

Transitions

Acts 1:4-8

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Introduction:

- Transitions:
 - High School to college
 - Single to married
 - Married to parents
 - Parents to empty nest
 - Empty nest to retirement
 - Widowhood, divorce or being orphaned are painful transitions no one wishes for

 - We change tires, brakes and oil
 - We transition presidents
 - We’ve transitioned from Delta to Omicron
- Ministry transitions: the church changes over time
 - Pastors change – Sen Wong, Lee Fong and Chun Kung pastored here – great mentors
 - Locations change – San Mateo, Burlingame, San Bruno, Belmont
 - Our church had to transition to online, as did every church in the modern world
- Our church is now transitioning – entering a new building
 - Parking is new
 - The bathrooms are no longer pink cement
 - We’re figuring out how to seat people the best way
 - We’re transitioning from online to hybrid
 - We know and respect our congregants joining us online, but you from home and here in the congregation know we have to start somewhere to be in person again – fulfilling everyone’s expectations in this transition is difficult, but we have to forge forward
- Change is good, though difficult
 - Telegraph to texting
 - Analog to digital
 - Gas to electric cars
 - Video tapes to streaming videos
 - Coins to Venmo
- Our spiritual life is about change – changing from a selfish sinner to being more like Christ
- Sanctification is change!

- Howard Hendricks: "The more you change, the more you become an instrument of change in the lives of others. If you want to become a change agent, you also must change." (*Teaching To Change Lives*)

Proposition: We will examine 3 transitions noted from the Old Testament focus on Israel to the New Testament focus on the Church and learn from that how we can adapt to our transitions.

1. The Transition Of Power From The Present Christ To The Universal Spirit (4-5)

⁴And 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; ⁵for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

- **V. 4 – Jesus transitioned the disciples from going out 2x2 (Mt 10) to staying in Jerusalem to wait for the Holy Spirit**
- The power of the Holy Spirit would be new to the disciples.
- In the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit came upon specific individuals for a specific time for a specific purpose.
- Between the Old and New Testament, the ministry of the Holy Spirit was silent. It was not non-existent or absent, we just don't have much record during those 400 years.
- **v. 5 – John the Baptist's prophecy about baptism are coming true**

Matthew 3:11b "He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire." (cf. Mk 1:8; Lk 3:16)

John 1:33 "I did not know Him, but He who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'Upon whom you see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, this is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit'"

- Grant Cole: "The Baptist sees some analogy between his rite and the work of the coming one. His medium is water but the coming one's medium will be the Holy Spirit." (*He Who Gives Life*, p. 182)

- **Not all baptisms are the same.**
 - John baptized unto repentance in anticipation of the Lamb of God Who will take away the sin of the world
 - John baptized Jesus to identify Him as the Messiah
 - But the Holy Spirit will baptize us by placing us in the Church

1 Corinthians 12:13 For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.

- *Baptizo* = to dip, submerge, immerse
- "It means to introduce or place a person or a thing into a new environment, or into union with something else so as to alter its condition or its relationship to its previous environment or condition." (Kenneth Wuest)

- John Walvoord: "Using the figure of the human body as representing the church, individual believers are revealed to be joined to this living church by the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Baptism is, then, the work of the Holy Spirit forming and adding to the living unity of the church." (*The Holy Spirit*, p. 140)
- In the Upper Room Discourse (John 14-16), Jesus told the Disciples that He's going away
 - The disciples didn't understand
 - So Jesus explained He's going to heaven to prepare a place for us
 - He will come for us and bring us to Him
 - Christ is the way, truth and life – the only access to the Father (John 14:6)
- **Then with the disciples afraid of being left alone, Jesus comforts them with the coming of the Holy Spirit**

John 14:26 But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.

John 15:26 But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me.

- The HS will be a witness for Christ by making us His witnesses
- He will teach us about Christ and we will tell others about it

John 16:5-7 ⁵But now I am going to him who sent me, and none of you asks me, 'Where are you going?' ⁶But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart. ⁷Nevertheless, 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.

- Why is it to our advantage that Christ goes away and He sends the Holy Spirit?
- If Christ was here without the Holy Spirit in us, we'd have to wait in a long line to gain access to Christ
- But through the Holy Spirit indwelling all of us, we all have access to God and His power and our Savior through the Holy Spirit
- Ie/ You thought the line waiting for a Covid test is long – the line waiting to have access to Jesus will be absolutely long!! The Holy Spirit is the "fast pass" to Christ!
- The Holy Spirit would provide ...
 - comprehension of their **message** (about Christ and the Gospel)
 - prompting for their **memory** (bring to remembrance)
 - leading on their **mission** (direct where they will go)
 - conviction in their **messaging** (convict of sin, righteousness and judgment)
 - transformation in their **motivation** (spiritual sanctification)
 - gifting in their **ministry** (divine enablement to serve others and glorify God)
- How is the Holy Spirit evident in your ministry? Or evangelism?

