

A Practical Study of ACTS:

Take It To Them!

“Putting the GO Back in the Gospel”

Study Number One – Acts 1:1-26

The version we're using in this series is a homemade translation of the Greek Text.

While working through the book of Acts, the words that were put on the Plymouth Rock come to mind.

“This spot marks the final resting place of the Pilgrims of the Mayflower. In weariness and hunger and in cold, fighting the wilderness, and burying their dead in common graves, that the Indians should not know how many had perished, they laid the foundations of a state in which all men for countless ages should have liberty to worship God in their own way. All who pass, dedicate yourselves anew to the resolution that you will not rest until this lofty ideal shall have been realized throughout the earth.”

(source unknown)

That's what's happening in the book of Acts. These are

pioneers. These are the ones that provided by their sacrifices and by the giving of their lives and by the stand of courage which they took, we have the gospel of Jesus Christ.

And so as we look at these great 28 chapters, we'll never get enough of it. It gets better every time we read it.

There are four things we have to address to start this series of studies. We have to look at:

1. WHO WROTE IT.

There really is not much question, unless we're in the school of higher criticism, that Dr. Luke is the one who wrote it. He wrote the gospel of Luke and then this is volume two of his work.

Dr. Luke is the only Greek writer in the New Testament. He was a close friend of the apostle Paul. He probably was born either in Antioch of Syria or Philippi of Macedonia. He became closely associated with the apostle Paul and almost became his private physician through the later years of his life.

He was in Rome when the apostle finally was martyred. He outlived the apostle by another 14 or 15 years. He went to school in Alexandria and his Greek in the New Testament, by the way, is some of the hardest to read. It's like our dictionary, our lexicon, right beside us. There are words that are just used one time in Acts and in Luke.

Luke then is the author. He has a brother by the name of Titus that we'll recognize. Titus was Paul's compatriot who took the ministry on the Island of Crete. The little book of Titus is addressed to him.

Now having that thought in mind that he is the author, the second thing is:

2. THE DATE.

We're saying that what is recorded in this book is recorded for 30 years. In other words, from the ascension of Christ until about 60 A.D.—30 of 60.

It has to be written before the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. so we're going to guess that it is somewhere around 61-64 A.D. It's believed that Luke was there in Rome with Paul as our study ends there in Acts chapter 28. So it was probably written in the city of Rome somewhere in those early or mid-60's. Dates vary.

Now we need to outline the book a little bit. It's great to get an overview.

The book of Acts is the easiest book in the Bible to outline. If we took Acts 1:8, we have:

3. The INSPIRED OUTLINE.

Those are the last words of Christ.

Acts 1:8

...you shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, in all Judea, Samaria, to the uttermost part of the earth.”

We have **THREE POINTS** in our outline:

1. The gospel of Jerusalem—Acts 1-7
2. To Judea and Samaria—Acts 8-12
3. And to the uttermost part of the earth—Acts 13-28

Now if we want to divide it in another way, just to give us some idea of how easy it divides, let's say that it divides around **PEOPLE**. There are two prominent men in the book of Acts.

1. **PETER** in Acts 1-12 and
2. **PAUL** in Acts 13-28.

It's the Gospel:

going to the **JEWS** in chapters 1-12, and

going to the **GENTILES** in chapters 13-28.

So it's a simple way of putting it together. Basically we're

going to follow those three stages in our outline as we work through it.

Now what's the PURPOSE in writing the book? If we did not have the book of Acts, we would jump to the Gospels—from the GOSPELS to the EPISTLES. And we would not know how the church got here. Because when the gospels end, they're still talking about the kingdom that's going to come.

We have to understand that the purpose in the book of Acts is to give a historical account from Christ's ascension to the time of the writings of the apostle Paul when the church is in existence.

Now in order for us to really get a handle on the book of Acts, we have to pretend that everybody sitting in the room wore a star of David and all they knew was Judaism. They are in fact Jews. And they're looking for a kingdom.

Now the reason there is so much probably with the interpretation of the book of Acts and why it becomes so controversial is simply because people try to formulate doctrine out of this book. We make a bad mistake if we try to teach doctrine out of a book of history. If we teach doctrine from the epistles and let Acts be Acts, everything will be fine.

If we've come with a motivation to study the book of Acts to prove a point, we aren't going to be happy. We're not going to fight over whether we speak in tongues or we don't speak in tongues, or whether we have to have a whole bunch of things

to be saved or whether it's by faith and faith alone. The Lord will have to straighten us out on that.

We're going to labor to work our way through it to help understand that Luke is writing volume 2 of his two volume work. He wrote the Gospel about Jesus Christ and he writes Acts of the history that immediately follows it in the formation of the church.

The book of Acts is like shifting gears. We're shifting from the KINGDOM to the CHURCH.

When we get to the end of Acts we have the church. At the beginning of Acts we have nothing but the kingdom. We're going to see that in this first episode.

We're shifting from LAW to GRACE.

We're doing away with the SACRIFICIAL SYSTEM and we're moving to GOD'S UNMERITED FAVOR.

We're shifting from the TEMPLE to the BODY OF CHRIST—believers intimately related to Jesus Christ and to one another.

And we're shifting from the SACRIFICES to the SON OF GOD HIMSELF—Jesus is the focal point of every message that's preached in the book of Acts.

Acts 1: Preliminary Preparations for Pentecost.

Just to put our three P's in a pod.

