

A Study in Acts

Lesson 2: Acts Chapter 1

Connecting Luke's Gospel to Acts

In the last 9 verses of the Luke's Gospel, Luke tells us about Christ's last instructions and His ascension in to heaven.

Luk 24:45-53 KJV

- (45) Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures,
- (46) And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day:
- (47) And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.
- (48) And ye are witnesses of these things.
- (49) And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.
- (50) And he led them out as far as to Bethany, and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them.
- (51) And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven.
- (52) And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy:
- (53) And were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God. Amen.

Focus on verse 49. The Apostles were to return to Jerusalem and tarry there until "clothed with power on high". They then did as Jesus commanded them.

Introduction

The beginning of the book of Acts takes up right where Luke's Gospel left off:

Act 1:1-5 KJV

- (1) The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach,
- (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:
- (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:
- (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, ye have heard of me.
- (5) For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.

Luke has reminded us of Jesus' command that the Apostles return to Jerusalem and wait. Instead of "clothed with power on high", we are told they will be "baptized in the Holy Spirit".

One Final Question

Act 1:6-9 KJV

- (6) When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?
- (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.
- (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.

Error always dies hard, especially that type of error which is deeply ingrained and fortified by human lusts and desires. An earthly kingdom was never, in the long history of Israel, or at any other time, contained in the purpose of God for Israel. Even the kingdom of Saul, David, and Solomon, which God permitted but never approved, was from its inception a rejection of God's government of the chosen people.

1Sa 8:6-7 ASV

- (6) But the thing displeased Samuel, when they said, Give us a king to judge us. And Samuel prayed unto Jehovah.
- (7) And Jehovah said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee; for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not be king over them.

Israel's desire for the restoration of THAT kingdom blinded their eyes to the Christ; and here it is evident that even the sacred Twelve themselves were contaminated with the earthly kingdom virus!

The question shows unmistakably that Jesus' kingdom had not yet been inaugurated; for, if it had been, it is inconceivable that these men, who were its chief executive officers on earth, knew nothing of the fact; and it is equally inconceivable that if it had been, Jesus would not have promptly corrected so egregious a blunder on the part of his disciples.

The kingdom in its present phase would begin very shortly; but Jesus passed over their ignorance on that point, fully aware that with the coming of the Spirit upon them they would have it brought to their remembrance all that Jesus had already taught on that question; but human curiosity is unlimited, and Jesus immediately warned his apostles that the final phase of the kingdom, including the resurrection and final judgment, would come at a time unknown to any man, not even to himself in his earthly limitation.

Jesus Ascends

Act 1:9 KJV

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

Note that this ends Jesus' visitations to Earth in body. Note also that there was such a cloud at the transfiguration:

Mat 17:5 While he was yet speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold, a voice out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.

Jesus spoke of his coming "in the clouds of heaven":

Mar 14:62 And Jesus said, I am: and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.

; and in the Old Testament, a cloud was the visible token to Israel that the glory of God dwelt in the tent of meeting:

Exo 40:34 Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle..

A Prophecy

Act 1:10-11 KJV

- (10) And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel;
- (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.

These men were most likely angels, so identified from their dazzling apparel, as frequently spoken of in Scripture:

[Mat 28:2-3 KJV](#)

- (2) And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it.
- (3) His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow:

[Joh 20:11-12 KJV](#)

- (11) But Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping: and as she wept, she stooped down, and looked into the sepulchre,
- (12) And seeth two angels in white sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain.

The message of the angels to the heavenward gazing apostles has the spiritual effect of challenging every believer to be busily engaged in the service of the Lord, rather than wasting time by gazing into those things, which are beyond all human knowledge of them. This is also a heavenly pledge that the Second Coming will be literal and physical as was Jesus' departure. Also, the manner of his coming will be "in the clouds of heaven," as frequently stated in the New Testament.

Waiting in Jerusalem

Worship with the women (Including Mary) and Jesus' Brethren

[Act 1:12-14 KJV](#)

- (12) Then returned they unto Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a sabbath day's journey.
- (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.
- (14) These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren.

Bethany, on the eastern slope of Olivet, was fifteen furlongs from Jerusalem

[Joh 11:18 KJV](#)

- (18) Now Bethany was nigh unto Jerusalem, about fifteen furlongs off:

and, since the distance from the site of the ascension to Jerusalem was a sabbath day's journey (approximately 3,000 feet), the site would have to be about two-thirds of the distance from Bethany to Jerusalem (fifteen furlongs being about 9,100 feet).

This upper room may not be certainly identified, despite persistent tradition to the effect that it was the place where the Last Supper was held, and that it was in the home of Mary, sister of Barnabas and mother of John Mark.

The list of the Twelve is given four times in the New Testament, in Matthew 10, Mark 3, Luke 6, and here. This list is like the others in that Peter, Philip, and James are recorded first in three groups

of four each, of course, the name of Judas being deleted here. The mention of the apostles by name stresses that the Twelve (Luke would immediately record the replacement of Judas by Matthias) were on hand in Jerusalem, as Jesus commanded, waiting for the promise of the Father.

There are four separately mentioned classes of persons who made up this company. They were (1) the apostles, (2) Mary the mother of Jesus and certain other devout women, (3) the brothers of Jesus, and (4) certain other disciples (Acts 1:15).

