend were engaged, even engrossed, in conversation. Our eyes are fixed on one another. But, *SUDDENLY* another human body materializes between us! Friends, that would scare whatever is in you right out! No wonder Jesus typically began His communication with "Fear not," or "Peace be unto you." Now, both my friend and I become totally oblivious to our previous conversation and completely occupied with the "intruding" person. And suppose, while we are transfixed by him, he just as suddenly dis-appears, de-materializing out of our sight? This is what happened over and over in the 40-day period after His resurrection. Jesus hop-scotched back and forth from visibility to invisibility again and again during those 40 days.

What a peculiar thing! Why did He do that? *He wanted His disciples to know without doubt or question that He was no less present with them when they couldn't see Him than He was when they could!* And the same is true today. Jesus Christ is so much present in the Person of the Holy Spirit that He could materialize into bodily form—if He wished to. But His stated purpose is that *each believer* give Him "bodily form" by letting his own body be the "temple," the "Holy of Holies," the shrine through which Jesus exhibits Himself.

Don't you think you would be completely convinced if you saw Jesus the way they did? Be very careful. Jesus Himself indicated that, because of the indwelling Presence of the Holy Spirit, the advantage belongs to *us* and not to the earliest believers (John 16:7).

How convinced are *you* about the reality of Jesus? About the validity of His claims? About the integrity of His Person? About His ability and His authority? About His universal missionary purpose? No great movement of God has ever occurred through unconvinced men. May God open our eyes freshly and fully to the Person and purpose of Jesus.

4. Commanded Men

Then, they were *commanded* men. Acts 1:2 says that "Jesus through the Holy Spirit gave commandments" unto them. Verse 4 adds, "Being assembled together with them, Jesus commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith He, ye have heard of me." The "promise of the Father" is a reference to the Day of Pentecost, the day of the full release of the Holy Spirit's redemptive power, a day which was then to follow very shortly.

Can you imagine what impulsive, self-aggressive Simon Peter might have thought at this point? "Jesus, why don't you make up your mind? You have spent three years preparing us to go, and now You tell us to wait!" But no such protest arose. By this time, the Apostles had learned not to argue with Jesus. After all, One Who is Absolute Lord of the universe is always right! Today's church should be so wise! It should spend a great deal of its time in prayer and Bible investigation to be convinced that it is operating exclusively by the Mind of Christ, then it should spend the rest of its time obeying Him.

- The ancient Arabs created a special breed of horses, sometimes called "Arabian steeds." At first, they were bred for exclusive use in the King's stables. As part of the equestrian training, a trainer carried a whistle on a rawhide rope around his neck. For months the horse was trained to stop all activity at the sound of the trainer's whistle and make a "bee line" for the trainer. Rigid obedience was required. The tiniest refusal was total disobedience. Then, for five days food was withheld from the horse, and for three days the horse was refused water to drink. It was kept in a corral in these final days of training. On the last day, a trough of food and water was placed visibly about 100 yards from the corral. The horse would stampede in hunger and thirst on the trough side of the corral. Then suddenly, the corral door would be sprung open, and the surprised horse would gallop toward the trough. But, when the horse was yet about 25 yards from the trough, the trainer standing off to the side would blow the whistle! Everything about the horse would tighten in confusion. A choice had to quickly be made. The choice? Trough or trainer? Which would it be? If the horse continued to the trough and gratified its hunger and thirst, thus disobeying the command of the trainer, it would either be recycled through the process or dismissed altogether. If the horse "voted" against its own drives and instincts and in favor of the trainer and the training process, thus going immediately to the trainer, it was then dismissed to go to the trough for food and water.

Friends, everyday such a choice confronts us. Trough of self gratification, or the Trainer's commands? These were commanded men, and Jesus expects nothing less from us.

5. Controlled Men

Finally, these were *controlled* men. In verse 4, Jesus spoke to them of "the promise of the Father," a promise concerning the coming of the Holy Spirit to empower His church on the Day of Pentecost.

In verse 5, He said, "Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days hence." The King James Bible used the old word "Ghost" instead of "Spirit," and

in one great sense, I like that translation. A ghost (in our thinking) is the part of the person that remains behind when the body has departed. The Holy Spirit may be described as Jesus present without a body! So, the Holy Spirit will do the same things, pursue the same purposes, and build the same kind of people Jesus built when He was here in the flesh. If Jesus produced wild and fanatical men, so will the Holy Spirit. But Jesus didn't produce that kind of people. He produced men who were vocationally prepared, skilled, and involved. They were men who could re-present Him in any situation. They were men who skillfully handled the intricacies of the Word of God and applied it to every situation.

And now, since the Day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit is our great "Stay-Within Friend," always present and willing to control and empower us for the Master's Mission. Are you filled with the great and gentle Holy Spirit, inwardly controlled by Him so that He can determine your character, speech, conduct, schedule, and itinerary?