Acts chapter 1 is like December the first. What happens on December the first? We're put on a guilt trip. Someone will say, "Twenty-three shopping days till Christmas." And then 22...then 21.

As the number of days left go down, we do all of our shopping on Christmas eve.

The countdown of days to one of the gigantic peaks in the Bible. There are certain places in the Bible where we just reach a great big high point. In our second study we're going to meet a great big high point.

It's a turning point in the divine revelation. There are several of those.

So like Christmas, we buy our cards, we go to our parties, we celebrate, we give to the Salvation Army, we get our food baskets and give to those who need and we're wrapping up our own gifts for a big celebration that comes on Christmas day. We're getting ready for a big, big day.

These are preliminary preparations then for the day of Pentecost.

Verse 1 in our study:

**v. 1 The first account I composed, O Theophilus,
concerning all that Jesus began to do and to teach,**

“The first account I composed, O Theophilus, concerning all that Jesus began to do and to teach,”

Who’s he writing to?

“Theophilus”—wouldn’t we like to have a name like Theophilus?

We’re probably thinking, “No, I wouldn’t like to have a name like Theophilus.” But we don’t know what Theophilus means.

What does *Theos* mean? “God.”

What does *phileo* mean? “to love.”

He is a “lover of God.”

In the Gospel of Luke, Luke says:

Luke 1:3

...I write to you oh excellent Theophilus;

Evidently this is a distinguished, prominent citizen in the Roman government. He is Greek and he is being written to by Luke.

Since he just calls him “O Theophilus” here and does away with the “excellent,” this fellow, after he read the Gospel of Luke, became a Christian.

He probably lost his job with the Roman government so now he’s just “Theophilus.” But he’s a lover of God. He’s living up to his name.

Here is the one to whom it is written. And he goes on to say in the text:

“The first account I composed”—that is, the Gospel of Luke—
“O Theophilus, concerning all that Jesus began to do and to teach,”

Well we have the same writer Luke. We have the same reader Theophilus. And we have the same subject, Jesus. And He is the focal point of the book of Acts.

If we are thinking that the focal point was the Holy Spirit, we have the wrong person of the Trinity. As we work through the book of Acts, watch how many times the name Jesus occurs.

It’s what He did and what He taught. That is exactly the way it has to be.

Ezra 7:10

Ezra prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, to do it and then to teach it.

Here he's speaking of the fact that he's writing of Jesus and what He began to do and to teach.

Now look at verse 2. It starts with the word "until."

v. 2 until the day when he was taken up, after having given orders through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom He had chosen.

"until the day when he was taken up, after having given orders through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom He had chosen."

That little word "until" is the word that bridges the gap between the two volumes.

When we go back to Luke 24, the last three verses of the Gospel of Luke, listen to what they say:

Luke 24:50-53

And He led them out as far as Bethany, and He lifted up His hands and He blessed them. And it came about that while He was blessing them, He parted from them; and they returned to Jerusalem with great joy and were continually in the temple praising God.

That's the ASCENSION.

Now what we do is we begin with that same event right here in volume number two.

“until the day when he was taken up,”

We’re going to see that in just a minute. It’s actually recorded here in the text.

“after having given orders through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom He had chosen.”

What’s that tell us? It’s just like when we leave home, if we have young kids that we left at the house, we give a series of orders to tell them what they were supposed to do.

The Lord, before He left, gave a series of “orders” to these men. Now we only see **TWO ORDERS** that are given in this chapter:

1. “y’all wait right here” and
2. “you’re going to be witnesses of mine.”

Now we don’t see a third order and that’s going to create a problem in our passage in just a minute. This one’s going to be a great one to get solved when we get to heaven because there are good guys on both sides of it.

Did in fact the Lord command those fellows while they were waiting to replace Judas Iscariot? Yay or Nay?

We'll get into it in just a few minutes to see whether Peter's doing what the Lord commanded or whether he just got an idea and he couldn't sit around and stay and wait any longer. So he decides he's going to help the Lord out. We'll get into that in a minute.

But notice a little word that kind of just jumps off the page at us when we read it the second time.

He'd "given orders through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom He had chosen."

These fellows are getting ready to do the choosing. The writer never misses a word.

"whom He had chosen"—these fellows. Now let's watch it as it begins to unfold in the text.

v. 3 To whom also He presented himself as one who was living, after His suffering, by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a period of forty days and speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God.

"To whom also"—that is to these 11 apostles—"He presented himself as one who was living, after His suffering, by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a period of forty days and speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God."

Before He ascended He commanded them. And secondly, He appeared to them on numerous occasions.

Some people have a problem with the resurrection of Christ. Jesus wanted to be sure of one thing, that before He left nobody had a problem with the resurrection. So He made it very, very obvious that He had triumphed over the grave to the point that for 40 days after the resurrection, He revealed Himself to many, many people.

The Gospel rises and falls on a living Christ. Every other religion in the world can go to a tomb that's filled with its leader. But if the resurrection of Christ in fact did happen, we have a living Christ.

And the Lord knows that! And so He provides numerous occasions for these fellows to see Him alive. In fact, there are actually TEN APPEARANCES of Christ in those 40 days. Want to hear a little bit of them?

1. He appeared to Mary Magdalene at the tomb.
2. He appeared to the women who had been to the tomb.
3. He went to see Peter privately.
4. He appeared to the disciples on the road to Emmaus and they finally recognized Him when He was breaking the bread.

