

Lesson 1: To Be His Witnesses

Luke 24:36-53 and Acts 1

In his Gospel, Luke recorded the events of the earthly life of Christ. In Acts, he picks up with Jesus' ministry on earth after His crucifixion and resurrection. For forty days Jesus walked the earth in His resurrected body. Since there is some overlap in Luke 24 and Acts 1, we will look at both chapters to get a fuller picture of those forty days.

1. Begin today by glancing at Luke 24:45. What did Jesus do for His apostles?

“...you will 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.”

Acts 1:8

These men had walked with Jesus during His earthly ministry. They had eaten with Him, spoken with Him and learned from Him daily for nearly three years. And yet, the Lord still had to open their minds to understand the Scriptures. Whether we have spent years studying the Bible or are opening one up for the first time, we would be wise to recognize our dependence upon the Lord to open our hearts and minds to understand His written Word.

As you begin this study of the Acts of the Apostles, take a moment to pray that the Spirit of God will open your heart and mind to receive and understand His living and active Word. Your prayer can be as simple as: “Open the eyes of my heart, Lord.”

The Promise of the Spirit

Now read Luke 24:36-53 and Acts 1:1-11.

2. What was Jesus' final instruction to the apostles (Acts 1:4-5 and Luke 24:49)? What were they to wait for?
3. Read Matthew 3:11 and Acts 1:5 and 1:8. Compare John's baptism with Jesus' baptism.

In Luke 24:49, Jesus refers to “the promise of [His] Father” coming upon the disciples. Some of Jesus’ words about the coming Holy Spirit are recorded in John 16:7-15, where He taught that He would send the Spirit from the Father. The mystery of the Trinity is so far beyond the mind’s ability to grasp, but in the coming of the Holy Spirit, we get a glimpse of the Triune God.

Read and reflect on Jesus’ words in John 16:7-15.

4. Why is it to our advantage that Jesus “went away” (John 16:7)?

5. From John 16:7-15, what are some roles of the Holy Spirit in our present age (since Jesus has ascended into heaven)?

6. According to Jesus in John 14:16-17, where does the Spirit now dwell?

7. Take some time to consider your current circumstances. How do you desire to see the Spirit’s activity in your own life? In what ways do you need the Holy Spirit to be your Helper? Where do you need Him to speak truth?

The Ascension of Christ

Focus in on Luke 24:50-53 and Acts 1:6-11.

8. What was the apostles’ question in Acts 1:6?

The apostles, being Jewish, were familiar with the prophecies about their Messiah as the Coming King, who would reign over a restored Israel. Naturally, since they were staring into the eyes of a resurrected Christ, they were curious if He would immediately restore Israel, which was then held tightly in the grip of the Roman Empire.

9. How does Jesus answer their question in Acts 1:7?

10. What do the angels in Acts 1:10-11 teach about Christ’s return?

The theories and debates surrounding the return of Christ are many and varied. But of this we can be sure: He will return! And when He does it will be as a Mighty King and Victorious Warrior. If you need a glimpse of the hope and glory that will accompany Christ's return, take some time to read through Revelation 19:11-16, and worship the mighty God we serve.

11. According to Acts 1:8, in the time between His ascension and His return – the time in which we live, what does the Holy Spirit equip disciples (including you and me) to do for Christ?

12. How can we be witnesses for Him in our world today?

Waiting in Obedience

Continue reading Acts 1:12-26.

In obedience to the Risen Christ's final instruction to them, the apostles returned to Jerusalem joined by many other followers of Christ.

13. According to Luke 24:50-53 and Acts 1:14, what was their attitude and what did they do as they waited?

Acts 1:15-20 records the tragic end of Judas' life. Judas was one of the original twelve disciples who walked with Jesus during His earthly ministry. He later betrayed Jesus by handing Him over to the authorities, which resulted in Jesus' crucifixion (Matthew 26). As a result of his betrayal and death, the twelve apostles were down to eleven.

14. According to Acts 1:15-20, what did Peter realize needed to be done in response to Judas' absence?

15. Why did Peter believe it was important to replace Judas?

16. How did the apostles go about replacing Judas in Acts 1:21-26?

17. [Bear in mind that this decision was being made before the outpouring of the Spirit. After the Spirit is sent to baptize and dwell within believers, there is no further reference to the practice of casting lots in the New Testament. Throughout the rest of Acts, we will see believers making decisions prayerfully by relying upon the guidance of the in-dwelling Spirit.]¹

18. How might we follow the examples set by the apostles during our own times of waiting?

Prepare for Life

We have seen in Acts 1:8 that the Holy Spirit will empower us, as disciples of Christ, to be witnesses for Him. Before we close, turn back to Luke 24:36-43 and consider Jesus' actions. The apostles had seen Jesus hanging on a cross and laid in a tomb. They knew His death was real. But what about His resurrection? Was it equally as real? We have an easy time in this world recognizing death as a real and tangible thing. We are not to be witnesses, though, only of Jesus' death. We are to be witnesses of His life – His resurrected life!

19. From 1 Corinthians 15:16-19, why is it significant that Jesus rose from the dead?

20. How does this affect Your relationship with the Lord? Does it change anything about the way You view Him? How will that affect Your being a witness for Him?

¹ *English Standard Version Study Bible*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008. Page 2082.

Lecture Notes: Lesson 1