This is the last mention of the Mary in the New Testament; and, from the fact of her being here with the apostles, it is evident that John honored the Lord's commission to receive her into his home and care for her:

[Joh 19:26-27 KJV](#)

(26) When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son!

(27) Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own

The brothers of Jesus were James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas:

[Mat 13:55 KJV](#)

(55) Is not this the carpenter's son? is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas?

and from the fact of their being mentioned apart from the apostles, it is clear that those apostles bearing some of these same names were not brothers of the Lord.

The Replacement

Peter Comments on Judas

[Act 1:15-17 KJV](#)

(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,)

(16) Men 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.

(17) For he was numbered with us, and had obtained part of this ministry.

The apostles knew they were going to be baptized with the Holy Spirit according to promise and prophecy and that there should be Twelve in the group. Because of this Peter directed the selection of one to fill the vacancy left by the betrayal of Judas. This truth lends still more force to the thought that only the Twelve were baptized in the Holy Spirit.

Here again, as invariably throughout the word of God, the prophets and writers of the Old Testament are represented, not as originating the words they delivered, but as receiving them from the Lord by means of the Holy Spirit. Thus it was not David who spoke, but the Holy Spirit. Jesus himself emphasized this emphatically

[Mat 22:43-44 KJV](#)

(43) He saith unto them, How then doth David in spirit call him Lord, saying,

(44) The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool?

Verse 17 makes two statements, (1) that Judas was numbered with the Twelve, and (2) that he "received" his portion of the apostolic ministry. This means that Judas, at first, was a genuine

apostle, he, not less than the others, being commissioned to cast out demons and to heal all manner of diseases

[Mat 10:1 KJV](#)

(1) And when he had called unto . . . his twelve disciples, he gave them power . . . unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease.

This refutes the allegation that Judas was a devil from the beginning.

Luke Comments on Judas

[Act 1:18-19 KJV](#)

(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.

(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.

In most translations, these two verses are placed in parenthesis to let us know that Luke is speaking here, not Peter.

Matthew's account of this incident recorded in Mathew 27:7 and following has been alleged to contradict what Luke said here; but, in actuality, the two accounts are in perfect harmony. Judas hanged himself, as Matthew related; but his body also fell, as in Luke. We do not know whether the fall took place as a result of Judas' bungling efforts at suicide, or if his body hung until it fell of natural causes. Tradition says that he fell while in the process of hanging himself.

It is also pointed out as contradiction that Luke here states that Judas purchased the field. In Mathew 27 it is stated that priests purchased the "potter's field". Again, there is no contradiction here. Judas provided the money, which remained his after his death; and therefore the field properly belonged to Judas, his estate, and his heirs (if any). Certainly, the priests refused to accept the returned money, either for themselves or for the temple treasury. Thus it is exactly true that Judas "obtained" the field. His money bought it. The priests, however, actually did the purchasing, hence the statement that "they" bought the field.

Peter Speaks of Qualifications

[Act 1:20-22 KJV](#)

(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.

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

(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.

“Bishoprick” means “office of bishop”.

The two passages from Psalms are Psa. 69:25 and Psa. 109:8, where certain unnamed enemies of the Psalmist are imprecated. Peter's reason for applying these words to Judas appears to be this: since the enemies of David, who was only a type of Christ, were thus denounced, then certainly an enemy and betrayer of the greater Son of David would be the proper object of the same denunciation.

Verses 21 and 22 shed light upon two of the most important subjects in the New Testament, (1) the qualifications of an apostle, and (2) the purpose of an apostle, that of witnessing the resurrection of Christ.

If not even a successor to Judas could be named an apostle except from among those who were constant companions of Jesus from John's baptism until the resurrection of Christ, how is it possible that any person in subsequent ages should be hailed as an apostle?

It should be noted that death did not remove Judas from his office; it was his betrayal of Jesus that removed him. When James was executed by Herod (Acts 12:2), no successor was chosen.

Moreover, Christ had promised the Twelve:

Mat 19:28 KJV

(28) And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

Therefore, all of the Twelve except Judas are still in office, all thought of a successor to any of them being absolutely an error.

The prime function of an apostle was that of a witness of Christ's resurrection; and, in the history of the world, there was never any such thing as a person not a witness becoming a successor to a witness. In the very nature of witnesses, there can be no such thing as a successor.

The Replacement is Chosen

Act 1:23-26 KJV

(23) And they appointed two, Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias.

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

(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.

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

Who did the putting forward? Is it to be supposed that the 120 disciples mentioned a little later did this? There is no evidence whatever that such a group had been disciples from the beginning of John's baptism; and thus it is not reasonable to suppose that anyone participated in the selection of Justus and Matthias except the apostles. Furthermore, there is a strong inference in this passage that only two qualified men could be found, other than the apostles themselves. It appears that those two were equally qualified, hence the decision through casting lots.

The Apostles then pray to the Lord, this is probably Jesus, since he did the original choosing of the twelve and the verse states "thou hast chosen". An interesting note in translation as well. The KJV states "from which Judas by transgression fell". Other English translations state that "Judas fell away". The Greek word "parabaiano" is used here and means "transgression". Leaving this word out in some English translations has led to confusion on this matter.

Is there any more disturbing phrase in the bible than "that he might go to his own place"? It shows that we all have a "place" in eternity.