5. He appeared to the ten disciples that first resurrection night. Remember Thomas was off by himself somewhere.

6. The sixth was a week later when he appeared to Thomas—basically all 11 of them were there together. And Thomas says, “My Lord and my God it is You.”

7. And then He appeared to 7 fellows that were fishing all night. Peter took 6 of the exes with him and they went out fishing. He ate breakfast with them. That’s when He asked Peter if he loved the Lord more than these in John 21.

8. He appeared to over 500 brethren at one time in Galilee, including the 11.

9. He appeared to James, the half-brother of our Lord—1 Corinthians 15:7.

10. And then here He is again. Right here on the day of ascension, getting ready to leave the Mount of Olives to go back to glory.

They’ve had 40 wonderful days:

1. to have their eyes SEE HIM and
2. to have their ears HEAR HIM.

How well did they communicate? Listen to 1 John. This is John writing his little epistle to show how well it got through.

1 John 1:1, 2

“What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we’ve seen with our eyes, what we beheld and our hands handled concerning the Word of Life; and the life was manifested, and we have seen and bear witness and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us.”

Convincing proof! We saw Him, we heard Him speak, we touched Him, we ate with Him. He triumphed over the grave!

And then He gave them many infallible proofs. But what is the content of His message? Notice what it says there:

“speaking of the things concerning”—the church.

Is that what the translation says there?

“speaking of things concerning”—WHAT?—“the kingdom of God.”

If we’re going to understand this book we have to realize what Jesus is talking about. He didn’t talk to them about the church. The only time Jesus mentions the church is in the Gospel of Matthew when He’s talking to Peter and He says:

“...upon this rock I will”—FUTURE—“build my church.” (ref. Matthew 16:17, 18)

The only frame of reference these fellows have is the frame of reference for the kingdom. These guys don't know what's coming. They don't know what the Lord's next program's going to be.

As far as they're concerned, after all they've been through, it's going to be the kingdom that's going to be set up now. And that's all they have in their mind and the Lord's not going to confuse them with anything further than that.

v. 4 And gathering them together, He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to be waiting for the promise of the Father which you heard from me;

“And gathering them together,”

And of course the place He gathered them was on the Mount of Olives, about three-quarters of a mile from Jerusalem.

“He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to be waiting for the promise of the Father which you heard from me;”

Well He got them together and He tells them don't leave Jerusalem. Why? Well these 11 out of the 12 are all northerners. The only southerner committed suicide—Judas is gone.

These 11 live 60-80 miles north from here. And the normal

thing would be, as soon as Jesus leaves, is to check out and go home. And He says, “Stay here. Stick around for a while. Don’t leave Jerusalem, but you be waiting for the promise of the Father.”

What is that? In John 14:26, in the Upper Room, He said:

John 14:26

“The helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, He will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all things that I have said to you.”

“the promise of the Father” is the coming of the Holy Spirit. So stick around and wait for it.

v. 5 for John baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.

“for John baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.”

Wouldn’t it be great some time if the Lord in the Word would say, “Y’all stick around because six days from now it’s going to happen. I want to let y’all know that two thousand years from now I’m coming back again.” So we’d know exactly when He’s coming.

There are two things the Lord never does.

1. He never gives DATES and
2. He never gives REASONS.

Now when we have a problem going on in our life and we're constantly wailing before God, "Why? Why? Why?" we'll never get an answer so why ask why! He loves us. It's consistent with His love. Even though we don't like it and we don't understand it, buck up and accept it and realize He works it together for good.

We'll never get an answer to why. And we never get a date!

Why didn't He say, "stick around for 10 more days and it'll happen"? No. "Y'all just stick around and when I'm ready for it to happen, it'll happen. And while you're sticking around waiting, whether it's 10 days or 10 years, y'all can just be trusting Me that it's going to happen."

That's why the Second Coming of Christ is so exciting and the Rapture of the church. There's no date on it! We sure are getting close though.

He didn't tell them the exact time. He never does! He just doesn't give any more information than He needs to.

He says when John came he "baptized with water."

"And y'all have been baptized by John the Baptist. But, when

the Holy Spirit comes, you are going to be baptized by the Holy Spirit.”

Now what is the baptism of the Holy Spirit?

When we come to know the Lord Jesus as Savior, we are baptized by the Holy Spirit into the body of Christ, the church. The church hasn't started yet. It's getting ready to start in 10 days. We know that because we have the historical record.

And on that day, 1 Corinthians 12:13 comes true:

1 Corinthians 12:13

“For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.”

The baptism of the Spirit is nowhere in the book of Acts. Something we seek or search for or hope to get. It is a non-experiential act of God placing us into the body of Christ.

v. 6 And so when they had come together, they were asking Him, saying: “Lord, is it at this time you are restoring the kingdom to Israel?”

“And so when they had come together, they were asking Him, saying: ‘Lord, is it at this time you are restoring the kingdom to Israel?’”

These guys are great. They have question marks for lines. Every time they're with the Lord they have another question that they have to ask.

Well the Mount of Olives does that to them. The last time they were on the Mount of Olives with the Lord, it was just before He went to the Cross. And they were sitting there—it's recorded in Matthew 24. Listen to it—verse 3:

Matthew 24:3

And as He was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things be and what will be the sign of your coming and the end of the age?"

