

**Heritage Christian Community Baptist Church Bible Study**  
Acts 1: 1-26 The Promise, The Ascension and The Replacement  
Rev. Dr. Dee Cain  
Jan 7, 2024

**Introduction to the Book of Acts**

This book began with no name but the Acts of the apostles became the name in the middle of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century A.D. even though only Peter, Paul and John acts are documented. The writer of this book is a gentile named Luke, a companion of Paul who accompanied Paul on missionary journeys. Luke wrote this book and the book of Luke as part of a two-volume set, constituting one fourth of the new testament. According to Luke, this book of Acts along with the book of Luke was written to present the history of Jesus and His disciples/Apostles from the beginning of Jesus baptism by John through His Ascension to Heaven and the Christian church. He sees the two books as a presentation of two stages of the work of Jesus Christ and writes to assure that his presentation of Jesus and the early church is based on reliable history. Luke tells us that the continued acts of Jesus in person and through His Spirit is the focus of the book. He writes in an effort to assure the Romans and others that there is “nothing to fear from Christians, for they are neither seditious nor subversive, but on the contrary legally innocent and morally harmless. More positively, they exercise a wholesome influence on society”<sup>1</sup> He addresses the book to most likely a specific person named Theophilus. The word *theophilles* an adjective means loved by God or loving God could represent every believer or Christian but most theologians believe it is a person and not generalized to all Christians. While Luke is considered a historian, he is also a theologian who used his history in the service of his theology.”<sup>2</sup> This book covers a space of about 30 years and provides us with an account of how the church grew after the ascension of Jesus. It can be divided into two parts, the mission under Peter, focused in Jerusalem, primarily to a Jewish audience in chapters 1-12 with Peter reaching out to the Gentiles and baptizing a centurion in chapter 11. It is also about the mission to the Gentiles under Paul, chapters 13-28 ending with Paul imprisoned and in Rome.

**Introduction to Chapter one**

it is approximately 40 days past the resurrection of Jesus from the grave. According to appearances recorded in scriptures, Jesus has shown himself to His disciples at least 10 times. Luke is writing to a man named Theophilus, who may be a Roman leader or a patron providing financial support to Luke as he records the history of Jesus and the church. In this chapter we will focus on three things, the promise of the Holy Spirit, the ascension of Jesus and the replacement for Judas Iscariot one of the 12 who had committed suicide after betraying Jesus.

**The Promise (Acts 1:1–8 (NKJV))**

<sup>1</sup>The former account I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach,  
<sup>2</sup>until the day in which He was taken up, after He through the Holy Spirit had given commandments to the apostles whom He had chosen,

---

<sup>1</sup> John R. W. Stott, [\*The Message of Acts: The Spirit, the Church & the World\*](#), The Bible Speaks Today (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 26.

<sup>2</sup> John R. W. Stott, [\*The Message of Acts: The Spirit, the Church & the World\*](#), The Bible Speaks Today (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 30.

<sup>3</sup>to whom He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.  
<sup>4</sup>And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, “which,” He said, “you have heard from Me;  
<sup>5</sup>for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.”  
<sup>6</sup>Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, “Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?”  
<sup>7</sup>And He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority.  
<sup>8</sup>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.”

Luke tells the goal of the volumes, to write all that Jesus began to do and teach. We should know that the work and teaching of Jesus continued through the work of the Apostles and through us today. Luke references the ascension as a point in his historical account in verse 2. After verse 2, we see the beginning of what is to continue through the Apostles whom Jesus had given instructions before he ascended. Luke covered these instructions in **Luke 24:44-49**, where Jesus opened up the understanding of the disciples, commissioned them for a mission to all the nations and gave them the promise of the Holy Spirit. Luke reminds his reader Theophilus that he has already told him these things and then begins to tell of those things he had not told. Luke writes in this book that Jesus presented himself **alive** to His disciples and provided reliable and **trustworthy/certain** truth or proof of His resurrection and life for forty days after His resurrection to the same Apostles whom he had chosen. It would appear to me that Luke points out that the disciple who was to be the replacement for Judas had not received these instructions or proofs of His resurrection. Luke ends verse 3 telling Theophilus and us that Jesus had also spoke and taught about the things of the kingdom of God during the forty days following his resurrection and before His ascension.

