

## The Acts of the Apostles

Lesson: 1

Topic: Book Overview, Promise of the Holy Spirit (1:1-5), The Ascension of Our Lord (1:6-11), Matthias Chosen to Replace Judas (1:12-26)

Reading: Acts 1:1-26

### Overview

- Title: The Acts of the Apostles
- Author:
  - Luke the Evangelist, who also wrote the Gospel of Luke
  - By writing his Gospel and Acts, Luke wrote about 25% of the NT.
- Date of Composition:
  - The content of Acts requires that it was composed after Paul reached Rome. Since Paul and Peter were executed at Rome in AD 68 and Acts doesn't record these events, the book was most likely written before their executions.
  - The Lutheran Study Bible has the date of roughly AD 60-62.
- Dates Covered:
  - Beginning with the Ascension of Christ to Paul's House arrest in Rome
  - This is roughly 25 years (c AD 33-58).
- Division of the Book:
  - Divided easily between the work of Peter (chp. 1-12) and the work of Paul (chp. 13-28).

### Acts 1:1-5

#### Verse 1

- "In the first book..."
  - Here's your reference to the Gospel of Luke.
  - Acts is to be thought of as the direct continuation of Luke's Gospel, with the exalted Christ as its dominate figure (Acts 1:1)
- "Theophilus"
  - Means "Lover of God"
  - Theophilus is mentioned in Luke 1:3
    - "In the opening paragraph, Luke describes the purpose of his gospel in terms of catechesis. The gospel is written for an individual by the name of Theophilus who has been 'catechized' and so is familiar with the basic tenets of faith" (Just, Luke 1:1-9:50, 37).
- "All that Jesus began to do and teach,"
  - Notice the word 'began'
  - Throughout Jesus' earthly ministry He performed many miracles and taught.
  - After His ascension, He continues to work and speak to His Church through those whom He sends.

### Verse 2

- Q: What does it mean by “the day when he was taken up?” (A: *His Ascension*)
- Q: How many days were there between Jesus’ resurrection and ascension? (A: *40 Days*)
- Q: What does the word “apostle” mean? (A: *A man sent out on behalf of another with the authority of the one who sent him.*)

### Verse 3

- Q: What proofs did Jesus show the apostles that He was risen from the dead? (A: *The wounds in His hands and side; they could touch His body; He ate and drank with them; He taught them; they could see His with their own eyes.*)

### Verse 4

- Q: What were the apostles told to do in Jerusalem? (A: *To wait for the Holy Spirit to come upon them so that they could be His faithful witnesses.*)

### Verse 5

- “for John baptized with water...”
  - John’s baptism was the baptism of repentance unto remission of sins, and hence had the Holy Spirit even as this Spirit alone brought faith through the OT era.
  - To reduce John’s baptism to a mere water ceremony that was devoid of the Spirit is wrong and contradicts Luke 3:3.
  - John began the work with baptism that used water.
  - Jesus was to finish at Pentecost where the Holy Spirit would come upon the apostles – tongues of fire.
  - The Spirit filled the disciples in a miraculous way and gave them great power. This is called “being baptized.”

## **Acts 1:6-11**

### Verse 6

- Q: What did the apostles want to know? (A: *When Jesus would restore the kingdom to Israel?*)
- Q: What kind of kingdom were the apostles thinking of? (A: *An earthly kingdom.*)

### Verse 7

- Q: What kingdom is Jesus speaking of? (A: *The kingdom of God.*)
- Q: How does God’s kingdom come? (A: *See Catechism: ‘God’s kingdom comes when our heavenly Father gives us His Holy Spirit, so that by His grace we believe His holy Word...’*)

### Verse 8

- Q: What were the apostles told to do after the Holy Spirit would come upon them? (A: *Be witnesses to Jesus in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the end of the earth.*)

- Q: How do the apostles continue to bear witness to Jesus today? *(A: Through the Apostolic Word of the New Testament that is preached and taught in the Church throughout the world.)*

#### Verse 9

- Q: What happened to Jesus after He had spoken to the apostles? *(A: He was taken up into heaven and a cloud received Him out of their sight.)*