There's their question. All of Matthew 24 and 25 is His answer to the signs of His coming and what's going to take place. Now they're right back at it.

It's interesting in the Upper Room discourse in John 13-17, Christ is less than 24 hours from hanging on the Cross and these guys are asking questions. They're not thinking about the Lord at all and what He's going to go through.

They're asking—Peter starts out. He asks, "Where are you going?" The Lord says, "Well where I'm going you can't go."

"Well why can't I go?" And then when he gets through He says, "Well, y'all know the way."

Thomas says, “Oh no we don’t know the way! How can we find the way?”

And then Philip says, “Well if you’d just show us the Father.”

And then Judas Thaddaeus Lebbaeus comes along and asks, “How are you going to reveal yourself to us and not to the world?”

And so question after question after question. And some people kind of chide the disciples here for asking this question.

“Is it time for you to be restoring the kingdom of heaven?”

There are several things that caused that. He’s just talking to them about the kingdom of God. That’s all he’s been talking about to them.

They’ve been through some horrible traumatic experiences the last few weeks. Jesus has actually died on a Roman cross. They lost their friend. They went through all the grief, all the agony, all the guilt associated with letting their leader die. And then He was raised from the dead and that’s hard for them to believe that and comprehend! And for 40 days now they’ve been with Him and it’s all they’ve been talking about. So it’s almost like it’s a crescendo. We’re getting ready for the big thing!

“Could it be that 10 days from now you’re going to restore the

kingdom as well as give us the Holy Spirit? Is that the way it's going to work?"

So it's a normal question. But we also have to remember one more thing about the disciples. They're very selfish in heart.

Remember the night before Jesus died, they were all sitting in the room with proud hearts and dirty feet? Anybody that's going to be cool in the kingdom couldn't stoop down and grab a bucket and a towel and start washing people's feet. They were arguing about who's going to be Secretary of State in the Kingdom. Nobody's going to be a servant in the Kingdom.

Remember, the power play that was made on Jesus? The mother of James and John came to Him and said, "Well I know You've already figured this out. I appreciate You putting James and John on the executive committee and I know You're going to keep it in the family. Look, I'd like John on one side and James on the other in the Kingdom."

Powerful. And the other 10 guys really got miffed. So they're living for the Kingdom! They've all got into this thing so they could be key people in the Kingdom! So this is a normal question to be asked by these fellows.

This is the perfect time for Jesus to say what a lot of guys say today. And that is, the church is spiritual Israel. The church is the Kingdom.

"Really fellows, I didn't mean for you to think it was going to

be a literal kingdom that I was going to rule over. It's a spiritual kingdom. And the church is going to take over all the promises made to Israel and the church is now spiritual Israel so there is no future for Israel. And so all this stuff that speaks about Me coming back to be King of kings and Lord of lords is now going to be fulfilled in the church."

Perfect time to say that! But He doesn't mince any words. Because He is fully come and is King of kings and Lord of lords. He's going to sit on the throne of His Father David and He's going to rule for a thousand years from the literal city of Jerusalem. That's the only way this fits.

And here He could have said that! But notice what His answer is to them. These are His last words. We want to savor these because He's going to leave us.

v. 7 He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has fixed by His own authority;

"He said to them,"—NEGATIVELY in verse 7 and POSITIVELY in verse 8—"It is not for you to know the times or seasons which the Father has fixed by His own authority;"

"That's not any of your business. Schedules—you just leave that with us."

v. 8 but you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses

both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.”

“but”—POSITIVELY—“you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.”

“Schedules are not for you BUT, ‘you shall receive’ and ‘you shall be’—that is for you.”

“Now don’t go out and try to witness before you get your power. You’ll make a mess of it. Wait until the Spirit comes before you become my witnesses.”

“you shall receive power” and “you shall be my witnesses.”

Verse 7 puts the FUTURE in the Father’s hands and

Verse 8 puts the PRESENT in the Spirit’s hands.

“you shall receive power”—the energizing force to be a witness for Him.

Now how do we experience this energizing power of the Spirit of God in our life? We experience it by simply coming and providing ourselves as an empty vessel and saying, “Lord, I’m nothing without You.”

The flesh profits nothing. It is the Spirit which quickens and

gives life—John 6:63.

“Just trust Me. Yield it to Me.”

Donald Grey Barnhouse says:

(An Expository Commentary: The Book of Acts by Donald Grey Barnhouse)

There is no doubt of the fact that God stands ready to fill you today and right now. You must be willing to confess before Him that you are empty. And if you'll say to Him, “Lord, I have nothing,” He'll take it from there. When Dr. William R. Newell, well-known Bible teacher of some years back, was in China saying goodbye to the then head of the China Inland Mission, he said, “O do pray for me, that I shall be nothing.” The director, with a twinkle in his eye, said, “Newell, you are nothing! Take it by faith.” We must remember that fact. We must let God bring us to the end of ourselves, so that as we face Him, there may be the constant realization that He is everything...

(source unknown)

The word for “witness” is the same word for “martyr” in the Greek text.

“*Martuero*”—martyr. It's being a witness to the point where we would be willing to be a martyr because we are filled and convinced that Jesus Christ is alive and He is available to live out His life in us by the power of the Holy Spirit.

And these men are going to be that. Realize that 10 out of these 11 that remain die martyrs' death for the cause of Jesus Christ.