In verses 4- 5, Luke writes that Jesus had assembled with his disciples. One meaning of this word assembled in the original Greek is a verb not used in this way anywhere else in the bible. One of the varied meanings is to share salt, translated eat with. In Luke 24:43, it is recorded that Jesus ate with his disciples and we might assume that this is what Luke refers to in this verse. During the time that he was eating with the disciples Jesus commanded the Apostles whom he had chosen before his ascension to wait in Jerusalem for the promise of the Father, referring to the Holy Spirit. The word used for wait is better translated as stop departing or stop coming and going and remain in Jerusalem until the promise (Holy Spirit) had come.( Luke 24:49, clothed with power from on high) The promise of the Holy Spirit before His crucifixion was to encourage the Apostles that they would not be alone after His death. Today and during the time spoken of in this chapter, the coming of the Holy Spirit is to both encourage and to empower those who have been commissioned by Jesus. During the meal, Jesus told his disciples in verse 5 what the Holy Spirit would do. He compared the coming of the Holy Spirit with traditional water baptism which John the Baptist had introduced. John’s baptism was one of repentance after confession and the baptism of the Holy Spirit would baptize new converts with **the power and presence of God**. Both baptisms would continue. The water baptism is an outward sign of the professed believer in Jesus Christ, repentance from sin. The baptism of fire refers to the day of

Pentecost when the Holy Spirit appeared like tongues of fire. (Acts 2:3) Every believer should receive both the water and the Holy Spirit baptism. (Acts 2:38b) **The Spirit can come before the water baptism** ( Acts 10:47). The gift of the Holy Spirit and baptism unto repentance and faith in Jesus are both necessary for the complete conversion experience. Jesus has been asked a question in verse 6, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? He answers it in verse 7; It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in His own power. Notice the question is specific, but the answer is indefinite. They were clear in what they wanted to know, but Jesus responds with a not so clear answer. He could have simply said, no not yet, or soon, or it is not mine to do but the Father when he determines the time and the season. But instead, he says as if upset by the question, it is not for you to know the times or the seasons which the Father hath put in his own power.

They **wanted to know when, not if**. They had grown. They had been disappointed when Jesus rode into Jerusalem that Palm Sunday morning, He rode to the temple instead of the Roman Garrison. They had expected their king to set up an earthly kingdom right then and there, but instead, he straightened out some matters at His house and then a few days later, He submitted himself unto death. When He was crucified, they thought He had died in vain as a victim instead of a victor. Jesus had to show up forty days to show them that He had gotten the victory at the cross and they would have to keep serving and completing their calling and purpose. They knew now that He must be the son of God because He had risen from the dead by His own power.

But, they could not let go of their expectation that He had come to free them from Roman rule. They were doubtful because there was **conflict between what they saw and what they had expected so**, when Jesus takes off on the cloud, they stare as if that is the end. Jesus leaves the subject of restoring power to Israel in Rome to the receipt of power from the Holy Spirit in verse 8. It's as if He says, the real power is not in who is controlling the government but the power that is coming to control you in a few days. Jesus promises that they shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon them and they shall be witnesses. The purpose of the power was not to free them from Roman oppression but from the oppression of sin in the lives of mankind. The Holy Spirit would also equip them to confirm and testify of Jesus death, burial and resurrection. They would be witnesses.

Jon Courson identifies three types of relationships we have with the Holy Ghost.

1. He is with us when we are convicted of our need to be born again (John 14:17)
  2. He comes *in* us the moment we open our heart to the Savior (John 20:22); and
  3. He comes *upon* us when He empowers us for service (Acts 1:5).
- The disciples had been called for a purpose and the power of the Holy Ghost would empower them to fulfill their calling. The real evidence of Holy Ghost power is in witnessing. This power makes us not ashamed to witness about Jesus even when others do not respond affirmatively to receiving Him in their hearts.
  - His power gives us boldness of speech because we go in the power of the Holy Ghost and leave the results up to Him. Jesus tells them where they will witness.
    - Jerusalem: It was the capital city, the place of the temple of God, it is home
    - Samaria: The forbidden places, the places of the least liked and least understood.
    - The uttermost parts of the earth: Everywhere else; until every man, woman, boy and girl knows that Jesus died for their sins and was raised from the dead with all power both in heaven and in earth.

**Q1: Why is the book of Luke, considered a history book instead of a gospel?**

**Q2: What did Jesus tell his Apostles about the coming of the promise of the Father and why was it called the promise of the Father?**

**Q3: What was the assignment of the Apostles and what were they to wait for?**

**Q4: What is our assignment?**

**The Ascension (Acts 1:9–11 (NKJV))**

<sup>9</sup>Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight.

<sup>10</sup>And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel,

<sup>11</sup>who also said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven.”

After Jesus gives the great commission to witness, He ascended into the heavenlies riding on a cloud, while they stared. The disciples had been trained by Jesus, the master teacher for three years to become witnesses and now the scene of this ascension takes them by surprise and they are spell bound. Two men, supposedly heavenly beings stood watching them and then posed a question to them as Jesus ascended, **Why stand ye gazing?** This same Jesus that was taken up shall return in the same way He has left, referring to riding on a cloud. Notice the comparison and contrast in His coming with his ascension.

