

LESSON ONE

(1:1-26)

The Church in Jerusalem 1:1 - 7:60

Introduction - Acts 1:1-5

1 *In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach, 2 until the day when he was taken up, after he had given commandment through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. 3 To them he presented himself alive after his passion by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days, and speaking of the kingdom of God. 4 And while staying with them he charged them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, "you heard from me, 5 for John baptized with water, but before many days you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit."*

The Introduction above pointed out that this book from Luke's hand continued his effort in behalf of a certain most excellent Theophilus, the effort designed to help Theophilus to know the truth about that which he had heard. We then study the book from the perspective: here is "truth" that we can use to establish our faith more firmly. It will open our eyes to many things, such as the fulfillment of God's plans which were made before the foundation of the world, especially in regard to the establishment of a church which was founded upon his son, Jesus. Every one who accepted the good news proclaimed became a member of the body of Christ identified as the "church," Acts 2:47. We may accept Jesus in the same way and receive the same results, since the account of the various conversions is clear, and remains the same for us as for them. Too, we can watch as the apostles carry out the commands of Jesus, and fulfill his plans, as expressed in such places as Luke 24:45-49; John 20:21-23. It will be most instructive to watch the divine interference in the various places that tells us that what was done was God's doing through the instrumentality of men. We may then rest easy in the knowledge that the church was no accident in

history nor produced by men, but rather that it was the culmination of God's will at the end of the ages. Of course, since such is true, the events leading up to it were of the same nature, such as Jesus' entrance into the human arena, etc. Luke - Acts was a tremendous production. May we enjoy Luke's efforts to the fullest.

1:1 - book - The Gospel included important events about Jesus. Acts revealed what Jesus continued through those commissioned to complete the task for which he came to earth. He came to provide a ransom for sinners, and also to provide a basis for the church, his body, a society of redeemed sinners.

to do and to teach - The present tense infinitives in Greek indicate that these things were characteristic of Jesus' life. Peter remarked in Acts 10:38 that Jesus "went about doing good." Jesus described himself as one who came to do God's will, Hebrews 10:7, and to give his life for a ransom for many, Mark 10:45. More than once it is said of God that he was pleased in his Son, Matthew 17:5; Luke 3:22; Cf. II Peter 1:17.

V. 2 - until the day - About ten days prior to Pentecost.

commandment - Jesus' teaching did not end in the upper room, but was continued during the period between his bodily resurrection and bodily ascension.

Holy Spirit - The teaching mentioned above was done both personally and through the agency of the personality known as the Holy Spirit. The exact relationships of God and Jesus and the Holy Spirit are not explained to us. The text in John 16 perhaps best shows what the work of the Holy Spirit was to carry on what Jesus did in person. The Acts account is quite helpful in showing how this was done. We can be grateful that God was always in control through the Holy Spirit. If we then do as the apostles directed in regard to becoming Christians, we can rest assured that God accepts us.

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V. 3 - **passion**- Normally descriptive of physical suffering, but inclusive here of Jesus' death.

proofs - The Gospels tell of eleven resurrection appearances, but quite clearly others took place which are not recorded. The Greek term carries the force of showing, convincingly. They were to be Jesus' witnesses (Luke 24:48), and he left the apostles with a clear-cut testimony to preach.

It is most important to establish the group with whom Jesus worked (in preparation for the beginning of the Church). The apostles are specifically highlighted as those who were chosen and sent by Jesus.

the kingdom of God - Much instruction was given about this matter, and though they still misunderstood (v. 6), yet the book of Acts and the epistles are best considered as their presentation of the kingdom, as explained by Jesus, and directed by the Holy Spirit. It is then equal to the church and composed of the same people.

the promise of the Father - Best taken as a promise from God, rather than about God. Read Luke 24:49, where the Holy Spirit is in mind, though not explicitly stated, as is true in Acts 1:5.

