

# Acts 1

Written by Luke the beloved physician  
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## Introduction:

### ● Why study Acts?

1. **We study Acts to find what the Lord considers important in church life.** Today there are divisions among churches about matters totally foreign to the New Testament Church and issues that could puzzle even the apostles.
2. The study of Acts is not a high priority in church life today because it is not *horizontally* relational. There is much interest in the “How to . . .” classes such as how to get along with a spouse or children.
3. But the message of Acts is very important because it shows God’s day-to-day working with His people. It does show a very strong *vertical* relationship such as Acts 2:47.

### ● The Author was Luke

1. Acts was written by “Luke, the beloved doctor” (Colossians 4:14) after he discovered the Great Physician. He gives the story medical precision beyond what others would write as seen in Acts 3:7-8.
2. The ministry of Jesus garnered a much smaller following than might be expected. God had come to earth in human form, lived as a man, identified Himself to His people for more than three years. One would have expected multiplied thousands to become His disciples, but instead, those He came to save killed Him, or had Him killed. The followers of Christ probably numbered less than 1,000 at this point. However, Jesus rose from the grave and paid for the sins of all who would believe in Him. And that resurrection is the key for the explosion that is beginning in Acts.
3. **William Barclay** gives an overview:

Church Growth Statements in the Book of Acts		
2:41	Jerusalem	About 3,000 souls were added to them
2:47	Jerusalem	The Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved
4:4	Jerusalem	The number of the men came to be about 5,000
5:14	Jerusalem	Believers were increasingly added to the Lord
6:1	Jerusalem	The number of disciples was multiplying
6:7	Jerusalem	The number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem
8:4	Jerusalem	Those . . . scattered went everywhere preaching the word
8:12	Samaria	Both men and women were baptized
8:13	Samaria	Simon himself also believed; and when he was baptized
8:38	Judea	Ethiopian Eunuch was baptized
9:18	Damascus	Saul (Paul) was baptized
9:31	Judea, Galilee, Samaria	The churches were multiplied
9:42	Joppa	Many believed on the Lord
10:48	Caesarea	Cornelius and his household were baptized
11:21	Antioch	A great number believed and turned to the Lord
11:24	Antioch	And a great many people were added to the Lord
12:24	Jerusalem	But the word of the Lord grew and multiplied
13:49	Antioch	And the word of Lord was being spread throughout the region
14:1	Iconium	A great multitude of both of the Jews and Greeks believed
14:21	Derbe	And made many disciples
16:15	Philippi	Lydia and household baptized
16:33	Philippi	Jailer and his household were baptized
17:4	Thessalonica	A great multitude of devout Greeks
17:12	Berea	Many of them believed
17:34	Athens	Some men joined him and believed
18:8	Corinth	Many of the Corinthians, hearing, believed, and were baptized
19:5	Ephesus	Twelve men were baptized in the name of the Lord

In two senses Acts is the second chapter of a continued story. First, it is the second volume which Luke had sent to Theophilus. In the first volume, his Gospel, Luke had told the story of the life of Jesus upon earth. Now he goes on to tell the story of the Christian Church. Second, Acts is the second volume of a story which has no end. The Gospel was only the story of what Jesus began to do and to teach.

4. In the Gospel of Luke 24:49, he records Jesus as saying **"And now I will send the Holy Spirit, just as My Father promised."** and in Acts 1:8 he records Jesus as saying **"but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you."** This verbal hint ties the two books to one writer.
5. Luke was the first medical missionary, available to minister to Paul's injuries as they traveled the Roman empire.
6. He appears to be a seasoned traveler and very familiar with nautical terms. Some have suggested that he had been a ship's doctor at some past time.
7. While Luke does not claim inspiration in Acts, Paul, his traveling companion, quotes Luke 10:7 in 1 Timothy 5:18 and calls it *Scripture*.
8. Luke, in Acts, quotes from Genesis, Exodus, Deuteronomy, 1 Kings, Psalms, Isaiah, Joel, Amos and Habakkuk. In quoting forty-two times, he demonstrates his agreement with the known inspired men of an earlier period. This is a test of inspiration.

#### ● The Time of Luke's Writing

1. Luke concluded writing Acts when he was with Paul in Rome about A.D. 61. This is based on the abrupt ending of the book.
2. "Some scholars point out that Luke makes no reference to any event later than AD 62 (leaving out the persecutions of Nero, the Fall of Jerusalem, and much more). It would be odd for him not to make some passing reference to these major events, if they had already taken place when he wrote. The end of Paul's life isn't mentioned either, nor even his fourth missionary journey, on which he seems to have reached Spain

- Aaron was to cast lots to pick the scapegoat. Leviticus 16:8
- Proverbs recommends it for settling disputes. Prov. 18:18
- Joshua used it in the distribution of land. Joshua 18:10
- This is the final recorded use of casting of lots among God's people. From here on, the Holy Spirit will indicate what the will of God is.