#### Verse 10

- Q: Who were the two men that appeared to the apostles? *(A: Angels)*

#### Verse 11

- Q: What do the angels promise the apostles? *(A: Jesus will come again in glory, even as He ascended into heaven in glory?)*
- Q: What fundamental Christian doctrine does the word 'return' refer to? *(A: The return of Christ to Judgement).*
- Q: Did Jesus leave His apostles and the Church when He ascended into heaven? *(A: No. Matthew 28:20 reveals that He is with us always even to the end of the age.)*
- Q: How does Christ continue to be present among us? *(A: Through the preaching of the Gospel and the celebration of the Sacraments.)*

### **Acts 1:12-26**

#### Verses 12-14

- Following Jesus' Ascension and prior to the day of Pentecost, the Apostles return to Jerusalem.
- "upper room"
  - Discrepancy on whether this is the upper room of the Last Supper, or where Jesus appeared to the disciples following His resurrection, or a completely different room.
  - Either way, it appears this is the apostles "new headquarters" sort of speak. The place where they were staying.
- Q: Why were the names of the eleven apostles important? *(A: The Church needed to know that they were the men whom Jesus had chosen to be the witnesses of His death and resurrection. Through them, Jesus would give His authoritative Word to the church.)*
- Q: Who gathered with them? *(A: The women, Jesus' mother Mary, and His brothers.)*
- Q: What did the apostles do? *(A: They continued together in prayer, waiting for the Holy Spirit.)*

#### Verses 15-26

- "In those days"

- That is the days between Jesus ascension and the day of Pentecost.
- With Judas committing suicide, there were now 11 apostles.
- Jesus appointed no substitute for Judas during the forty days.
- The fact that the number of apostles must be twelve according to:
  - The number Jesus originally chose.
  - Which matched the twelve tribes of Israel.
  - And the twelve thrown awaiting them to judge the twelve tribes.
- Q: What qualifications did Peter prescribe for Judas's replacement? (A: He had to have accompanied the apostles from the baptism of John to the day of Jesus' ascension.)
- Q: Who did the Church select to fill Judas's office? (A: Matthias)
- Q: What is the difference between the apostles call and Matthias' call? (A: Jesus chose His apostles directly. Through the gathered church, Jesus calls Matthias.)
- Q: Who would Jesus later choose to be His apostle? (A: Saul of Tarsus who became the Apostle Paul.)
- Q: How does God call men today to be pastors today? (A: Through the church.)

### **Terms**

- gospels: The first four books of the new testament. They record the "good news" of the ministry, death, and resurrection of Christ.
- epistles: Letters from the apostles to the church and her ministers in various places.
- Ascension: The event in Christ's exaltation, forty days after His resurrection. This marked the beginning of His session at the right hand of God the Father.
- disciples: A believer in Jesus who trust His Word.
- witnesses: Those who had seen the resurrected Christ.
- apostles: These men were eyewitnesses of Jesus' resurrection, chosen and "sent out" by His to speak His Word on His behalf in the world. The church is founded upon their word.
- prophets: The Old Testament men of God who were called by His to preach His Word to the people of Israel and point them to the coming Savior.
- evangelist: Ministers in the New Testament who preached as missionaries through the world. The term means "Gospel preacher" and is used of the authors of the four gospels.

### **Catechesis Summary**

- Jesus' ascension into heaven is part of Christ's exaltation by God the Father for having redeems us from sin, death, and the power of Satan.
- Through His suffering and death on the cross, Jesus accomplished our salvation, opened heaven for us by the forgiveness of all our sins.
- Since His death won forgiveness of sins, He had to rise from the dead.
- Ascended to the right hand of God – a place of power and authority – He continues to rule for the sake of His church.
- He hasn't gone to a place far away but comes to His church on earth through preaching and His gifts of Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

- The Acts of the Apostles is a continuation of Luke's Gospel in which the acts and preaching of Jesus continue in the world after His ascension through the ministry of the Apostles.
- The Apostles were the men Jesus had chosen to preach His Gospel and be the eyewitnesses of all that He had said and done.
- They were to establish the Church upon God's authoritative Word.
- Ephesians 2:20 reveals the Church, "is build upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone."
- The Church doesn't exist and has no life apart from the Prophetic and Apostolic Scriptures.
- Every church and every pastor sent by God is bound to His Word.