V. 5 - **John** - John's disciples had included at least Peter, Andrew, James and John. Philip and Nathaniel may have been, as well as others in Jesus' group.

Holy Spirit - The fulfillment of Joel 2:27-31, as recorded in Acts 2:1ff. Note how long God had been promising this event, and now it is about to happen.

QUESTIONS

1. What period of time did Luke's first treatise cover?
2. To whom did Jesus, through the Holy Spirit, give commands?
3. How long did Jesus appear to the apostles?
4. Of what did Jesus speak to the apostles?
5. Why were they commanded to wait in Jerusalem?

On the Mount of Olivet, 1:6-11

6 So when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" 7 He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has fixed by his own authority. 8 But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth." 9 And when he had said this, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. 10 And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, 11 and said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven."

V. 6 - **do you restore** - The book shows how their narrow nationalism is finally eliminated,

and the truth of the commission in Matthew 28 impressed upon them: everyone is included in the plan of God.

The struggle to understand the nature of the kingdom/church was difficult; conversion was needed. The Old Testament was a dispensation, the basic demand being that of faith, to be expressed through the Mosaic law. Now - the same command is given (believe), but in relationship to Jesus, and to be expressed and understood through what we know as the Church. We may see so much better than they, that we wonder about their blindness.

If the Old Testament dispensation was but the shadow, however, of things to come, how unclear was the reality, the Church? If we only had the Old Testament, how much of the "Church" would we have figured out?

V. 7 - It is not for you to know - Jesus through the Holy Spirit, and understanding which would naturally come, revealed most of the facts later. They needed something else far more important: power from God.

authority - The Greek term's use can be seen in Matthew 28:18; Mark 1:22; Luke 7:8; 20:20; John 1:12; Acts 5:4; 8:19; Romans 9:21; 13:1,2,3; II Thess. 3:9; Rev. 13:5; 17:12. It has the basic concept of freedom or right to act, do something; perhaps because such is inherent (as with God) or given, as to men.

V. 8 - power - Paul describes the Gospel as God's power. It is interesting that Acts 2 shows the apostles preached the Gospel: God's power. However, the power meant here is exactly equal to the Holy Spirit, v. 5.

witnesses - The Greek word is also translated "martyr." In 1:22, this point is made as they select Matthias to replace Judas.

The men, once forbidden to enter Samaria, or areas of Gentiles, were now enjoined to go there. It would take some doing for them to realize what

was meant, and to allow their Hebrew identity to be swallowed up in a larger fellowship.

end of the earth - Acts may be somewhat outlined here, but we may miss a more important point: how Christianity overcame provincial ideas and selfish concerns to envelop the whole world. Moreover, though Acts is somewhat history, it barely skims the surface of the means by which the Gospel was spread. Acts does tell clearly, the nature of the Church.

V. 9 - Read Luke 24:51, which records the same event, and shows Jesus blessing the apostles.

a cloud - Paul says "in glory," I Tim. 3:16. For the apostles, the relationship of a cloud with God and the things of God would surely come to mind.

It is to be noted that the apostles were promised by Jesus that he would be with them until the end of the age, Matthew 18:20; 28:20. Jesus' ascension would permit him to be glorified in power, Acts 2:36, and return in glory at his Second Coming, Mark 13:26; Matthew 25:31, etc. He was to be glorified in them, John 17:10. His presence was to be theirs by means of the presence of the Holy Spirit.

V. 11 - men of Galilee - This helps us to see the exact group of men to whom Jesus gave the final commission, and who received the promise in 2:1-4.

QUESTIONS

6. Who has time and season in his power?
7. What were the apostles to receive? For what purpose?

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8. Did they understand how many people the commission included?