- When He came, he was conceived in secret, but when he ascended it was public,
- When He came, He was born the son of God, wrapped up in human flesh, but when He ascended, He was, the Son of God stripped of His flesh and wrapped up in His glorified body.
- When He came, He came meek and lowly without prominence, but when He ascended, He ascended as Savior, Son and Sovereign, high and lifted up.
- When he came, the shepherds found him by following a shining star, but when he ascended, He was the bright and morning star ascending into the sky chauffeured by a cloud.
- When he came, no one on earth witnessed his birth but His mama and His earthly daddy, but when He ascended, an estimated 500 believers witnessed His ascension and He is coming back riding on a cloud to receive His church.

**Q5: How did Jesus Ascend from the earth after the forty days?**

**Q6: What were the apostles and people doing as He ascended and who did they encounter?**

## **The Replacement ( vs. 12-26)**

Acts 1:12–26 (NKJV)

<sup>12</sup>Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey.

<sup>13</sup>And when they had entered, they went up into the upper room where they were staying: Peter, James, John, and Andrew; Philip and Thomas; Bartholomew and Matthew; James the son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot; and Judas the son of James.

<sup>14</sup>These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.

<sup>15</sup>And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples (altogether the number of names was about a hundred and twenty), and said,

<sup>16</sup>“Men and brethren, this Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke before by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus;

<sup>17</sup>for he was numbered with us and obtained a part in this ministry.”

<sup>18</sup>(Now this man purchased a field with the wages of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst open in the middle and all his entrails gushed out.

<sup>19</sup>And it became known to all those dwelling in Jerusalem; so that field is called in their own language, Akel Dama, that is, Field of Blood.)

<sup>20</sup>“For it is written in the Book of Psalms: ‘Let his dwelling place be desolate, And let no one live in it’; and, ‘Let another take his office.’

<sup>21</sup>“Therefore, of these men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us,

<sup>22</sup>beginning from the baptism of John to that day when He was taken up from us, one of these must become a witness with us of His resurrection.”

<sup>23</sup>And they proposed two: Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias.

<sup>24</sup>And they prayed and said, “You, O Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which of these two You have chosen

<sup>25</sup>to take part in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place.”

<sup>26</sup>And they cast their lots, and the lot fell on Matthias. And he was numbered with the eleven apostles.

After the ascension of Jesus, the disciples returned to Jerusalem to meet in the upper room ( an upper story or roof top room often the third story with outer stairs to access.) They met for prayer and to discuss the important matter of finding a replacement for Judas Iscariot who had betrayed Jesus and then in remorse, hung himself. The verses tell us that there were 120 persons in that room. The women including the mother of Jesus and the two brothers of Jesus were present in the upper room and all were praying and on one accord. (having the same goal, purpose) According to Mark 6:3, Jesus had four brothers—James, Judas, Joseph, and Simon<sup>3</sup> ( Most likely James and Judas were there and became writers of the book of James and Jude)

These verses outline the reason, the method and outcome of their meeting which was prayer as they waited on the promise of the Holy Spirit. On this day, they also had to decide who would replace Judas and they came to a decision through prayer, open discussion and the casting of lots.

---

<sup>3</sup> John B. Polhill, [Acts](#), vol. 26, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 89.

These verses tell us of the bloody death of Judas at his own hand and the prophecy concerning his death by the psalmist David and his replacement. (Ps 69:25, 109:8) Verses 18-19 **were not** stated by Peter who initiated and led the discussion but were provided by Luke as represented by the parenthesis. The apostles used prayer as a method of selection along with casting lots to discern God's desire for the replacement. The criteria for the selection were, the candidate must have been with Jesus since the beginning of Jesus earthly ministry following His baptism in the wilderness and had remained a follower of Jesus through Jesus crucifixion, resurrection and ascension and had witnessed the reality or truth of Jesus resurrection. Two names were proposed, Joseph called Barsabas, and Matthias. After they had prayed asking God to show them the right person as he knew hearts, they then cast lots. The lot fell on Matthias and he was selected. Casting lots consisted of marked stones representing each candidate being placed in a jar and shaken out. The one whose stone fell out first was chosen (cf. 1 Chr 26:13).<sup>4</sup>

**Q7: How was the replacement Apostle selected and what was the criteria?**

### **Small Group Discussion**

Q8: The disciples were not only to wait but to remain in Jerusalem. Why would that be difficult for you to do and why?

**A: Open**

Q9: Jesus told the disciples that It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority, what are some questions you want to ask the Lord that may merit the same answer from the Lord?

**A: Open**

Q10: How is the selection of leaders at Heritage similar and different from the way Matthias was selected?

**A:**

Q11: What key thought(s) do you take away from this lesson?

**A: Open**

---

<sup>4</sup> John B. Polhill, [Acts](#), vol. 26, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 95.