

# THE BOOK OF ACTS

## CHAPTER 1

### ACTS OVERVIEW

**Writer:** Luke

**Time:** 61-66 A.D.

**Occasion:** The book of Acts was written during the time Paul was writing the four prison epistles. This book continues where the book of Luke ends and could be entitled Second Luke. Acts begins with the end of the earthly ministry of Jesus and covers the formation and development of the church. In essence, it is the passing of the torch from Jesus to the church. The human subjects change in the book, but the message and the Holy Spirit's anointing remain the same.

**Theme:** The central theme is the diminishing of the Jew and the increasing of the Gentiles. This theme is found in Acts 1:8, in Jesus' command to preach the gospel in "Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." This is also the outline of Acts. The gospel begins in Jerusalem where the first church is established (chapters 1-7). Samaria will come next, with the ministry of Phillip (chapter 8). The book will end with the Gentile revivals in Antioch and Ephesus with Paul as the main minister (chapters 9-28).

**Background:** The day of Pentecost began a new dispensation, the "mystery," which was unknown to the Old Testament prophets. Another name for this new dispensation is the "church age" or "the dispensation of grace." The major difference between the Old and New Testaments is the new ministry of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit was present in the Old Testament, but would only anoint specific individuals for specific purposes. The day of Pentecost introduced the new birth and the infilling of the Holy Spirit to empower believers to fulfill the great commission.

### The Local Churches

- Chapters 2-10: Jerusalem
- Chapters 12-17: Antioch
- Chapters 18-20: Ephesus

### The Predominant Characters

- Chapters 1-5: Peter
- Chapters 6-7: Stephen
- Chapters 8-12: Barnabas, Philip, and Saul of Tarsus
- Chapters 13-28: Saul as Paul

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **The Challenge of Chapter One**

Like Jesus, one day all believers will receive an eternal resurrection body. Until that time, we need the power of the Holy Spirit to be witnesses in the earth. No longer are we required to wait for the promise Holy Spirit as the disciples did on the day of Pentecost. Since that time, He is available to all who will receive him.

Those first disciples wanted to know when Jesus would come to establish His kingdom on earth. Today, many Christians asked the same question. But Jesus' answer remains the same, "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in His own power" (verse 7). Instead, Jesus points the attention of the disciples toward the promised Holy Spirit, which would enable them to be witnesses throughout the entire earth. We must be careful not to make the same mistake Peter did by making decisions according to the flesh and doing that which the Lord did not instruct him to do. It is easy to do the things that seemed good and right but are not according to God's perfect plan and purpose.

### **Waiting For The Promise**

Luke addresses the book of Acts to Theophilus, a born-again Roman dignitary. Luke recounts the events following the resurrection of Jesus, including the 40 days He walked among the disciples and His command for them to wait for the promised Holy Spirit.

### **Opening Salutation**

Act 1:1 The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach,

Theophilus (meaning loved of God) is a born-again dignitary in Rome. Luke addressed the books of Luke and Acts to him (Luke 1:3). In Luke's gospel Theophilus is called "most excellent," which is an address for his nobility. Luke, being a physician, was familiar with many wealthy and powerful people in the Roman Empire.

Is the only Gentile author in the New Testament. The gospel of Luke began the story of the works and teachings of Jesus. The book of Acts continues the story. Jesus not only taught the people, he also performed miracles and healings. The church in Acts was to follow this pattern of doing and teaching (Acts 8:6).

Act 1:2 Until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen:

The book of Luke brings us to the day of the resurrection. (Luke 24:51) but no further. Acts chapter 1 continues recording the events of the same day were the gospel of Luke ends. Jesus gave His disciples the commandment to wait for the Holy Spirit (Luke 24:49).

Jesus had been empowered by the Holy Spirit (Isaiah 11: 2-3; 61:1-2) without measure (John 3:34). He began His public ministry when He was baptized by John the Baptist. This is when the Holy Spirit came upon Him for supernatural ministry. When Jesus became sin for us at the cross, the ministry of the Spirit temporarily ceased (Psalm 22:1; Matthew 27:46) but came upon Him at the resurrection (Romans 8:11; 1 Peter 3:18). Then the Holy Spirit empowers Jesus in His resurrection body (Acts 1:2) as well as the 11 apostles who were chosen by the Lord Jesus.

## **The Resurrection Appearances of Jesus**

Act 1:3 To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God:

To whom (disciples) also He showed Himself alive after His passion (suffering) by many infallible proofs, being seen of them 40 days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.

Pentecost is 50 days after Firstfruits, the day Jesus was raised from the dead. He walked among the disciples for 40 days leaving 10 days for the disciples to wait in Jerusalem in the upper room. These 10 days are the subject of chapter 1.

