

V.O.C. November 2019

November 3, 2019: Jesus' work continues

Dear Listeners,

This month I would like to draw your attention to a book of the Bible called Acts. That name stands for "the Acts of the Apostles." These Apostles were disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ whom He sent out into the world with this message of salvation: "There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." The name *Apostles* means "sent away." They were *sent away* to bring the glad tidings about Jesus into the world after Jesus' ascension into heaven and after the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Then the book of *Acts* shows us that Jesus, the ascended Lord, continued to do His work of salvation. His apostles were His instruments in that work. When we follow these apostles in their "*acts*," we see the power of Jesus, but we also see the resistance against Jesus. Then we discover that this resistance is much like the resistance we experience in our own hearts and in our society! And no wonder, for people are still the same and Satan is still the same!

When we follow these apostles in their work, we will see how they bring the gospel: they do so in a different way and with different words to the Jews, and in a different approach to the Gentiles. They remind the Jews of what God had revealed about Jesus in His Word, which He fulfilled in Jesus; they proclaim to the Gentiles the love of God that has come to them as well in Jesus. Then we do have to keep in mind though that in either way the message, the glad tidings of salvation, is going into the world through Jesus! He continued His work! Yes, and as we discover His continued work, we will hopefully also see and realize that He is still working, today also! He even uses the messages of the Voice of the Church that are coming to you for His work!

This book of the Bible, dear listeners, "the Acts of the Apostles," was written by a man (a medical doctor and a historiographer) named Luke. He starts out his account, saying: "In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach, until the day when he was taken up..." Luke's first account is "the gospel according to Luke," named after him. In that first account of the gospel Luke shares the great and wonderful works and words of Jesus, which were the *beginning* of His work. After Jesus' death the disciples had thought that this was the end of it; they had lost all hope. Actually we, too, are inclined to think that after Jesus' ascension into heaven it was all over and done. Yet, we too should realize today that Jesus' work continued! We can expect great things as yet; He will come to the completion of His work! That's why it is so important for us to know and see and believe that Jesus' work continues!

You see, dear listeners, many people thought (and think) that the cloud with which Jesus ascended into heaven served like the fall of the curtain in a theater: this is the end, the play is finished and the actors leave the stage. That's not what happened though! We read in Acts 1:9, "as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight." Jesus was taken up by a cloud; this cloud was the symbol of God's majesty and glory. The LORD God went ahead of His people Israel in

a cloud during their wilderness journey. When the LORD God came to dwell among His people in the tabernacle, and later on in the temple, His people saw Him cover this place with a cloud. This is the cloud that covered Jesus, the cloud of God's glorious presence. By this cloud the LORD God honoured Jesus; at the same time, it showed the disciples that though they could not see Jesus any longer He was still there.

"I will be with you till the end of the age," He had said! He is enthroned above the earth as a king with power and authority! As such He is very closely involved with what's happening on earth! He uses His power and authority to make His kingdom break through on the earth! Hence, though we do not now see Him and we may not always realize His involvement in our life, in the life of His church and of the world, He still is very much! Yes, He governs all things on earth for His church! We may know that and believe it, because that's what we learn from the book of Acts!

After this glorious ascension, the disciples went back to Jerusalem rejoicing, Luke tells us at the end of his first account, "and were continually in the temple blessing God." That's where they devoted themselves to prayer. Indeed, the ten days between Jesus' ascension and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost the disciples waited and they prayed. That's how they showed that they believed that their Lord was with them indeed! They also showed that they believed His promise that He will send them His Holy Spirit. That's how the Lord Jesus fulfils all His promises, in the way of prayer! Today still! So these ten days were days in which they did not see Him any longer, yet they believed in Him. They passed this time with prayer!

That's certainly something we may learn from this book of Acts for today too, dear listeners. It happens today as well that we don't see Jesus, we don't see or realize His power, and we don't experience His presence. It sometimes makes believers cry, "Lord, where are you?" This should not make us desperate though, or puzzled or bewildered. The Lord Jesus already told His disciples that their life after His departure would be filled with sorrow and pain; yet, also, that there would be a joy that no one could snatch from us! Thus we, too, should use such times of sorrow and pain, or of joy and gratitude, for prayer.

Then in our prayers, dear listeners, we can express our faith and hope and love, believing God's promises, and confessing our faith that we know that Jesus' work continues. However, we need to pray for patience, for a time of respite, until we see the fulfilment of God's promises again! Then, by faith, we may pray to the Father, as Jesus taught us, and we may pray in Jesus' Name. Then God the Father will hear this prayer and help us wait for His time. That's what these disciples experienced too. It showed their faith; it also showed their dependence upon Jesus in His work through them! We have to realize that too when we see His work continue in this world: we are weak but Jesus has all power in heaven and on earth! That's what these disciples showed while they waited and prayed: the glad tiding of Jesus will go into the world, showing people God's love in Jesus Christ. However, the first thing we need to do in this continued work of Jesus is pray, intensely and constantly, knowing that God's work in Jesus Christ continues in His power! That's what we will be seeing next week also as we continue our reading!