9. How is Jesus to come back?

10. Do you suppose it was human to stand gazing after Jesus?

21 So one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, 22 beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us - one of these men must become with us a witness to his resurrection.” 23 And they put forward two, Joseph called Barsabbas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias. 24 And they prayed and said, “Lord, who knowest the hearts of all men, show which one of these two thou hast chosen 25 to take the place in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside, to go to his own place.” 26 And they cast lots for them, and the lot fell on Matthias; and he was enrolled with the eleven apostles.

In the Upper Room, 1:12-26

12 Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day’s journey away; 13 and when they had entered, they went up to the upper room, where they were staying, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot and Judas the son of James. 14 All these with one accord devoted themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers.

15 In those days Peter stood up among the brethren (the company of persons was in all about a hundred and twenty), and said, 16 “Brethren, the scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke beforehand by the mouth of David, concerning Judas who was guide to those who arrested Jesus. 17 For he was numbered among us, and was allotted his share in this ministry. 18 (Now this man bought a field with the reward of his wickedness; and falling headlong he burst open in the middle and all his bowels gushed out. 19 And it became known to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the field was called in their language Akeldama, that is, Field of Blood.) 20 For it is written in the book of Psalms,

‘Let his habitation become desolate, and let there be no one to live in it’; and ‘His office let another take.’

V. 12 - **a Sabbath day’s journey** - Here is the only place in the Bible where the exact distance is mentioned. Exodus 16:29 apparently was considered to be limited by Numbers 35:5, though not explicitly stated.

We might also note that Olivet is said to be a Sabbath day’s journey from Jerusalem, not that the apostles were. Luke 24:50 says they were in the vicinity of Bethany.

Between the ascension of Jesus and Pentecost, Acts 2:1, is a period of ten days, Luke 24:52-53 and Acts 1:12-14 give general descriptions of the apostles’ activities during this time. Verses 15-26 relate one important event of the period.

V. 14 - The apostles, minus Judas, along with other believers, and part of Jesus’ own family, are said to be together at this time. We have no idea where the upper room was. Since Jerusalem was flattened in AD 70, we cannot point out this place today.

V. 15 - **about 120** - Note “about.” Consider also that Paul mentioned over 500 believers in Galilee, perhaps in addition to these. Peter generally is the prominent personage in the first twelve chapters, Paul in chapters 13-28. In any group, someone will generally be the leader. However, the Scriptures do not state or imply that

Peter was considered “first among equals” by either the Lord or the apostles.

V. 16 - **brethren** - A term used both specifically and generally. The LXX used the term to designate a member of the same 1) family, 2) community, or 3) a neighbor. The N.T. uses it for a member of the same family, either physical or spiritual. See, for example, such texts as Matthew 1:2; 4:18; 5:22; 7:3-5; 12:46, 48; 18:15, 21, 35; 22:24-25; 23:8; 28:10; Mark 6:3; Luke 3:19; John 7:3; 11:2; Acts 7:2; 11:1; 13:15; 15:1; Romans 1:13; I Cor. 1:1; and many others like these.

scripture...Holy Spirit...David - We need to pay close attention to this verse and to what it tells us about 1) nature of Scripture and 2) the method (how) of inspiration. Peter’s usage of the term “scripture” is typical of those recorded in the N.T., including Jesus. Similar expressions are “it is written” and “Scripture says.”

Invariably the term is applied to what now constitutes our Bible, excluding the apocryphal books which are printed in most Catholic editions. These books were considered authoritative since they were from God. Hence, whenever anyone quoted from an O.T. text, the quote was considered the final word on the subject. For an extensive study on this subject, see Clark Pinnock’s *Biblical Revelation* from Moody Press. See also *New Testament Evidences* from College Press.

