

Jesus' Promise to His Apostles

Acts 1

Introduction

In his gospel, Luke wrote about Jesus' life and **ministry** on earth. He records Jesus' death, resurrection, and **ascension** into heaven. Did you know Jesus' ministry did not end with His ascension. The ministry of Jesus was carried on by His apostles through the mighty power of the **Holy Spirit**. The book of Acts is written to teach how Christ's ministry continued in the apostles' lives even after He returned to Heaven.

Before Jesus returned to Heaven, He gave the apostles a promise about their ministry. Luke begins the book of Acts with testimony about Jesus' appearances after his resurrection, and he tells about the promise Jesus gave the apostles. He also describes the ascension witnessed by the apostles.

Outline of Acts 1

- I. A Previous Account - Acts 1:1-2
- II. Jesus' Appearances After the Resurrection - Acts 1:3-8
- III. Jesus' Ascension - Acts 1:9-11
- IV. After the Ascension - Acts 1:12-26

I. A Previous Account - Acts 1:1-2

The Book of Acts is addressed to Theophilus, just like the Gospel of Luke. In the first verse of Acts, Luke reminds Theophilus of the contents of the gospel. Luke's gospel was all about what Jesus did and taught. Now we will see what Jesus continued to do and teach through the ministry of His followers. This is so exciting because Jesus continues to do and teach through His followers today. He does it the same way He did in the first century — through the power of the Holy Spirit. What is Jesus doing through you? Who is He teaching through you?

The gospel of Luke also tells us that before the ascension, Jesus gave certain commands to His apostles. The first is that they were to wait in Jerusalem for the promise of the Father (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4). The second was that they were to be witnesses to the world (Luke 24:47; Acts 1:8).

II. Jesus' Appearances After the Resurrection **- Acts 1:3-8**

Appearances of Christ between His resurrection and ascension are recorded in Matthew 28, Mark 16, Luke 24, John 20-21, and 1 Corinthians 15:5-7. Acts tells us who Jesus appeared to, how long the period of appearances lasted, and why He appeared.

The apostles were the men Jesus chose (1:2b) to minister with Him while He was on earth. They were to carry on His ministry after He returned to the Father. He appeared to them over a forty day period to 1) prove His resurrection, 2) speak about the kingdom of God, 3) give them instructions, 4) answer their questions, and 5) commission them.

Luke tells us that Christ presented many **"infallible proofs"** that He was alive. The apostles witnessed His death, and they needed to know He was alive. They saw Him with their own eyes many times. They touched Him (John 20:26-29). They heard Him. They knew it was Jesus by what they saw and by what He said!

The *kingdom of God* was Jesus' message before He died and after He rose again. It was important because it was the **doctrine** the apostles were to preach. As you study Acts, watch to see how many times the "kingdom of God" is mentioned.

In Luke 24:49, Jesus spoke of the *Promise of My Father* which would give His apostles *power from on high*. He also promised them that when He went away, He would send them a *Helper* who would never leave them (John 14:16; 15:26; 16:7). Jesus instructed them to wait in Jerusalem for the fulfillment of the promise.

John the Baptist, who baptized with water for the repentance of sins, predicted the future baptism of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 3:11; Mark 1:8). The Holy Spirit was the Helper Jesus promised to the apostles. Believers today have this same Helper.

Verse eight contains Christ's second command to His apostles. He had told them to stay in Jerusalem and wait for the promise of the Father (1:4). Now He told them that they were to be witnesses to Him *in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth*. In Matthew 10:5-6, Jesus had instructed the apostles not to go to the Gentiles nor the Samaritans, but only to the lost sheep of Israel. This verse removes those limitations and shows that the kingdom of God is for everyone.

III. Jesus' Ascension - Acts 1:9-11

After Jesus spoke with His apostles and taught them what they needed to know, He ascended into heaven. Jesus needed to ascend so that the Holy Spirit could come as the apostles' Helper and source of power as they preached the gospel (John 16:7).

The apostles watched as Jesus was taken up. He disappeared in a cloud of the heavens and the apostles seemed to be mesmerized by the sight. Then, they saw *two men in white apparel*, probably two angels. The men told the apostles that Jesus, whom they had just seen depart, would one day come back the very same way.

If Jesus is going to return in the same manner in which He was taken, then we know three definite things about His second coming: 1) He

will come in a cloud, 2) He will come bodily, and 3) He will come in plain view of people.

IV. After the Ascension - Acts 1:12-26

Luke describes two meetings which happened shortly after Jesus' ascension. The first was a prayer meeting and the second was a meeting to choose a replacement apostle for Judas, who had betrayed Jesus before His death.

Immediately after witnessing the Lord's ascension, the apostles returned to Jerusalem according to His instructions. They had been on the Mount of Olives. Luke describes the distance as *a Sabbath day's journey* (believed to be about 1100 paces, a quarter of a mile, one lap around a school running track). According to Jewish religious tradition, this was the distance a Jew was allowed to walk without breaking the commandment to keep the Sabbath Day holy.

The eleven apostles were there (only Judas, the traitor, was missing) along with Mary, the mother of Jesus, and the women who had followed Him. Jesus' brothers, who had not been among His disciples prior to His death and resurrection, were also there. (Jesus' brothers are named in Mark 6:3.)

Jesus had established a pattern of prayer for His disciples, and, now, they continued in it. The phrase *with one accord* means that they prayed with one mind. When you play a game of Tag, you must choose someone to be "it." Usually, no one agrees who should be "it." Sometimes there is a volunteer. But the disciples did not have any disagreement. Imagine if you said, "I think I should have the last cookie" and all of your siblings said, "I agree." It doesn't happen that way often, does it? But, it did here with the disciples. They were one in Christ; they agreed with each other because they were each committed to Christ. How great to be part of such a prayer group.

