

A STUDY OF ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

Acts 1

INTRODUCTION: I want us welcome to the study of books and characters. It is good we learn from things that are written as they will aid and guide us in our behavior as we labour in the master's vine yard. **Rom 15:4.** We will therefore spend some time studying some books in the Bible and some Bible Characters.

To who was the book of Acts addressed and why: Luke 1:1-4, Acts 1:1-3, Acts looks like a part 2 of Luke's Gospel. Acts 1:1-2. Acts was a book written to set the records straight as according to Luke it was well researched. The word most excellent might also refer to his Excellency. Acts 23:26; 24:3; 26:25.

On a broader level we can see what Luke discussed in his book.

- He described the spread of the gospel message in certain areas of the Roman Empire.
- Luke paid particular attention to explaining how the ministry of Paul related to that of Peter and the church at Jerusalem.
- He also dealt with the relationship of the Christian church and its mission to the work of Jesus.
- At the same time, Luke discussed the connection between Judaism and the church, as well as the church's relations with the government of Rome.

When Luke refers to Theophilus in Acts, it had a more familiar tone than in the Gospel according to Luke. **Luke 1:3, and Acts 1:1.** Why do you think so? It appears truly according to **Luke 1:4** that Theophilus was a believer.

What period in the History of the Church did the book of Acts cover? Early Church

Who was Luke and at about what time was the book written: **II Tim 4:11, Philemon 1:24, Col 4:14, Acts 16:1-3.** About AD 62-85. Paul and Peter were already martyred.

Acts 1: 1-9 focuses on Jesus and the authenticity of His resurrection. He wrote that Jesus operated with His Disciples for about 40 days before the ascension. (Vs 3). These 40 days strengthened the Apostles.

THE KINGDOM OF GOD. Vs 6

The disciples were looking at the restoration of the glory of Israel from Rome while Jesus was looking beyond that. They often considered a kingdom where they will be given great positions. (**Mark 10:35-37; Luke 22:24-30**). His death was therefore a sore grief and utter disappointment for them.

Consider the dialogue between Jesus and his disciples in Vs 6-8. Jesus spent time re-emphasizing His words to the disciples about the Kingdom. Note that Jesus was speaking about the kingdom of God or heaven while the disciples were talking about the kingdom. What do you think Jesus meant when He was talking about the kingdom? **Matthew 4:17; Mark 1:14-15; Luke 4:43; John 3:5.** How much misunderstanding of the scripture do we have today? It shows how much of God was in the disciples at this time. When they got the message of Jesus, their life and understanding changed. See Jesus' answer in vs 8. **Acts 8:12; 14:22; 19:8; 20:25; 28:23, 31**

WAITING FOR THE PROMISE: Acts 1:4, Luke 24:49.

What do you think could have happened if the disciples had decided not to wait? Note that the location where they were to wait was specified.

Consider the function of the Holy Spirit in the beginning of the church and are you surprised at what is happening to churches and their leaders today? Isaiah 40:31

The Holy Spirit was the prime mover in the work of the kingdom in the early church. Luke referred to the Holy Spirit as the mover in a number of places in Acts

The Spirit moves Philip to make contact with the Ethiopian Eunuch **Acts 8:29**;

He prepares Peter for the coming of the emissaries of Cornelius **Acts 10:19**;

He orders Peter to go without hesitation with these emissaries **Acts 11:12**;

He orchestrates the setting apart of Paul and Barnabas for the momentous step of taking the gospel to the Gentiles **Acts 13:2, 4**

He guides the decisions of the Council of Jerusalem **Acts 15:28**

He guides Paul past Asia, Mysia and Bithynia, down into Troas and thence to Europe Acts 16:6

He tells Paul what awaits him in Jerusalem **Acts 20:23**.

[William Barclay, *The Acts of the Apostles*, revised edition, The Daily Study Bible Series (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1976), 19.]

Acts of the Apostle is as focused on Jesus as Luke is. Jesus was mentioned 86 times in Luke's gospel and 68 times in Acts. In Acts 16:7 the Holy Spirit is referred to as the Spirit of Jesus.

THE WITNESSES OF JESUS. Vs 8.

Who is a witness: a person who sees an event, typically a crime or accident, take place.

An evidence; proof.

Acts 1:22; 2:32; 3:15; 5:32; 7:58; 10:39, 41;13:31; 22:15, 22; 26:16.

Jesus was saying you will be by my evidence because you have seen me. You will not be talking by a reported speech.

You are my witness in JERUSALEM covers the first seven chapters, Judea and Samaria covers 8-11, the remaining chapter traces the gospel until it reached Rome. The meeting of the council in Jerusalem tells us that the Apostles did not understand this mandate. They perhaps thought that Jesus meant they will be witnesses to the Jews living outside of Jerusalem.

How many believers are still witnesses today? Are we truly taking the Gospel to the uttermost part of the world? Have we taken it to Judea and Samaria?

THE GLORIOUS TRIP TO HEAVEN(The ascension) Vs 9.

He did not need a jet or a space craft. Gently He defied gravity and off He went into heaven. The sight of Jesus being enveloped in the cloud is reminiscent of the Shekinah of God. This was the symbol of the glorious divine presence among God's people in the Old Testament, particularly in the tabernacle. Exodus 13:21; 16:10; 24:16; 25:8; 40:34-38

THE APOSTOLIC GROUP Vs 13-15

Who were the people in the upper room? They were the twelve (Luke 6:14-16), whom Jesus called the Apostles. Luke gave the same list again in Acts 1:13 but omits Judas Iscariot who was dead at this time and placed John from 4th position to 2nd. The title of Apostle was used reservedly by Luke for the twelve only. The only other place where you see him use the title again outside the twelve was for Paul and Barnabas. Act 14:4, 14.

Luke also talked about the women who were in the upper room with the 12. Vs 14. The brothers of Jesus were also part of those in the upper room. Cleopas (Luke 24:13-35), others were Justus and Matthias. On the whole they were about 120 people.

What were the 120 doing? They must have been prayer and waiting for the fulfilment of Jesus' prophecy.

Let's discuss the death of Judas and His replacement by lot: what manner do you think he died according to Acts. 1:16-19.

Vs 21-26. They then thought of a replacement for him. Jesus did not mention that Judas should be replaced by they exercised their senses and will. Vs 20. The person that was chosen needed to have been with them from the time of John the Baptist till ascension. Acts 1:22. In other words, they needed another eye witness to fill this post. Is apostolic succession therefore possible seeing that this office was very unique to the 12? Why was Judas replaced and James the son of Zebedee was not replaced? Acts 12:2.

What do we say about casting lot? Let us remember that it appears this was the last time that lot was ever used in the New Testament.

CONCLUSION: I believe this is a good summary of Acts 1: My question to us is are we true witnesses today; If someone writes an untainted story about us after we have left this world will it resemble that of the disciples?