

# **Acts of the Apostles**

## **A Study of the Early Church**

### **Lesson 1 Acts 1:1-26**

#### **Introduction:**

The "former treatise" which Luke referred to in Acts 1:1 is the Gospel of Luke (see Luke 1:14) in which Luke revealed all that Jesus began to do and teach while He was on earth. Acts continues the narrative by telling what Jesus continued to do and teach through the inspired apostles as they proclaimed the gospel of Christ, and through the church which took the gospel to the known world. The Gospel of Luke speaks of Christ's ministry on earth in a physical body, while Acts speaks of His rule as King over His spiritual kingdom, reigning from His throne in heaven and directing the affairs of His church. For example, in Acts 1:24 the disciples asked to be shown which man the Lord had chosen to replace Judas as an apostle. In Acts 2:47 it is the Lord who added to the church those who were being saved. In Acts 13:1-3, it is Christ through His Spirit who sent out Paul and Barnabas; and in Acts 14:27, Paul and Barnabas told what God had done through them.

Following His resurrection from the dead, Christ continued to minister to His apostles for a period of forty days (read Luke 24:36-53 in connection with Acts 1:1-11). In the concluding remarks of the Gospel of Luke and in Acts, Jesus told His apostles to remain in Jerusalem and wait until they are "endued with power from on high" when they would be "baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now." The proclamation of the gospel message through the inspired apostles in the city of Jerusalem harmonizes with Isaiah's prophecy "For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem" (Isaiah 2:3).

This baptism of the Holy Spirit had been announced by John the Baptist (Matthew 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33).<sup>1</sup> The Spirit, through the preaching of the gospel, would unite all the believers in one body, to be known as the church (see 1 Corinthians 12:13). The Spirit would also be given to certain believers through the laying on of the apostle's hands to empower them with spiritual gifts to benefit the church. There are two occurrences of this baptism of the Holy Spirit in Acts: (1) in Acts 2, when the apostles were "endued with power from on high"; and (2) in Acts 10 (also see 11:16) when Cornelius and his household were empowered by the Holy Spirit to speak with tongues as proof that God now accepted Gentiles into the church. According to Ephesians 2:11-

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<sup>1</sup> Note that Jesus did not mention a baptism with fire on this occasion. The baptism of fire refers to judgment.

22 the body of Christ is composed of Jews and Gentiles who are all baptized by into this spiritual body.

The question posed to Jesus by His apostles concerning the coming of the kingdom (Acts 1:6-8) showed they simply did not understand the nature of the Lord's spiritual kingdom (Luke 17:20-21; John 18:36). Like all Jews of that day, the apostles labored under the same misconceptions. They initially believed the Lord came to establish a physical kingdom in Israel like in the days of David and Solomon over which He would reign as King from Jerusalem. The apostles were confused until their understanding was eventually clarified by the Holy Spirit. Since this understanding would come in the days ahead, Jesus simply avoided answering the question directly, but gave them a hint as to when the kingdom would come – namely, when they were baptized with the Holy Spirit. Jesus had promised that His kingdom would come with "power" (Mark 9:1), and that the power would come with the Holy Spirit (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:5), and that would occur in Jerusalem in just a few days.

The ascension of Jesus into heaven seemed to be sudden and unexpected. The "two men" (or angels) who stood by in "white apparel" assured the apostles, "This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11). This corresponds to Paul's statements regarding the Lord's return (1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:4; 2 Thessalonians 1:3-10).

The next order of business was to select a new apostle to replace Judas. Their decision was clearly based on the Word of God (Psalms 109:8; 69:25) and on continued prayer (Acts 1:14, 24). The man who replaced Judas had to meet specific qualifications (Acts 1:21-22). Of the names put forth, Matthias was God's choice, since he was likewise filled with the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost.

Everything was now ready for the coming of the Spirit. It was only a matter of time, and as the believers waited for that day to arrive, they spent their hours in prayer and fellowship in an upper room. Among those present were "Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers" (Acts 1:14). These were the same brothers who had once mocked Jesus (John 7:5). But following the Lord's resurrection from the dead, they were overwhelmingly convinced He was indeed the Christ.

### **Memorization:**

*"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." (Acts 1:8)*

### **Key Events of Acts 1:**

- Jesus met with His apostles 40 days after His resurrection and promised the Holy Spirit.
- Jesus ascended into heaven.



3. What did the disciples not understand about the nature of the kingdom? Cite two verses where Jesus explained the spiritual nature of the kingdom.
4. Explain how the statement "you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you" is the link between Mark 9:1 and Acts 2.

**C. The Ascension of Jesus (Acts 1:9-11)**

1. Where were Jesus and His apostles when He ascended into heaven and what other notable events occurred there? (Consult "the former account" and a Bible dictionary).
2. List the manner in which Jesus went up into heaven and explain how He will come again in the same manner.
3. What is the significance of Luke mentioning "Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers" as those among the 120 disciples – especially His brothers (cf. John 7:5)?

**D. Matthias Chosen (Acts 1:12-26)**

1. What prophecies of David did Judas fulfill? Explain your answer.

2. How did Judas "purchase a field with the wages of iniquity?" How much did the field cost?
  
3. What Old Testament prophet (beside David) also spoke of this event?
  
4. How do you explain the alleged contradiction between the gospel account of Judas' death in Matthew 27 and the one in Acts 1?
  
5. Where was "Akeldama" (Field of Blood) located and what was the significance of being buried there? Consult a Bible dictionary.
  
6. What qualifications did Matthias meet to be selected as one of the twelve apostles?
  
7. Which of these qualifications do you believe is the most significant and why? Explain your answer.