1. Before His ascension, Jesus made appearances to:
  - a) Mary Magdalene and the other Mary (Matthew 28:1, 9-10)
  - b) Peter (1 Corinthians 15:5)
  - c) Two believers on the road to Emmaus (Mark 16:12; Luke 24:13)
  - d) Ten of the disciples (Thomas was not present -- John 20:19-25)
  - e) The eleven disciples (John 26-29)
  - f) Seven disciples by the Sea of Galilee (John 21:1)
  - g) Five hundred believers at once, probably at the ascension (1 Corinthians 15:6; Acts 1:3-11)
  - h) His half-brother, James (1 Corinthians 15:7)
  - i) The eleven disciples on the mountain near Galilee (Matthew 28:16-17)
2. After the ascension, Jesus appeared to:
  - a) Stephen (Acts 7:56)
  - b) Paul on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:3-4)
  - c) John on Patmos (Revelation 1:12-13)

After the resurrection, Jesus had a different body than He had on earth; He had a resurrection body, so many it not recognized him right away.

## **The Command to Wait**

Act 1:4 And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me.

The formation and development of the church begins in Jerusalem, the very place where Jesus was rejected, crucified, and became sin and sickness for mankind. The city of the curse now became the city of blessing to the rest of the world -- Judea, Samaria, and the uttermost parts of the earth.

The promise of the Father includes both the new birth and the infilling of the Holy Spirit (John 14:12-17; 15:16; 16:7-15).

Act 1:5 For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.

Matthew 3:11 records John's prophecy: "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire." John compares his own water baptism of Jesus to the Spirit Jesus would stand on the day of Pentecost.

### **Jesus' Ascension (6-11)**

Jesus gives His final instructions to the disciples concerning the Holy Spirit, and they watch while he ascends into heaven. As the disciples stand gazing, two angels appear and speak to them of the second coming.

### **The Establishment of the Kingdom**

Act 1:6 When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?

This is a selfish request because they want Jesus to remove the Roman rulers and usher in the millennium. Jesus has just finished teaching about the baptism of the Spirit, which is an introduction to the church age. But the disciples are thinking in terms of the old covenant and desire the millennial kingdom to be established in the earth.

Act 1:7 And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the **times** or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power.

And he said unto them, it is not for you to know the times (chronos) or the seasons (kairos), which the Father hath *put* in his own power (exousia).

The Greek word *chronos*, translated time, refers to the successive time of chronological events and, more specifically, means each passing moment. This word is typically connected with history. From this point on, Israel's history is hidden from the disciples. They don't know when their nation will be destroyed, the Jews dispersed and persecuted, and, after going through tribulation, eventually restored as a people and a nation.

The Greek word *Kairos*, translated seasons, refers to a specific period of time such as a dispensation or section of time. The disciples also don't understand the church age is coming. They won't learn about the church age until after Pentecost when they are taught by the Holy Spirit. Jesus is telling them their questions are premature.

## Power To Be Witnesses

Act 1:8 But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

But ye shall receive (*lambano*: seize, take hold of) power (*dunamis*: inherent power), after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall (future tense) be witnesses unto me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

This is a play on words. The Father has authority over times and seasons, but they will receive authority to be witnesses in the dispensation. Believers have been given power to operate in the times and seasons which come under the Father's sovereignty. We need to be concerned with our dominion, and God will be a ruler over His.

The ultimate use of the power of the Holy Spirit is witnessing. Whether the power is released through the gifts of the Spirit or through the words of the disciples mouths, the final result is the winning of souls. No gift is given to enhance the user or build his reputation. God is interested in spiritual results.

Jesus is preparing the disciples for the mantle of power to witness. Their public ministry, by Jesus', begins after the Holy Spirit comes upon them.

In the new birth, the Holy Spirit comes to live in its. Following the new birth, we can receive power after the Holy Spirit comes upon us. This event will occur many times in the book of Acts (10:45; 19:6). The gospel will spread from Jerusalem (northern kingdom) and Judea (southern kingdom) to the Gentiles all over the world.

**1:7 times**, *chronos* (khron-oss); Compare "chronology," "chronic," "chronicles." Duration of time, which may be a point, a lapse, a span, a period, a stretch, a quantity, a measure, a duration, or a length. *Kairos* ("seasons") suggests kind of time. *Chronos* tells what day it is. *Kairos* tells of special happenings occurring during the time frame of *chronos*.