Dwight L. Moody was one of those who gave his whole life to witness for Jesus Christ. He was consumed with being a witness. His son wrote this book shortly after his death:

(The Life of D. L. Moody by W. R. Moody)

“What is to be done for the unsaved masses?” Mr. Moody asked while in Sheffield. In answering his own inquiry he said that he had found a spiritual famine in England such as he had never dreamed of. “Here, for instance, in this town of Sheffield,” he said, “I am told that there are one hundred and fifty thousand people who not only never go near a place of worship, but for whom there is actually no church accommodation provided, even if they were willing to take advantage of it. It seems to me if there be upon God’s earth one blacker sight than these thousands of Christless and graceless souls, it is the thousands of dead and slumbering Christians living in their very midst, rubbing shoulders with them every day upon the streets, and never so much as lifting up a little finger to warn them of death and eternity and judgment to come. Talk of being sickened at the sight of the world’s degradation, ah! let those of us who are Christians hide our faces because of our own, and pray God to deliver us from the guilt of the world’s blood. I believe that if there is one thing which pierces the Master’s heart with unutterable grief,

it is not the world's iniquity, but the Church's indifference."

He then argued that every Christian man and woman should feel that the question was not one for ministers and elders and deacons alone, but for them as well. "It is not enough," he said, "to give alms; personal service is necessary. I may hire a man to do *some* work, but I can never hire a man to do *my* work. Alone before God I must answer for that, and so must we all."

(source unknown)

He goes on to say:

(The Life of D. L. Moody by W. R. Moody)

One day a man arose who said that he had been five years on the Mount of Transfiguration. Mr. Moody cast a quick glance upon the speaker and flashed into his face a sharp question:

"How many souls did you lead to Christ last year?"

"Well, I don't know," was the astonished reply.

"Have you saved any?" persisted Mr. Moody.

"I don't know that I have," answered the man with a depressed air.

"Well," said Mr. Moody, "we don't want that kind of a mountaintop experience. When a man gets up so high that he cannot reach down and save poor sinners, there is something wrong."

(source unknown)

This article appeared in the *Seattle P.I.* [*Seattle Post*

Intelligencer]:

SLOW RESCUE MAY HAVE RAISED TOLL IN JAPANESE PLANE CRASH

A twelve-year-old survivor's account of talking to two relatives while they were dying in the wreckage of a Japan Airlines jet liner raised questions yesterday about how many people might have lived if rescuers arrived earlier. Keiko Kawakami, one of four survivors of the crash that killed 520 people said she exchanged words of encouragement with her father and sister for a long time before they died. "After the crash, both my father and sister were alive, and we were checking up on each other's condition and encouraging each other. The jet liner wandered for 39 minutes before slamming into a remote mountain top 70 miles northwest of Tokyo. The first rescuers arrive 14 hours after the crash. [Then this really got me]

A seven-page will and final notes left by Hirotsugu Kawaguchi reported "There was smoke that seemed to come from an explosion in the cabin, and we began making a descent. Be good to each other and work hard," wrote Kawaguchi, 52, to his three children during the last minute's swerving and descent. "Good bye. Please take good care of the children," he wrote to his wife. Kawaguchi's final words were "I am grateful for the truly happy life I have enjoyed until now." [Listen to this]

Weeping, in a nationally televised [audience, she says], "I want to live my life from now on according to this will."
(source unknown)

“Is your heart so calloused and so cold or do you really feel what Calvary cost Christ? And are you willing to fulfill His will and live in light of it? That you will be My witnesses to this generation?”

Charles Haddon Spurgeon, who lived in the time in London when they used to light the gaslights every night, records the following:

Coming one Thursday in the late autumn from an engagement beyond Dulwich, my way led up to the top of the Herne Hill ridge. I came along the level out of which rises the steep hill I had to ascend.

While I was on the lower ground, riding in a hansom cab, I saw a light before me, and when I came near the hill, I watched that light gradually go up the hill, leaving a train of stars behind it. This line of new-born stars remained in the form of one lamp, and then another and another. It reached from the foot of the hill to its summit.

I did not see the lamplighter. I did not know his name, nor his age, nor his residence; but I saw the lights which he had kindled, and these remained when he himself had gone his way.

As I rode along I thought to myself, “How earnestly do I wish that my life may be spent in lighting one soul after another with the sacred flame of eternal life! I would myself be as much as possible unseen while at my work, and would vanish into eternal brilliance above when my work is done.”
(source unknown)

When people leave our life and leave our presence, if we're really walking with God, filled by the Spirit and we've fulfilled our function, they ought to be saying, "You light up my life." And that's what he's saying. We are to be witnesses to those around us.

And then those were his last words. Look at verse 9.

v. 9 And having said these things, He was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud took Him up out of their sight.

"And having said these things, He was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud took Him up out of their sight."

Now this isn't the only time in the Bible when somebody is "lifted up."

Genesis 5:22-24 says Enoch and God were walking along together and the Lord took him and Enoch was not.

In 2 Kings 2:1 it says a whirlwind and a chariot of fire descended and Elijah was caught up to glory into the presence of God.

In Acts 8:39, we're going to see when we get over to Acts 8, Philip was caught away by the Spirit of God.

And 1 Thessalonians says that one of these days the Lord's going to descend from heaven with a shout and all the

Christians are going to be caught up to be in His presence. And so shall we ever be with the Lord. (ref. 1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17)

What does “caught up into the clouds” mean? That’s caught up into the Shekinah Glory. That’s caught up into the presence of God Himself.