- Do you feel powerless and ineffective? That's usually because we focus on our inability and not on the ability given by the Holy Spirit – who guides us into truth, brings to remembrance what Jesus said and helps us comprehend and communicate Christ
- Leo Tolstoy: "Everyone thinks of changing the world, but no one thinks of changing himself."
- The Holy Spirit is the One who divinely changes us!

2. The Transition Of Focus From The Kingdom To The Church (6-7; cf. Rom 11)

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

- “... Acts is the history of the transition from kingdom expectations to the new work of building the church... (1) The kingdom is never made a synonym for the church, (2) no details are given as to what was said about the kingdom and (3) the kingdom is never seen as some mystical or spiritual aspect of the church age.” (*A Bible Handbook To The Acts Of The Apostles*, Mal Couch, General Editor, Kregel, 1999, p. 86)
- Jesus came to be King
- But He was rejected by Israel

Romans 11:2 God has not rejected his people whom he foreknew.

Romans 11:7-8 ʹWhat then? **Israel failed** to obtain what it was seeking. The elect obtained it, but the rest were **hardened**, ʹas it is written, “God gave them a spirit of **stupor**, eyes that would not see and ears that would not hear, down **to this very day.**”

- God hardened Israel's heart because of their rejection

Romans 11:11 ʹSo I ask, did they stumble in order that they might fall? By no means! Rather, **through their trespass salvation has come to the Gentiles**, so as to make **Israel jealous.**

- God has shifted His focus onto the Gentiles since Israel rejected Jesus
- God wants to make them jealous by showing His love to the Gentiles

Romans 11:25b-26a a partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the **fullness of the Gentiles** has come in. ʹAnd in this way all **Israel will be saved**, as it is written,

- The focus is on the Gentiles
- Once the elect of the Gentiles, “the fullness of the Gentiles,” then the focus will return on Israel and God will save them
- Ie/ Tony Evans used an illustration of Christ being the **Quarterback** trying to hand the ball off to Israel the **Running Back**. But Israel didn't want the ball and ran the other way. So Jesus looked to His second option, the Church at **Wide Receiver** (or world wide receiver) and gave them salvation.

- This does not mean that Jews aren't saved. They are. The Church has both Jews and Gentiles. There are many Messianic ministries reaching the Jewish population – Friends of Israel, Jews for Jesus, Slavic Gospel Association has a ministry in Israel. But God still has a plan for the nation.
 - He promised land and a great nation to Abraham – God will keep that promise (Gen 13, 15)
 - He promised an eternal King on the throne of David – God will fulfill that too

2 Samuel 7:16 And your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you. Your throne shall be established forever.”

1 Chronicles 17:14 And I will establish him in My house and in My kingdom forever; and his throne shall be established forever.

- Acts began with Jesus teaching about the Kingdom of God (Acts 1:3)

Acts 1:3 He presented himself alive to them after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God.

- When the disciples asked when Jesus would restore the kingdom, Jesus doesn't deny that a kingdom will come nor that the Church is the new kingdom, but He says that the timing of it will be unknown to the disciples for now

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.

- Gregg Allison & Andreas Kostenberger: “The disciples take this as their cue to inquire about the restoration of the politically, nationally, and ethnically constrained kingdom to Israel (v. 6).” (*The Holy Spirit*, p. 83)
- Jesus responds it's not time for you to know. The Heavenly Father has set this in His sovereign plan.
- The disciples were not sure what type of power they would get from the Holy Spirit. Would it be the power they would have to overturn the Roman Empire? Would life turn around for them in a good sense?
- The **disciples were frustrated** with Israel being dominated by Rome, a malevolent dictator Emperor and oppressed by taxation and military threat.
- They wanted to know when they would be on top of the political and military spectrum.
- F. F. Bruce: “Instead of political power which had formerly been the object of their ambitions, a power far greater and nobler would be theirs. When the Holy Spirit came upon them, Jesus assured them, they would be clothed with heavenly power – that power by which, in the event, their mighty works were accomplished and their preaching made effective.” (*The Book Of The Acts*, The New International Commentary On The New Testament, Eerdmans, reprinted 1980, p. 38)

- When will it happen?
 - Deuteronomy 29:29 tells us that the secret things belong to the Lord
- Peter taught that Christ would eventually sit on the throne

Acts 2:30 Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne,

- What is the Kingdom?
 - Literal Kingdom where Jesus will reign
 - This fulfills the Davidic Covenant
 - Or The Church – Roman Catholic and Reformed Amillennial View
 - Augustine believed the kingdom was the church – the Roman Catholic Church, whose Pope possessed the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven (Mt 16)
 - Amillennialism, the belief that there is no literal reign of Christ for a Millennium (1,000 years) which developed around the 3rd & 4th centuries
 - When the Reformers broke from the Roman Catholic Church, they developed the doctrine of salvation, but not eschatology – many retained several teachings of the RCC – including Amillennialism
- The Church is distinct from Israel in the Scriptures

