

The latter days

In my lifetime, I have had the opportunity to rub shoulders with nuclear physicist, rocket scientists, airplane builders, and many other so-called educated people. I can tell you, the greatest percentage of them are dreamers, lost in thought, concerned with how things work, and what their relationship is to those things.

During that period of time, some discussions have taken place concerning how old the earth is, the difference in the timeline between carbon dating and an actual calendar.

I say this, because I want you to understand that I have no problem with how old the earth is, or when creation started, and when God created man.

We sometimes banter the word around called "prehistoric!"

What does it actually mean, it means the time before recorded history.

If we stop and think about it, we could say that the time that went on prior to written history is kind of like the riddle of, if a tree falls in the middle of a forest and no one is around, does it make any sound?

It doesn't really matter.

If we understand the relativity of those actions, we should not have a problem recognizing that the forces of nature that we don't understand are prevalent all around us.

Our God is an awesome God, and He does not measure time as we do.

Today I want to talk to you about the timeline of our civilization, as recorded by the Jewish people and relate it to God working with us humans down through the ages.

If we start with Adam as an example and use that as the beginning of recorded time to make our case, it is as follows.

That from the time of Adam to the time of Noah 1056 years have passed, but, Noah is only the 10th generation by genealogy.

Remember at that time God wanted to destroy the human race because of its wickedness.

Abraham is born in the year 1948 and he is the 20th generation.

Isaac is born in the year 2048 100 years later and is generation 21.

I will not continue to bore you with this timeline except to say that the promise that God made to Abraham will be another 600 years plus before they will enter the promised land.

God will have raised up Moses, He will have led the children of Israel out of Egypt and into the promised land. Moses will have been given the law or Torah from God on the sacred mountain. God will have made an effort to give the children of Israel a way of salvation through the law, even though they corrupted it.

I want you to know that God is a loving and patient God. Through this timeline you should recognize how patient God is and then centuries later God sends the Messiah to the earth to become the perfect sacrifice for all our sins.

Today's sermon or series is based on what happened after Jesus ascended back to heaven.

Last year, we traveled with Jesus and the disciples on the dusty roads of Galilee and Judea. The group following Jesus was made up of both men and women.

God has laid it on my heart to tell you the story, the story of the men and women who were despised, because of their belief in Jesus Christ, the Messiah.

So, we will start by looking at the Gospels as to why and to whom they were written.

The book of Matthew was written as an established record to the Jewish people.

The book of Mark was written for those believers who were not necessarily Jewish.

The book of Luke was written by the physician to his friend Theophilus, to convince him that Jesus was the Messiah.

The book of John the beloved, was written to ascertain the deity of Christ.

All these are written as witnesses to the Lord Jesus Christ and we should take them as such.

Today, we're going to start in the book of Acts, and we're going to look at those who carried the gospel throughout the Middle East.

Turn in your Bibles to the book of Acts chapter 1 verse 1:

While you are turning there I want you to recognize that this is another letter written by Luke to Theophilus, recording the goings on and travels of the 1st Christian apostles and ministers and what happened as Jesus ascended to heaven and the disciples made their 1st decisions as apostles.

Ready?

Let us begin:

In my former book Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach until the day He was taken up to heaven after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles He had chosen.

After His suffering, He presented Himself to them and gave many convincing proofs that He was alive.

1. One of the things He did, is to eat and drink with them. Let us continue:

He appeared to them over a period of 40 days and spoke about the kingdom of God.

On one occasion, while He was eating with them, He gave them this command.

“Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard Me speak about.

For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.”

2. I want to make sure that you are firmly grounded in the fact that Jesus Christ was indeed crucified and had risen from the tomb they had laid Him in, and had shown Himself to all of these witnesses over a period of 40 days. This goes to the very heart of your faith in Jesus Christ as the Messiah.
Do you believe?

Let us continue:

Then they gathered around Him and asked Him, “Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom of Israel?”