That was a cloud that hung over the Tabernacle. It was a cloud that led them by day. It was the pillar of fire that led them by night.

Imagine what happened on the other side of that cloud.

We always think of the disciples down here and they’re looking up and they’re hoping to finally catch that last glimpse of the Lord. Just imagine what happened on the other side. They’re probably singing and saying:

“Hallelujah, Amazing Grace, the Son’s been gone for 33 years and He’s home! He’s victorious and He’s going to bring a great army with Him! “

Oh, how they must have sung and what a time of great rejoicing!

Remember when Jesus was in that last prayer in John 17? He says:

“Father, glorify me with the glory which I had with You before

the world was.” (ref. John 17:5)

That’s probably what happened on the other side of the cloud. He went back to that glory. He was wrapped in swaddling clothes and they laid Him in a manger but He was wrapped in clouds as He went home to glory.

And the divine drama is over! This is the last we see Jesus Christ. He’s out of sight but He’s not out of hearing. He’s out of sight but He’s still there.

And notice what happens.

v. 10 And as they were gazing intently into the heaven while He was departing, and behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them.

“And as they were gazing intently into the heaven”—we can just see them! They’re looking—“while He was departing,”

They were looking so hard they didn’t even notice these two angels were standing by them.

“and behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them.”

v. 11 And they also said: “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him going into heaven.”

“And they also said:”—we can just imagine these fellows got shook—“Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the heaven?”

“You’re so heavenly minded you’re no earthly good here. What are you doing?”

“This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him going into heaven.”

This Jesus—the same yesterday, today, forever—is going to come back again. In the same way He’s going to step over the clouds.

Revelation 19 describes it, “He comes as King of kings and Lord of lords.” Oh that’s great! He’s going to come again! We’re going to be with Him forever.

Now, the word “then” in verse 12 is a TRANSITION. We’re going to get into something here for just a few minutes before we wrap this up.

v. 12 Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day’s journey away.

“Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem,”—about three-quarters of a

mile—“a Sabbath day’s journey away.”

v. 13 And when they entered [the city], they went up to the upper room, where they were staying; that is, 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 brother of James.

“And when they entered [the city], they went up to the upper room, where they were staying;”

Now it gets very specific here. This is the dorm. This is a place where eleven fellows are bunking down and it mentions all their names.

“that is, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew”—now Bartholomew might throw us but that’s another name for Nathaniel—“and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon the Zealot, and Judas”—that’s Judas Thaddeus Lebbaeus, the youngest among the twelve—“the brother of James.”

So here are the eleven of them. This is where they’re staying. This is their dorm.

v. 14 These all with one mind were continually devoting themselves to prayer, along with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.

“These all with one mind were continually devoting themselves to prayer, along with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.”

Now this looks like they make this a co-ed dorm and the girls come up to where the fellows are staying. This has to be a pretty big place to house 120. The last verse in Luke 24 says that they spent their time at the temple rejoicing.

Most likely when they had these prayer meetings and when they had these times together they went over to the temple. They stayed in this upper room. And the Spirit of God in our next study is going to come to the upper room. He’s going to come to their meeting with this group when they’re at their regular meeting at the temple.

Notice the greatest miracle in the book of Acts:

“These all with one mind”

They have been fighting for so long over the Kingdom, that for all of them to become “one mind” is an incredible miracle.

They are all together. No more power plays. No authority struggles. They’re all together in this and they:

“were continually devoting themselves to prayer.”

v. 15 And in these days Peter stood up in the midst of the brethren (a gathering of about one hundred and twenty persons was there together), and said,

“And in these days Peter stood up in the midst of the brethren (a gathering of about one hundred and twenty persons was there together), and said,”

Now some people said instead of standing up they should have stayed sitting down.

Peter is a SANGUINE. And for a sanguine to sit around indefinitely with nothing definite to do is probably the worst thing he can do. If we live with a sanguine who is inactive for any period of time, we'd be climbing the walls. It's horrible to put a sanguine out to pasture.

This is probably about day 7 of the 10 days.

Saul in the Old Testament waited for 7 days and then he forced himself to offer the sacrifice. A sanguine can usually make it just about a week and then it really gets rough.

Peter probably made a mistake here. Now there are Greek scholars who say that's silly. Let's promote the thought that he blew it.

Peter is not the same Peter here that he was back in the Gospel. Remember, he's the one that denied the Lord. He had to, with tears in his eyes, admit his own inadequacy when he

said he couldn't love like the Lord wanted him to love.

He is a broken, compassionate, tender individual. That's true. But he's also back in the place of leadership now that the Lord's gone. And so it's very normal for him to just want to take over.

On about day 7, when he couldn't stand it any longer, Peter stands up and there's 120 folks around. Inside his mind he's saying, "You know, the Lord will really appreciate my handling of this. After all He talked about twelve thrones in the Kingdom and the apostles are going to sit on it. We've only got eleven. We're going to have one throne empty if I don't do something. And then He probably just forgot to mention it before He left and all those details so he's really going to be grateful to me if I take care of this."

So impetuous, impatient Peter is quick to move into it and get something done.

Now watch this—verse 16.

v. 16 "Men, brothers, the Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit foretold by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus."

"Men, brothers, the Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit foretold by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus."

Now what's he mean? That's Psalm 41:9. Even His own familiar friend lifted up his heel against Him.