**1:5-8 The Baptism with the Holy Spirit, HOLY SPIRIT FULLNESS.** This Ascension-day promise of Jesus to the assembled believers anticipates the Day of Pentecost and describes the coming of Pentecost as being "baptized with the Holy Spirit." This is not the same experience as described in John 20:22 ("Receive the Holy Spirit"). The experience in John 20:22 took place before the Ascension and was related to the work of the Holy Spirit in the New Birth as promised in John 3:3-5. Here in Acts 1:5 is the empowering for ministry that was promised in Luke 24:49. The focus here is on the mission of the believers---one

that cannot be accomplished without the supernatural Holy Spirit baptism, which was to follow Jesus' words about the spreading witness of the gospel through the Spirit-filled disciples in Acts 1:8 could only be fulfilled with supernatural power as a result of being baptized with the Holy Spirit.

Act 1:9 And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight.

And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up (passive voice); and a cloud (glory cloud) received him out of their sight.

Act records man's view from the earth as Jesus ascends into heaven. Hebrews 1:3 reveals the view from heaven as Jesus ascends: ". . . when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." Verse 13 continues, "But to which of the angels said he at any time, Sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool?"

Act 1:10 And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel;

the two men are angels who have already been with them but have suddenly materialized, appearing to the disciples. Jesus has already seen them, just as He had seen Moses and Elijah on the Mount of Transfiguration.

Act 1:11 Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.

The angels are referring to the second advent, not the rapture of the church. At the second advent, Jesus will descend through the heavens and touch the Mount of Olives (Zechariah 14:4).

### **Man Chooses An Apostle (12-26)**

As 120 disciples waiting in the upper room, Peter addresses the selection of the disciple to replace Judas.

Act 1:12 Then returned they unto Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a sabbath day's journey.

A Sabbath day's journey is approximately three-fifths of a mile (John 11:18).

Act 1:13 And when they were come in, they went up into an upper room, where abode both Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, Philip, and Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon Zelotes, and Judas the brother of James.

This may be the same upper room used by Jesus and His disciples for the Last Supper (Mark 14:15; Luke 22:11-12). Upper rooms were common in the time in which Jesus lived, and were usually owned by people who would rent them out for special occasions.

Act 1:14 These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren.

Along with the eleven disciples are the women who followed Jesus and ministered to Him (Matthew 27:55-56; Luke 8:3). Also present are Jesus' mother and two half-brothers, James and Joses (Joseph Jr.) (Matthew 13:55; Mark 6:3).

Act 1:15 And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples, and said, (the number of names together were about an hundred and twenty,) and said, Act 1:16 Men and brethren, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas, which was guide to them that took Jesus.

Peter's address all "men" is to all in the upper room. "Brethren" addresses the other ten disciples.

Act 1:17 For he was numbered with us, and had obtained part of this ministry. Act 1:18 Now this man purchased a field with the reward of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out.

After Judas had hung himself (Matthew 27:5), no one cut him down. The rope eventually ride and broke, and Judas's decayed body burst apart and his inner parts gushed out.

Act 1:19 And it was known unto all the dwellers at Jerusalem; insomuch as that field is called in their proper tongue, Aceldama, that is to say, The field of blood.

And it was known unto all the dwellers at Jerusalem; insomuch as that field is called in their proper tongue, Aceldama, that is to say, The field of blood.

Act 1:20 For it is written in the book of Psalms, Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein: and his bishoprick let another take.

For it is written in the book of Psalms, Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein: and his bishopric (oversight) let another take.

Act 1:21 Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us,

Act 1:22 Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection.

Act 1:23 And they appointed two, Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias.

Act 1:24 And they prayed, and said, Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, shew whether of these two thou hast chosen,

Act 1:25 That he may take part of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas by **transgression** fell, that he might go to his own place.

**1:25 transgression, *parabaino*** (par-ab-ahee-no); Abandoning a trust, departing, stepping aside, overstep, violation, rebellion, aberration, apostasy, disobedience, deviation from an original and true direction. In order to go his own way, Judas abandoned his position of service as one of the Twelve.

Act 1:26 And they gave forth their lots; and the lot fell upon Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.

Jesus did not instruct His followers to go to the upper room and choose an apostle. It was Peter who took it upon himself to lead the group into choosing an apostle to replace Judas.

In Galatians 1:1 Paul calls himself, “an apostle, not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead.” The Greek says, “not from the source of men, neither by the source of man.”

Apostleship cannot be conferred by a group of men or by an individual. An apostle also cannot be elected by casting lots or by natural birth. Apostleship is sovereignly given by God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 1:1 says, “Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus.” Paul was an apostle not based upon a vote or the selection of men, nor was he qualified because of natural qualifications. He was an apostle by the will of God.