3. Is this so unusual? Think about it, He rode into Jerusalem just a little while before on the back of a mule with people crying Hosanna to the King. Then the Jewish leaders arrested Him and put Him to death, now He is risen and is alive and is standing on the side of the mountain, the Mount of Olives. They are very confused!

Let us continue:

He said to them; it is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by His own authority.

4. Again recognize, Jesus is telling them as He said before that only God has the authority and knows when He will return and set up his kingdom. Amen?

Let us continue:

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

3. So He is telling them, you are going to set up My kingdom, there will not be an earthly king but a heavenly one. Jesus is returning to the Father and He is instructing them what to do.

Let us continue:

After He had said this, He was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid Him from their sight.

They were looking intently up into the sky as He was going, when suddenly 2 men dressed in white stood beside them.

"Men of Galilee", they said, "Why do you stand here looking into the sky?"

“This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen Him go into heaven.”

5. Jesus has given them instructions, and He has been taken up into the clouds, and notice there are 2 men here giving witness that He will return in the same way you saw Him go. This then becomes a great part of their early ministry, that Jesus was indeed the Messiah and will return again for those who are faithful and believe in Him. Amen?

Think about it, if they had known then that it would be over 2000 years before He returned to them, would their ministry have been different?

Indeed it would have.

Let us continue:

Then the apostles returned to Jerusalem from the hill called the Mount of Olives, a Sabbath days walk from the city.

6. So they accepted what was said to them by the witnesses, and returned back to Jerusalem.

Let us continue:

When they arrived, they went upstairs to the room where they were staying.

Those present were Peter, John, James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew; James son of Alphaeus and Simon the zealot, and Judas son of James.

7. Luke thought it important that Theophilus should know who were present in the room they had in Jerusalem, because they are going to elect a disciple to take Judas Iscariot's place.

Let us continue:

They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.

8. It is important to note, that for the 1st time they are recognizing the women that are with them in the group. I believe that this is a recognition of how Jesus Christ treated the women, and it certainly made a social difference in Christianity.

Let us continue:

In those days Peter stood up among the believers: a group numbering about 120: and said, brothers and sisters, the Scripture had to be fulfilled in which the Holy Spirit spoke long ago through David concerning Judas who served as guide to those who arrested Jesus.

He was one of our number and shared in our ministry.

With the payment he received for his wickedness, Judas bought a field, there he fell headlong, his body burst open and all his intestines spilled out.

Everyone in Jerusalem heard about this, so they call that field in their language Akeldama, that is, field of blood.

For, said Peter, it is written in the book of Psalms.

May his place be deserted, and there be no one to dwell in it, and, may another take his place of leadership.

9. We notice here that Peter is now very cognizant of what has been written in the Old Testament by the prophets. Peter is going to make sure that the disciples number is taken back to 12.

Let us continue:

Therefore it is necessary to choose one of the men who have been with us the whole time the Lord Jesus was living among us, beginning from John's baptism to the time when Jesus was taken up from us.

10. Why is it so important that this disciple must have been with them since the time of John's baptism of Jesus? Because John is a witness to Jesus and to His being the Messiah. Amen?

Let us continue:

For one of these must become a witness with us of His resurrection.

So they nominated 2 men: Joseph called Justus: and Matthias.

Then they prayed, Lord, you know everyone's heart. Show us which of these 2 you have chosen to take over this apostolic ministry, which Judas left to go where he belongs.

Then they cast lots, and the lot fell to Matthias, so he was added to the 11 apostles.

11. We notice that they prayed and then asked for a witness, the casting of lots, this was done in various ways, usually with a group of stones with them being white with one black or reverse. In this way they received an answer to which one should be chosen.

We will continue next week God willing with the 2nd chapter of Acts and the receiving of the Holy Spirit. God has placed on my heart the importance of the knowledge and understanding of the early church and its leaders.

This will be done by Scripture and some historic research. I hope you enjoy the journey and will come along with me as we explore the Scripture and history. Let us pray.