V. 17 - **he was numbered** - Judas was chosen by Jesus as an apostle, but became a traitor of his own choosing.

share - The Greek word is seen in 1:26, in Luke 1:9; John 19:24. **was allotted** - This translates a verb meaning to obtain by lot or to determine by casting lots. It is found in Luke 1:9 and John 19:24. The word was used of choices made, whether divine (as with Judas and Matthias) or human.

ministry - The Greek word looks like **deaconship**; but it meant **service** in such a broad

sense that it includes apostleship here and in 1:25, as also in Acts 20:24; 21:19; Rom. 11:13; II Cor. 4:1; 6:3 and others. We should realize that the apostasy of Judas created a vacancy that needed to be filled at this time. The death of James in Ch. 12 did not create a vacancy that then had to be filled. The apostleship was not something that could be transferred. Paul’s choice was in addition to these twelve men.

V. 18,19 - Apparently a parenthesis by Luke. See Matthew 27:1ff for the parallel account. Each account can be understood to be truthful even if they describe the whole event somewhat differently. They can be harmonized if desired, eliminating what some see as a contradiction.

The text as it stands seems to be an explanation by Luke to Theophilus of some events which took place but were not too clear at the time of the writing. Luke pointed out the extra items not mentioned by Peter, since those who were listening to Peter knew about Judas and would not have needed an explanation.

V. 20 - Psalms 69:25 and 109:8 are quoted. Doubtless Peter had never associated these Psalms with Judas or Jesus, and is expressing facts only now understandable. Of importance is the idea that the apostles were to be guided into truth (John 16), and this is some of that guidance.

habitation - Generally, a dwelling place, a home; but here a place within a group.

office - The Greek term and its various forms means overseer, or as found in I Tim. 3:1; Titus 1:7; I Peter 2:12, 25. In the case of the apostles, they were the initial group in reference to the whole church. Men to oversee the individual assemblies were to be chosen to care for the local groups, but such did not and do not have only the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The N.T. was/is their guide.

V. 21 - **one of the men** - Whose qualifications are 1) accompanied Jesus, beginning

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with John's immersion, 2) witnessed Jesus' resurrection, and 3) chosen by the Lord. There was no need of other than those who knew the facts.

V. 22 - **resurrection** - They never preached other than a crucified and resurrected Christ, the salvation of those believing, the stone of stumbling to those who did not, Rom. 9:33; I Cor. 1:18. Of course, I Cor. 15 develops this subject extensively.

V. 24 - **Lord, who knowest the hearts** - How well the apostles could testify to this fact! Jesus may be meant, since he had just been mentioned in v. 21, and also had selected the twelve originally, etc.

of all men - Just what the men meant by this prayer is uncertain. Did they feel unable to discern their own desires as well as the worth of the two men, about which they could only guess? Likewise, their method of selection is of interest, since we do not know why they chose the particular method they did. However, such questions are futile and we desist.

V. 25 - **place** - The men were careful to not designate where this is, though Jesus did in John 17:12 (which prayer they heard), nor to speak evil of Judas, though they must surely have felt strongly about that which he did.

ministry and apostleship - the two terms are not identical, but do overlap.

V. 26 - **apostles** - Though the twelve are explicitly identified in this chapter, others are also called apostles in the New Testament, such as Paul; James (Galatians 1:19); Barnabas (Acts 14:4, 14; Andronicus and Junias (Rom. 16:7). See also Philippians 2:25 and II Cor. 8:23. Yet none of these ever claimed to be among the 12 nor to have their prerogatives, except Paul.

The testimony of the twelve was considered normative by the early church since God was directing them. This same fact was true about Paul. Therefore, the measure of any message preached or

written was that which was considered to be from these men, and from these men alone, or those who had associated with them, as Mark or Luke.

QUESTIONS

11. Why did Luke specifically identify in v. 13 who had watched Jesus ascend?
12. How long was it between the ascension and Pentecost?
13. What did the apostles do in this period?
14. Why did the Scripture have to be fulfilled? How was it (what the Holy Spirit spoke through David) fulfilled?
15. What specific qualities did the apostles indicate must be present in the man replacing Judas? Why?
16. Just exactly what qualifications did the apostles have that others did not have?

LESSON TWO (2:1-36)

In An Apartment of the Temple 2:1-36