

Big C Church, Week 1

You Will Receive Power

July 18, 2021

Main Text: Acts 3:1-16

Supporting Texts: Isaiah 53; Luke 11:41; 12:33; Acts 1:8; 4:7

SERIES INTRO

We'll be asking the big question, "What is God's vision for the church?" by taking Acts 1:8 and breaking it up into seven parts.

1. You will receive power
2. When the Holy Spirit comes on you
3. And you will be my witnesses
4. In Jerusalem
5. In Judea and Samaria
6. And to the ends of the earth
7. Finally, we'll ask ourselves if we are open to God's vision.

This isn't a vision-casting series as churches sometimes preach where pastors lay out a distinct vision for the future. This is a series with a more general focus on God's big C church. As in, every Christian who reads Acts 1:8 is part of a body of Christ who should expect that even though we are not awaiting the day of Pentecost in the days after Jesus' ascension, we are part of the same Church of Jesus Christ that was started at Pentecost.

SERMON INTRO

The Church—you and I—have been given power by God. This kind of power is different from the power that God has given to every person. Diane Langberg, in her book [Redeeming Power](#), writes about how power comes from Jesus Christ. She says,

"Are you verbally powerful? The Word gave you that power. Are you physically powerful? The mighty God, who breaks down strongholds and sustains the universe, gave you that power. Do you have a powerful position? It is from the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Do you have power of knowledge or skill? The Creator God, whose ways are beyond finding out, gave that power to you. Do you hold emotional power with others? That power came from the Comforter, the Wonderful Counselor. Do you have great financial power? If so, it is merely a small portion from the One who holds all riches. Any power that you and I hold is God's and has been given to us by him for the sole purpose of glorifying him and blessing others."¹

That's not the kind of power Acts 1:8 is referring to. God wants us to use that kind of power for the kingdom. But not to rely upon it alone.

GOD

Acts 3:1-16

¹ Langberg, Diane. *Redeeming Power: Understanding Authority and Abuse in the Church*. pp. 10-11.

Like Acts 2:42-47 says, the early church went to the temple courts daily. Peter and John are doing this. The Mishnah describes this time of prayer following the sacrifice:

“When he stooped to pour out the drink offering the Prefect waved the towel and Ben Arza [a priest] clashed the cymbal and the Levites broke forth into singing. When they reached a break in the singing they blew upon the trumpets and the people prostrated themselves [in prayer]; at every break there was a blowing of the trumpet and at every blowing of the trumpet a prostration [in prayer]. This was the rite of the daily whole-offering in the service of the House of our God.”²

It wasn't like a prayer service we're used to, where one person is praying at a time and it's relatively quiet. This was a loud environment.

Just like ancient prayer services were different from ours, so were ancient gates. Josephus, a first-century Jewish historian, describes the gates this way:

“Of the gates nine were completely covered with gold and silver, as were the posts and lintels, but the one outside the Sanctuary was of Corinthian bronze, and far more valuable than those overlaid with silver or even with gold. Every gateway had double doors, each half being 45 feet high and 22-1/2 wide.”³

Peter and John are faced with a choice: We can obey the teachings of our Lord Jesus (see Luke 11:41; 12:33). Or, we can go into the temple and pass by this man, because after all, Jesus said that the poor would always be with them. Or, there is a third option—to do what Jesus did.

“Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk.” F. F. Bruce cites a story that perhaps you've heard. “Thomas Aquinas once called on Pope Innocent II when the latter was counting out a large sum of money. ‘You see, Thomas,’ said the Pope, ‘the church can no longer say, “Silver and gold have I none.”’ ‘True, holy father,’ was the reply; ‘neither can she now say, “Rise and walk.”’⁴

This is the conundrum we face today. Are there things we need to abandon and surrender so that Christ's power may be made perfect in our weakness? Do we need to, like Peter and John, share what once belonged to us with other Christians so that the only option we have is to say, “I don't have that. But what I do have is the power of the name of Jesus”?

Peter describes what he will say next as something he has. It is the power he has received at Pentecost that he has. A power found in Jesus' name. As this story progresses and Peter and John are brought before the religious authorities. They are asked in Acts 4:7, “By what power or what name did you do this?”

It is the power of this Jesus that we have been given, that enables a man lame from birth to walk, jump, and praise God.

Verse 12. Peter admits it. What you and I know, but what was not obvious to anyone that day—this miracle happened because of the power of God flowing through them.

² Zondervan Illustrated Bible Background Commentary. p. 241.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Bruce, F.F. The Book of Acts. NICNT. pp. 77-78.

Wayne Schmidt writes in *Power Plays*, “Good stewardship of God-given power will cause power to flow in two directions.”⁵ First, it flows outward in worship when we recognize Jesus as the One who is powerful. (vv. 13-15). Second, it flows outward in witness (vv. 15-16).

US

What would it look like if we all lived not only in the power God gives every person, but also in the power available to us in the name of Jesus? How would the Church be different? We would be full of these seven things.

Love

Humility

Self-limitation

Joy

Vulnerability

Submission

Freedom⁶

⁵ Schmidt, Wayne. *Power Plays*. p. 48.

⁶ Foster, Richard. *The Challenge of the Disciplined Life: Christian Reflections on Money, Sex, and Power*. pp. 201-207.