1 Corinthians 10:32 Give no offense, either to the **Jews** or to the Greeks or to the **church** of God,

Ephesians 2:11-13 ¹¹Therefore remember that you, once **Gentiles** in the flesh—who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands— ¹²that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of **Israel** and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. ¹³But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

- The Terms “Church” And “Israel” Are Never Used Interchangeably In The Scriptures
 - 73x “Israel” is used in the NT always meaning ethnic Israel
- **We’re not to build a kingdom, we’re to build Christ’s Church**
 - Many think that politics needs to be our priority – though important, it is not greater than the Gospel
 - If we want to change our community and nation, it won’t come by imposing biblical principles on unsaved rebels, but to transform those rebelling from God into born-again children of God
- The disciples had a new focus – it wasn’t the kingdom. It’s now the Church!
- **Are we building our personal kingdom or are we focusing on the church?**
 - We are getting to comfortable in our isolation and can easily lose sight of being in touch with people to minister to them

- Unless you are effectively using Zoom and online media to minister people to people sacrificially, we can't continue to hide behind our screens and not serve people or share the Gospel

3. The Transition Of Ministry From Israel To The World (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.”

- In the Old Testament, the focus was Israel-centric. Now the world is the focus.
- In the OT, Gentiles were brought into the nation of Israel – Ruth, Rahab and some Ninevites chose the God of Israel
- The Jews were chosen because they would be the nation from where Jesus the Messiah would come
- Now that Jesus has come to Israel, but rejected by Israel, now the focus was on the Gentiles
- **The Holy Spirit Came To Empower The Church For Evangelism**
- The weakness of evangelism in today's church is due to an ignorance and apathy of the Holy Spirit's empowerment for evangelism
- The book of Acts demonstrates the power of the Spirit in the growth of the Church
- **Witness = Gr. *martyria***
 - Being a witness for Christ is basically telling people what Christ did in your life in saving you
 - It's scary because we think we have to be trained to answer hard questions, memorize a lot of Scriptures or have a driven personality
 - Some of us are afraid to be a witness because we don't want to catch Covid – there are significant risks in all ministry
 - Everyone here today is taking a risk – the same risk when we go grocery shopping, or go to the doctor's office
- **“Power” = Gr. *dunamis***
 - Many of us think we need to be experienced, smart, trained, prepared and dazzling
 - We only need the Holy Spirit
 - We only need to be available for the Spirit to work through us
 - God used untrained fisherman and other blue-collar workers to be His witness
 - The difference between Peter in the Gospels and Acts in the Holy Spirit
 - Peter (Rock) – Rocky 1 – he loses, Rocky 2 – he wins: for the Apostle – he wins in Acts because of the Holy Spirit
 - The weakness of evangelism in today's church is due to an ignorance and apathy of the Holy Spirit's empowerment for evangelism

The Great Commission

Scripture	Directed to Whom	What	Ministry to Whom
Matt. 28:19– 20	Disciples	Go, make disciples!	All nations
Mark 16:15	Disciples	Go, preach the good news!	All creation
Luke 24:46– 48	Disciples	You are witnesses	All nations

Acts 1:8	Disciples	You will be witnesses	Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, World
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Malphurs, Aubrey. Advanced Strategic Planning: A 21st-Century Model for Church and Ministry Leaders (p. 113). Baker Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

- Next week, we will focus more on this important verse.

Conclusion:

- **Transitions in ministry are a reality – don't be surprised that they happen.**
 - George Peabody, the father of modern philanthropy, over 150 years ago said: "Our task is not to bring order out of chaos, but to get work done in the midst of chaos."
 - Transitioning out of Shelter In Place will be difficult for every church and every business – but we have responsibilities to fulfill
- **Transitions in ministry are difficult – God empowers us to handle them through the Holy Spirit**
 - Sometimes I feel the burden when I am not an effective change agent for those in the church – but that's not my job – it's the Holy Spirit's ministry!
 - My responsibility is to be a change agent myself by letting the Holy Spirit transform and use me. Then to give you the tools from God's Word and instruct you to depend on the Holy Spirit and the example of Christ. Then it's up to you to depend on the H.S.
 - We will have people not like what we do or how we do it. We try our best to follow God's Word, seek wisdom from consensus and rely on the leading of the Holy Spirit.
- **The priority through transitions is the Gospel – people, times and places change, but the power and purpose of the cross of Christ does not**
 - Did you know that the Church of Ephesus is long gone?
 - The disciples in the room in Jerusalem in Acts 1 are long gone
 - John Calvin and Charles Spurgeon have been succeeded
 - Billy Graham is gone, but evangelism is still needed
 - Several nations are hostile to the Gospel – including the nations of the early church – but the purpose of the cross has not changed
 - Our life situation will change.
 - People will change.
 - The church will have several iterations.
 - But the Gospel remains the priority!!!

Discussion:

- What makes transitions in ministry so difficult and hard?
- How does the power and the presence of the Holy Spirit enable us to manage these transitions?
- How do we ensure the priority of the Gospel amidst our current transitions?