#### CHAPTER SUMMARY:

1. Jesus met with His apostles over a 40 day period, telling them to wait in Jerusalem for the baptism of the Holy Spirit.
2. Among the apostles' support group were the half-brothers of Jesus, now become believers in His resurrection.
3. During the waiting, Matthias is selected as a replacement for Judas and in line to receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

### A SUMMARY IN RHYME

The Book of Acts tells when the church was founded,  
 Written by Luke to Theophilus in order to be grounded.  
 The story ends in the city of far-off Rome  
 Where Paul lived in chains in a home of his own.  
 Dr. Luke wrote from both his experience and that of others  
 So readers of all generations could become brothers.  
 Jesus had promised His Spirit to the Apostles eleven  
 So they could be empowered to help others to heaven.  
 These special men were to be His eyewitnesses  
 Here, there and across the world of religiousness.  
 About 110 disciples waited with them in the upper room  
 To talk and pray about what had happened at the tomb.  
 Judas had blown it and was replaced by Matthias  
 Who was a good man like John's father Zacharias.

—by Charles Dailey

- The person picked would then be equipped by the Holy Spirit to go forth and **witness** about the **Resurrection**.
- Evidently, the apostles were in executive session with the 100 + looking on. Notice the use of **us** in these two verses.

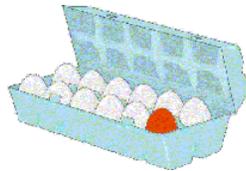
### MATTHIAS IS SELECTED

(Acts 1:23) So they nominated two men: Joseph called Barsabbas (also known as Justus) and Matthias.

- They chose two men from the 100 + as candidates for the smaller group of 12. The larger group included the women, but none were presented for the choice.

(Acts 1:24) Then they all prayed, "O Lord, You know every heart. Show us which of these men You have chosen (25) as an apostle to replace Judas in this ministry, for he has deserted us and gone where he belongs."

- The group **prayed** for the **Lord** to pick one of the qualified men. The **Lord** Jesus knew, but they must learn His choice to replace **Judas**. He had previously chosen the other apostles. See vs. 2.
- **Judas** needed to be **replaced** because it was the 12, not the 120 who would be receiving the baptism of the Holy Spirit. If the entire 120 were slated to receive the power, no replacement for **Judas** would have been needed.
- **Judas** was treated respectfully in death.



(Acts 1:26) Then they cast lots, and Matthias was selected to become an apostle with the other eleven.

- The number of **apostles** has now returned to twelve. Acts 6:2. The inspired writer Luke says so.
- The **casting of lots** is found many places in Scripture.
  - The Roman soldiers who crucified Jesus cast lots for His clothes. Luke 23:34.
  - The Gentile sailors looking for the cause of the storm cast lots and Jonah was identified. Jonah 1:7

and perhaps even seen the Atlantic." - Quote from an unknown writer.

### ● Luke's Sources

1. Beginning with Acts 16, Luke was writing from first hand observation.
2. For the earlier part of Acts Luke had been in contact with **Mary**, the mother of Jesus. She was a personal observer of the early portions of Acts. **Silas** could have provided information about the second missionary journey, as could **Timothy**.

### ● Luke's Characterizations

1. Luke always shows the believers in a good light with the exceptions of Ananias, Sapphira, and Simon the Sorcerer.
2. Luke, writing as a Gentile to the Gentile Theophilus, shows the extreme opposition that developed to the gospel message among the Jewish leaders. This includes their mindless opposition to all Gentiles. We learn more about Theophilus in Acts 1:1.
3. He generally shows Roman officials to be fair-minded men. The Roman centurions are men of above-average character. The higher officials are impartial in their judging. While Felix was motivated by greed, he was replaced by fairer Festus who obeyed the Roman law and sent Paul to Rome to be tried by Caesar. Such wonderful fairness to a Roman citizen!

## — Acts —

### THE PROMISE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT TO THE APOSTLES

(Acts 1:1 NLV) In my first book I told you, Theophilus, about everything Jesus began to do and teach (2) until the day He was taken up to heaven after giving His chosen apostles further instructions through the Holy Spirit.