The eleven apostles believed it was necessary to fill Judas' spot. Jesus had told them that

when He sat on His throne of glory, they would sit on twelve thrones and judge the twelve tribes of Israel (Matthew 19:28). This may have been the reason for their decision.

Luke says the meeting took place *in those days*, which refers to the ten days between Jesus' ascension and Pentecost (Acts 2:1). About 120 disciples were present. These disciples were like the "seed" of the church. Just like a small seed can grow into a mighty tree, these disciples were the start of what is now a mighty church. It is just like the tiny mustard seed that Jesus talked about in Matthew 13:31-32.

Peter gave a speech showing that Judas' betrayal of Jesus was part of God's **providential** plan. He argued that Psalms 69 and 109 gave evidence and explanation of Judas' betrayal of Jesus. These were written by David who, at the time, wrote about his own enemies. It was the Holy Spirit working through David that made these Psalms a prophecy concerning the enemies of Christ. Peter applied these Psalms to Judas. *His habitation was left desolate* (Psalm 69:25) and *another must take his office* (Psalm 109:8). David foretold the sin and the punishment.

Notice in the Bible that verses 18 and 19 are in parenthesis. This is because Luke has inserted his own explanation of the fate of Judas into Peter's speech. Judas actually bought the Field of Blood indirectly. He threw the money he had been paid to betray Jesus into the temple and the priests then used it to buy a burial plot for foreigners (Matthew 27:3-8). In this way, the field was purchased with the blood money which had been paid to Judas.

Peter stated the requirements for the man who would replace Judas. The man must have followed Jesus from the time He was baptized by John the Baptist until His ascension. This man would become a witness of the resurrection along with the eleven. The Greek word used here for 'witness' is similar to a witness in a court room who gives his testimony.

Two men were offered for consideration: Joseph, also called Barsabas, surnamed Justus, and Matthias. Nothing more is known about either of these men. All those present joined in the first recorded Christian prayer. It is very short and unpretentious. They simply placed their confidence in the Lord and asked Him to choose His replacement for Judas. Do you keep your prayers short and simple?

After praying, they cast lots and the lot fell on Matthias, *And he was numbered with the eleven apostles*. After the pouring out of the Holy Spirit, there are no more accounts of lots being used. There was no longer any need. †

Prayer

Ask God to use you for His glory. Tell Him that you want to be able to teach others about Him though your actions and words.

Memory Verse

Acts 1:7 — *And He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority."*

Vocabulary

ascension - ascent means an upward or rising movement; the 'ascension' is what Christians call Jesus' return to Heaven after His resurrection and 40 day visit.

doctrine - the teaching about a subject; Jesus taught His apostles all about the *kingdom of Heaven* and instructed them to teach others what He had taught them.

Holy Spirit - the third person of the Trinity; the spirit of God; the presence of God in a Christian

infallible proofs - certain proofs; proof that is unmistakable or sure

ministry - the service someone gives freely

providential - God's arrangement of everything that happens

This page has been left blank intentionally.

QUESTIONS FOR ACTS LESSON 2

All questions are based on the New King James Version of the Bible.

DAY ONE: Read all notes and references.

1. Before He ascended into heaven, what did Jesus tell His disciples to do? _____

2. What did Jesus' apostles do after He ascended to heaven? _____

DAY TWO: Read Acts 2:1-13.

The Day of Pentecost, known in the Old Testament as the Feast of Weeks, was one of the three great yearly feasts of Israel. It took place 50 days after the Feast of First Fruits, and was a festive time when Jews from different countries went up to Jerusalem to celebrate the completion of the harvest season.

3. a. Where were Jesus' apostles on the Day of Pentecost?

b. Try to put yourself in the place of one of the apostles and describe what you saw and heard.

4. a. What promise of God was fulfilled at this time? (See Acts 1:8 for help.)

b. What do you learn about the Holy Spirit from:

John 14:26? _____

John 16:7-14? _____

5. a. What did the people hear the apostles speaking about? Give the verse from Acts chapter 2.

b. What was it that amazed and confused all the Jews from the other nations? What did some people think about the apostles?

DAY THREE: Read Acts 2:14-21.

7. Circle True or False next to each statement and give the verse where you found it.

- a. T or F vs. _____ Peter stood up to speak to the crowd of Jews.
- a. T or F vs. _____ The eleven other apostles stood up with him.
- a. T or F vs. _____ Peter was drunk and was trying to make excuses for himself.
- a. T or F vs. _____ Peter explained what was happening by quoting from the prophet Joel.
- a. T or F vs. _____ The prophet Joel wrote about what would happen in the last days.

8. From Joel's prophecy, why were the apostles able to speak in languages they did not know?

Give verse(s). _____

9. a. From Joel's prophecy, give some important points about the last days.

b. According to Joel, who will be saved?

DAY FOUR: Read Acts 2:22-36.

10. a. What do you learn about God from verses 22-24?

b. What do you learn about Jesus from verses 24-36?

11. a. What should all of Peter's listeners know for sure after hearing his sermon? Give verse.

b. ♥ (Heart Question) Is this something that you know and believe? _____

DAY FIVE: Read Acts 2:37-47.

12. a. How did the people who heard Peter's sermon respond? _____

b. What did Peter tell them they must do and what promise went along with it? _____
