

Acts of the Apostles- Session 1

Recap

In this opening message on the Book of Acts, Pastor Gary set the stage for a summer-long journey through Acts and the life of the Apostle Paul. He emphasized that Acts is “part two” of Luke’s Gospel—a carefully researched, historically reliable account written by Dr. Luke to explain what Jesus *continued* to do and teach through ordinary, unschooled believers empowered by the Holy Spirit. These first disciples were few in number, under persecution, under-resourced, and grieving the physical departure of Jesus—yet they were entrusted with the most important message in the world. The heart of the message was to help us see how similar we actually are to them, and how much we, too, need the Holy Spirit’s power, guidance, and friendship.

A major focus was on Acts 1: Jesus’ command to *wait* in Jerusalem for “the promise of the Father” and the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Rather than turning this into a purely doctrinal debate, we were urged to see the Spirit as a Person to be known, trusted, and depended on—Jesus’ own chosen way of continuing His work through the church. The disciples were told not to depart, to wait together, and to accept that there were things they did *not* need to know. That season of waiting refined them, deepened their dependence, and prepared them for the power they would soon receive. The invitation to us is clear: in a rushed, self-sufficient culture, we must recover the spiritual discipline of waiting—learning to stay where God has us until He moves, to seek a real relationship with the Holy Spirit, and to desire above all else to “know Christ and the power of his resurrection.”

Study Guide: Key Points

Waiting in Community: Prayerful Dependence Together

The disciples’ first assignment after Jesus’ ascension was simple but costly: “do not depart from Jerusalem” and *wait* for the promise of the Father. They did this *together*—about 120 believers gathered in the upper room, “with one accord in prayer and supplication,” along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus and Jesus’ brothers. They had just witnessed the resurrection and ascension, but they still lacked clarity on timing, details, and outcomes. What they *did* know was that Jesus told them to stay put and remain together before attempting anything for Him. We were reminded how often we are tempted to rush ahead—into ministry, decisions, or “solutions”—without pausing to pray and discern with others. Acts 1 shows that the early church’s power flowed out of shared dependence, shared questions, and shared prayer, not spiritual lone-ranger efforts.

Identity in Christ: Ordinary, Unschooled... and Chosen

A key emphasis was how Luke describes the central leaders of Acts as “unschooled, ordinary men.” Many had no formal training, no social status, and very little experience leading movements—yet God entrusted them with the gospel that would shape nations. A story from southern India illustrated this: when Acts 4:13 was read to a room of village pastors, they stood and cheered because they saw themselves in that description—ordinary, unschooled, working multiple jobs—yet used by God. This is the pattern of the New Testament. Apostles were those who had been with Jesus, witnessed His resurrection, and were entrusted with establishing doctrine and church life—not the spiritual elite by worldly standards. The encouragement to us is that your lack of pedigree, education, or religious background does not disqualify you. In Christ, you are part of “a priesthood of all believers,” called and sent, invited into the same story of dependence and obedience the early church lived out.

Worship-First Posture: Relationship over Formula

When Jesus promised, “you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit,” the church has often turned that phrase into a doctrinal battleground instead of a relational invitation. Instead of starting with adoration—honoring the Spirit as a Person to love, trust, and welcome—we often start with arguments: Is this for today? What about tongues? What did the wind and fire mean? The first believers had no library of commentaries, no denominational debates. They simply obeyed, prayed, and then *experienced* the Spirit being poured out. We were urged to see that God’s intent is a living relationship with the Spirit that changes how we pray, how we worship, and how we live—Jesus has “left the building” physically, sits at the right hand of the Father, and now wants His people to walk in close friendship with the Holy Spirit. Our posture should begin with worship (Who are You, Lord?) before we get lost in formulas (How exactly does this work?).

Stillness Before God: Learning to Wait for the Promise

A central application was the call to learn to *wait*—a deeply countercultural discipline. Jesus told the disciples not to depart and to wait for the promise, without giving them exact timing or details. They counted days; they likely tried to interpret the significance of numbers—day three, day seven, day ten. Yet the Spirit did not come on their timetable, but on God’s: at Pentecost, during the wheat harvest and the offering of leavened loaves. Those ten days became a process of refinement—letting go of control, accepting what they did not need to know, being prepared for a “first date” with the Holy Spirit. Many marriages, jobs, and major life choices are damaged by an inability to wait. We are conditioned for instant gratification, but “they that wait upon the Lord” are the ones who are renewed, strengthened, and truly guided. Stillness before God—refusing to depart until He leads—is not passivity; it is preparation.

Power with Purpose: Strength for a Costly Calling

When Jesus said, “you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you,” we were reminded that this power is not only boldness or dynamite-like energy for preaching and miracles, but also power for gentleness, patience, kindness, and long-suffering. The apostles would travel vast distances, cross ethnic and racial boundaries, face persecution and death—from India to Spain to North Africa and beyond. From a human standpoint, their task was impossible. They needed more than natural gifting or good strategies; they needed to be immersed—baptized—in the Spirit so that no part of them remained untouched by God’s

presence. In the same way, we may not face martyrdom, but we face impossibilities in our homes, workplaces, and relationships. The message closed with a probing question: if King Jesus asked you, “What do you want?”, would you answer, “I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection”? Do you want the Spirit’s power to be a better husband, wife, parent, or worker? That desire—combined with a willingness to wait and obey—is the starting point of true spiritual power.

Study Text – Acts 1:1–14 (NKJV)