And in John 13—that's the verse He quotes that night when Judas leaves His presence.

v. 17 For he was numbered among us, and received his portion in this ministry.

“For he was numbered among us, and received his portion in this ministry.”

He was one of us! He “received his portion.”

It's possible to have our name on a church role and to go through all the motions and not be a Christian. That's possible. Here's an illustration!

He had religion without a relationship. He had association without acceptance. He had profession without possession. And Peter talks of it.

Now a sanguine always goes in for the gory details. They see an accident, they tell us all the gory, gory details. They're great storytellers.

v. 18 Now this man acquired a field with the price of his wickedness; and having fallen flat on his face, he

cracked open at the waist with a crashing noise and all his inner organs gushed out.

“Now this man acquired a field with the price of his wickedness;”

He hung himself on a tree over the ravine. Finally the rope broke:

“and having fallen flat on his face, he cracked open at the waist with a crashing noise and all his inner organs gushed out.”

Oh yuck!

v. 19 And it became known to all who were living in Jerusalem; so that in their own language that field was called Hakeldama, that is, field of blood.

“And it became known to all who were living in Jerusalem; so that in their own language that field was called Hakeldama, that is, field of blood.”

When somebody commits suicide, everybody’s that left really has to bear a stigma, don’t they? Imagine how much stigma those eleven fellows had to face because one of their own buddies committed suicide.

That’s why he says everybody in Jerusalem knew it because of what he did. It’s almost like being in bitterness.

“And it became known to all who were living in Jerusalem.”

v. 20 For it is written in the book of Psalms, ‘Let his homestead be made desolate, and let no man dwell in it;’ and ‘His office let another man take.’

“For it is written in the book of Psalms, ‘Let his homestead be made desolate, and let no man dwell in it;’ and ‘His office let another man take.’”

Now that’s:

Psalm 69:25

may the camp be desolate...

And then:

Psalm 109:8

let his days be few,
let another take his office.

So he has two Psalms here that he quotes.

v. 21 It is therefore necessary that of the men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us—

“It is therefore necessary that of the men”

See he doesn't say “The Lord told me this.”

He just says it is “necessary [to my way of thinking] that of the men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us—”

We have to get somebody who's been with us all the time. And then He puts the parameters on it.

v. 22 beginning from the baptism of John, until the day that He was taken up from us—one of these should become a witness with us of His resurrection.”

“beginning from the baptism of John,”—way back there when this started 3 years ago—“until the day that He was taken up from us”—just a little while ago—“one of these should become a witness with us of His resurrection.”“

They should see Him as the risen Christ.

v. 23 And they nominated two, Joseph, the one called Barsabas, (who was also called Justus), and Matthias.

“And they nominated two, Joseph, the one called Barsabas, (who was also called Justus), and Matthias.”

v. 24 And they prayed, and said: “You, Lord, who knows the hearts of all men, show which one of these two you have chosen

“And they prayed, and said: ‘You, Lord, who knows the hearts of all men, show which one of these two you have chosen”

v. 25 to receive the place of this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place.”

“to receive the place of this ministry and apostleship from which”—WHAT?—“Judas turned aside to go to his own place.”“

Don’t say Judas was a pawn. Judas made a choice and he chose to turn aside and go to “his own place.”

There are two kinds of people sitting in this room. Those who have chosen to receive Jesus Christ like one thief on the cross said, “remember me when You come into Your kingdom.” And another one who turned his back and did not respond. He “turned aside” and went to his own place.

Matthew 7:13, 14

There’s a broad way that leads to destruction and there’s a narrow way which leads to life and few there are who find it.

1 John 5:11, 12

He who has the Son has life, and he who has not the Son of God has not life.

“You make those choices. And up until now you’ve made those choices. Tonight you’re going to make it again. Either to turn to go to your own place or to realize that Jesus Christ is the way, the truth and the life and no man comes to the Father but by Me.” (ref. John 14:6)

And Peter says Judas made his choice and he’s gone “to his own place.”

“Now Lord, You know so You show which one it’s going to be.”

Now they went back to the Old Testament.

v. 26 And they drew lots for them, and the lot fell upon Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.

“And they drew lots for them, and the lot fell upon Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.”—but he’s never mentioned again.

And what about Joseph Barsabbas? He was the first public candidate running for office who lost the race. Is he still supportive after he loses the race? Does he indulge in self-pity? We don’t know. He’s never seen again. He also drops off the page.

The apostle Paul had to suffer an awful lot over his apostleship. He had to be called to question time after time after time the mistake that was made here caused havoc in the apostle's life.

If we're in doubt, wait. We'll never make a mistake by waiting. We'll always make a mistake by acting.

In Genesis 16 after ten years Sarah says, "Abraham, we've got to help God out. Take my handmaiden and have a baby." And so Ishmael is born.

Helping God out always gets us into terrible, terrible trouble. Trying to work it out on our own is like an illustration in Josh McDowell's book *The Secret of Loving*:

(The Secret of Loving by Josh McDowell)

Remember the last time you worked a jigsaw puzzle? The best way to proceed is to use the picture on the box top as your guide. I remember a close friend of mine, Dick Day, telling me about a fellow who bought two puzzles as birthday gifts for a relative who dearly loved puzzles. Before he wrapped them he switched the box tops. Can you imagine the frustration?

Yet that's how many Christians today are trying to get the puzzle of their lives together—with the wrong box top as their guide. The box top of emotions is sitting where the box top of God's Word, the Bible, should be.