- **The first book** had also been written to **Theophilus** by Luke. It covered the ministry of **Jesus** and we call it the Gospel of Luke. Luke 1:1-4.
- In Luke 1:3 Luke addresses **Theophilus** as "most excellent **Theophilus**," a title reserved in Acts for Roman governors.
- Theophilus was a governor working for the Roman Empire and the expression **further instructions** resonated with him. He was a man of authority and viewed life from the standpoint of authority.

**(Acts 1:3) During the forty days after His crucifixion, He appeared to the apostles from time to time, and He proved to them in many ways that He was actually alive. And He talked to them about the Kingdom of God.**

- Following **His crucifixion**, He **appeared** to these **apostles** who knew Him best—over a period of **forty days**, following up on previous teaching about the **kingdom of God**. Jesus not only looked like Jesus as they knew Him, but He continued old conversations, further proof of his identity.
- The resurrection was the **center** of every sermon the apostles preached that is recorded in Acts.

**(Acts 1:4) Once when He was eating with them, He commanded them, "Do not leave Jerusalem until the Father sends you the gift He promised, as I told you before. (5) John baptized with water, but in just a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."**

- Jesus exercised leadership with His men by calling a meeting and commanding them to stay in town. Without Jesus' urging, they would have returned home to Galilee. Being a governor, Theophilus could relate to these **commands**.
- The Father, working through the Son, had promised them a baptism different than John's. Now they were to be **baptized with the Holy Spirit**.

**place the Aramaic name Akeldama, which means "Field of Blood.")**

- Luke inserts two sentences to catch Theophilus up on what had happened—verses 18 and 19.
- Suicide was unusual among the Jewish people, but Judas had hanged himself, although Luke does not specify it here. William Barclay suggests several reasons that Judas might have betrayed Jesus but likes this one best: Judas never meant Jesus to die but betrayed him with the intention of forcing his hand. If that be so, Judas had the tragic experience of seeing his plan go desperately wrong; and in his bitter remorse he committed suicide.
- The money paid to Judas was collected and used by the priests to buy a potter's field to use as a burial ground. Judas was hanging there dead because it was Passover and a body could not be touched. The corpse fell apart. The plot of land was named **Field of Blood** because of Judas.
- **Aramaic (their own language)** was normally spoken in Jerusalem. Dr. Luke is writing to Theophilus in the Greek language. Now, back to Peter's speech:

### **PETER CONTINUES**

**(Acts 1:20) Peter continued, "This was written in the book of Psalms, where it says, 'Let his home become desolate, with no one living in it.' [Psalm 69:25] It also says, 'Let someone else take his position.' [PSALM 109:8]**

- Peter sees the **Psalm 69** passage as prophesying the burial ground and **Psalm 109** as saying that his special office should be passed to **someone else**.

**(Acts 1:21) "So now we must choose a replacement for Judas from among the men who were with us the entire time we were traveling with the Lord Jesus— (22) from the time He was baptized by John until the day He was taken from us. Whoever is chosen will join us as a witness of Jesus' resurrection."**

- For a person to be selected, he needed to have the experience of being with **Jesus** during His ministry.

arrested. But that was before the Resurrection day when He appeared to his half-brother James as recorded in 1 Corinthians 15:7. These former skeptics are now listed among the believers. Here is another powerful proof of the Resurrection.

### PETER ADDRESSED THE BELIEVERS

**(Acts 1:15) During this time, when about 120 believers were together in one place, Peter stood up and addressed them.**

- The scene has changed to a room that can handle a large gathering. **Peter** is the man up front doing the talking. He is first among equals, a leader but not a final authority.
- There are more believers than are present here. 1 Corinthians 15:6 mentions 500 in one place.

**(Acts 1:16) "Brothers," He said, "the Scriptures had to be fulfilled concerning Judas, who guided those who arrested Jesus. This was predicted long ago by the Holy Spirit, speaking through King David.**

- Peter began with **Scripture**. They all believed it.
- He says that **David** spoke some words by **the Holy Spirit**. The listeners all believed **David** their king of 1,000 years before.
- **Judas** chose to be the betrayer. God even spoke of a betrayer 1,000 years before it happened.

**(Acts 1:17) Judas was one of us and shared in the ministry with us."**

- The apostles had trusted **Judas**, making him their treasurer. He had preached and performed miracles just like the others.

### LUKE INSERTS BACKGROUND

**(Acts 1:18) (Judas had bought a field with the money he received for his treachery. Falling headfirst there, his body split open, spilling out all his intestines. (19) The news of his death spread to all the people of Jerusalem, and they gave the**

### BEGIN YOUR WORK FROM JERUSALEM

**(Acts 1:6) So when the apostles were with Jesus, they kept asking Him, "Lord, has the time come for You to free Israel and restore our kingdom?"**

- The apostles had heard Jesus tell of the **kingdom** of God and had preached it themselves. But they were still thinking it would be **Israel** of old being **restored**. They were looking for a physical **kingdom**.