(source unknown)

Peter steps ahead of the Lord in this and a lot of people are hurt as a result of it.

Here are the lessons we get out of our study.

Lesson #1: Jesus is a living Savior.

Jesus is a living Savior. We're going to be convinced of that as you work through this passage.

Lesson #2: We are to be His witnesses.

Lesson #3: He is coming back again.

The same Jesus that we've seen go into heaven is going to come back in like manner.

Lesson #4: The rapture of the church will be similar to the ascension only quicker.

Understand that? The rapture of the church is the taking of all the Christians home to be with the Lord. That could happen at any time. There's nothing standing in the way of that prophetically. And it says it's going to happen in a moment, the twinkling of an eye.

Rapture will be like that. Christians will just be caught up just that quick into the presence of the Lord.

Lesson #5: It thrills the heart of God to see us with one mind devoting ourselves to prayer.

It thrills the heart of God to see us with one mind, devoting ourselves to prayer. Oh how special that must have been to the Lord to see them there praying. And with one, after all those years of fussing and fighting and being concerned about who was going to be first in the kingdom.

Lesson #6: Judas turned aside to go to his own place.

That's a critical statement. Judas turned aside to go to his own place. He made a choice and that choice determined an eternal destiny without a relationship with God. Judas turned aside to his own place.

Lesson #7: When we try to help God we always hinder His ultimate purpose.

When we try to help God, we always hinder His ultimate purpose.

Ruth Harms Calkin has written some precious little books. And in her little book *Lord, You Love to Say Yes* she has a great little poem called "The King Is Coming":

(Lord, You Love to Say Yes by Ruth Harms Calkin)

The King Is Coming

I watched and smiled
As my silver-haired grandmother
Listened with rapt attention
To the intellectual speaker.
It was indeed a stimulating
Prophetic study
Of things to come.
On our way home I asked:
“Did you enjoy it?”
“Oh yes, my dear!
I didn’t understand it all
But it doesn’t matter:
[Because] I know the One who is coming.”
(source unknown)

To know Him is to have life. Not to know Him is to live in eternal death.

Father, as we come to the conclusion of the study, we pray if there’s someone who really has anxiety and concern about the future, that they would hear well that this is the day of salvation. This now is the moment to respond to Jesus Christ. Thank You for the power of Your Word. Thank You for the sensing of Your presence, speaking to our hearts as a result of our study. May this be a good beginning to a great series of studies in this marvelous book—the book of Acts. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

A Practical Study of ACTS:

Take It To Them!

“Putting the GO Back in the Gospel”

STUDY NUMBER ONE – ACTS 1:1-26

NOTES

v. 1 The first account I composed, O Theophilus, concerning all that Jesus began to do and to teach,

v. 2 until the day when he was taken up, after having given orders through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom He had chosen.

v. 3 To whom also He presented himself as one who was living, after His suffering, by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a period of forty days and speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God.

v. 4 And gathering them together, He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to be waiting for the promise of the Father which you heard from me;

v. 5 for John baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.

v. 6 And so when they had come together, they were asking Him, saying: “Lord, is it at this time you are restoring the kingdom to Israel?”

v. 7 He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has fixed by His own authority;

v. 8 but you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.”

v. 9 And having said these things, He was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud took Him up out of their sight.

v. 10 And as they were gazing intently into the heaven while He was departing, and behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them.

v. 11 And they also said: “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him going into heaven.”

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v. 14 These all with one mind were continually devoting themselves to prayer, along with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.

v. 15 And in these days Peter stood up in the midst of the brethren (a gathering of about one hundred and twenty persons was there together), and said,

v. 16 "Men, brothers, the Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit foretold by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus.

v. 17 For he was numbered among us, and received his portion in this ministry.

v. 18 Now this man acquired a field with the price of his wickedness; and having fallen flat on his face, he cracked open at the waist with a crashing noise and all his inner organs gushed out.

v. 19 And it became known to all who were living in Jerusalem; so that in their own language that field was called Hakeldama, that is, field of blood.

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v. 21 It is therefore necessary that of the men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us—

v. 22 beginning from the baptism of John, until the day that He was taken up from us—one of these should become a witness with us of His resurrection."

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v. 25 to receive the place of this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place."

v. 26 And they drew lots for them, and the lot fell upon Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.

QUESTIONS:

1. Read Acts 1:1-26 and in your own words pull out the main thought of this passage.

2. What was Luke's purpose in writing his gospel, according to the first two verses?

3. What are the Lord's last words before He is taken up to heaven?

4. What great promise ought to motivate us in our service for the Lord in verse 11?

5. What did the disciples do when they got back to Jerusalem, according to verse 14?

6. What was the first action taken by Peter and the disciples in verses 15ff?

7. What is it about Judas that makes his situation so difficult, according to verse 17?

8. What three things did they do in replacing Judas, according to verses 23, 24, & 26?

9. What verse in the study has meant the most to you?

10. What lesson have you learned from this study?

LESSONS FROM THE PASSAGE:

What are some of the lessons we can learn from this particular study?

LESSON #1: Jesus is a living Savior.

LESSON #2: We are to be His witnesses.

LESSON #3: He is coming back again.

LESSON #4: The rapture will be similar to the ascension except it will be quicker.

LESSON #5: It thrills the heart of God to see us with one mind devoting ourselves to prayer.

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