- **William Barclay** observes:

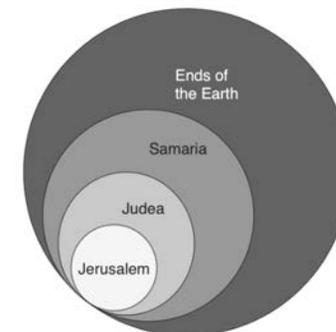
The Jews were always vividly conscious of being God's chosen people. They took that to mean that they were destined for special privilege and for world-wide dominion. The whole course of their history proved that humanly speaking that could never be. Palestine was a little country not more than 120 miles long by 40 miles wide. It had its days of independence but it had become subject in turn to the Babylonians, the Persians, the Greeks and the Romans. So the Jews began to look forward to a day when God would break directly into human history and establish that world sovereignty of which they dreamed. They conceived of the kingdom in political terms.

**(Acts 1:7) He replied, "The Father alone has the authority to set those dates and times, and they are not for you to know. (8) But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be My witnesses, telling people about Me everywhere – in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."**

- Jesus declined to spell out a timeframe but repeated His promise that the **Holy Spirit would come upon you**. Luke reserves this language for the miracle-working power.

- This **power** would enable them to witness for Him in:

- **Jerusalem**. All of them witnessed for Jesus here.
- **Judea and Samaria**. Some went to the surrounding provinces.



- **The remotest parts of the earth.** All of them went to remote places. For example, the apostle Thomas went to India.
- This is one way of outlining the book of Acts.

**(Acts 1:9) After saying this, He was taken up into a cloud while they were watching, and they could no longer see Him.**

- They were eyewitnesses of the ascension, too. This was an added evidence of the resurrection.
- Jesus left earth after fulfilling His purpose to die for mankind including each of us.

### JESUS WILL RETURN SOMEDAY

**(Acts 1:10) As they strained to see Him rising into heaven, two white-robed men suddenly stood among them.**

- Luke speaks of **two men in white**. They were angels.

**(Acts 1:11) "Men of Galilee," they said, "why are you standing here staring into heaven? Jesus has been taken from you into heaven, but someday He will return from heaven in the same way you saw Him go!"**

- The apostles were all from **Galilee**. The only Judean was Judas Iscariot and he was no longer on the team.
- Jesus will **return in the same manner you saw Him go**. There are events in history that might be described as a coming of Christ, but only the second coming *in person from heaven* meets this qualification spoken by the white-robed men.
- The Scottish **William Barclay** observes:
  - . . . this passage brings us face to face with the Second Coming. About the Second Coming we must remember two things. First, to speculate when and how it will happen is both foolish and useless, Jesus said that not even he knew the day and the hour when the Son of Man would come. (Mark 13:32.)
  - Second, the essential teaching of Christianity is that God has a plan for man and the world. We are bound to believe that

history is not a haphazard conglomeration of chance events which are going nowhere.

### THE DISCIPLES WAITED IN JERUSALEM

**(Acts 1:12) Then the apostles returned to Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives, a distance of half a mile.**

- The apostles returned to **Jerusalem** proper.

**(Acts 1:13) When they arrived, they went to the upstairs room of the house where they were staying. Here are the names of those who were present: Peter, John, James, Andrew, Philip, Thomas, Bartholomew, Matthew, James (son of Alphaeus), Simon (the Zealot), and Judas (son of James).**

- They were all staying in the **upstairs room**, presumably the same one where they had observed the first Lord's Supper. This may have been John Mark's mother's house because the church assembled there later. Acts 12:12.
- Luke identifies each of the 11 apostles so there will not be impostors later.

**(Acts 1:14) They all met together and were constantly united in prayer, along with Mary the mother of Jesus, several other women, and the brothers of Jesus.**

- The apostles were **united**. No more discussions about who was the greatest.
  - They were spending much time in **prayer** with some notable people added to their group.
    - **The women:** Luke has identified this group in Luke 8:2-3. They appear also at Luke 23:55 and 24:1-2.
    - **Mary the mother of Jesus** received special notice—as she should. She may have reported these events to Luke when he was writing Acts.
    - The surprising addition to the group were the four **brothers of Jesus**, James and Joseph and Simon and Judas. Matthew 13:55.
- Near the end of His ministry, they did not believe and encouraged Him to go to Jerusalem where He could be