

3. The Book of Acts 1:9-26

A message by Pastor Phil Ballmaier
5-6-26

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The Book of Acts was written by Luke. The first twelve chapters focus in on the ministry of Peter—but then starting in Chapter 13 the focus shifts to the ministry of Paul for the remainder of the book.

Many believe that the Book of Acts is a model for the Church—because it was one of the most successful periods in church history.

Paul in writing to the Colossians said, *“And the word of the gospel which has come to you, as it has also in all the world...”* (Colossians 1:6)

The Gospel had spread to the entire known world during the first 30 years of the Church's existence. This happened at a time when there weren't any seminaries or Bible colleges—***the work was done through ordinary people who were simply relying on the power of the Holy Spirit.***

Their success is a powerful testimony of how much we need to get back to this model today if we're going to be successful in reaching our world for Jesus.

Acts 1:9–11 (NKJV)

⁹ Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. ¹⁰ And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel [angels], ¹¹ who also said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This *same* Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven.”

Notice that in verse 11 Luke (under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit) says, **“This same Jesus** [not ‘this same ‘Christ spirit’ as the New Age teaches]...**will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven.”**

New Agers believe that a new ‘messiah’ is going to make his appearance on the world scene someday and that he will be the latest reincarnation of the Christ-spirit who has come to usher in the New Age for the earth. They believe that Messiah Jesus was the reincarnation of the Christ-spirit for this present age—the Piscean Age.

They believe there is coming another leader (messiah, avatar) who will be the latest reincarnation of the Christ-spirit for the New Age—the Age of Aquarius.

I remember, back in the early 1980's when I was just a young pastor a full-page ad appeared in the Chicago Tribune announcing that Maitreya Buddha, the last reincarnation of the Christ spirit, was alive on the earth and ready to reveal himself..

“This *same* Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven.”

Matthew 24:23–27 (NKJV)

²³ “Then if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here *is* the Christ!’ or ‘There!’ do not believe *it*. ²⁴ For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. ²⁵ See, I have told you beforehand. ²⁶ “Therefore if they say to you, ‘Look, He is in the desert!’ do not go out; *or* ‘Look, *He is* in the inner rooms!’ do not believe *it*. ²⁷ For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.

Revelation 1:7 (NKJV)

⁷ Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen.

Zechariah 14:4 (NKJV)

⁴ And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, Which faces Jerusalem on the east. And the Mount of Olives shall be split in two, From east to west, *Making* a very large valley; Half of the mountain shall move toward the north And half of it toward the south.

Acts 1:12 (NKJV)

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

A **Sabbath day’s journey** was the maximum distance one was permitted to travel on the Sabbath under rabbinic law. It was fixed at 2,000 cubits, or about one half to three quarters of a mile (Joshua 3:4).

Acts 1:13 (NKJV)

¹³ **And when they had entered, they went up into the upper room where they were staying: Peter, James, John, and Andrew; Philip and Thomas; Bartholomew and Matthew; James *the son* of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot; and Judas *the son* of James.**

Why were they all staying in Jerusalem?—Because Jesus told them to wait there:

Luke 24:49 (NKJV)

⁴⁹ “Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high.”

Acts 1:4 (NKJV)

⁴ And being assembled together with *them*, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, “*which,*” *He said,* “you have heard from Me;

Acts 1:14 (NKJV)

¹⁴ **These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.**

It is likely that the group met in the Upper Room where the last Passover had been celebrated—but we are told in Luke 24:53 that they also went to the Temple for worship.

The phrase, “**These all continued with one accord**” occurs 11 times in the Book of Acts and is one of the keys to the power and success of those early Christians—they were in unity with one another.

Satan can only defeat us if he first divides us—but that said unity is beautiful:

Psalm 133:1 (NKJV)

¹ Behold, how good and how pleasant *it is* For brethren to dwell together in unity!

A second key to their power and success
is given in the words,
“**they continued ... in prayer.**”

No great work of God has ever been done apart from prayer—and no great work for God will ever be accomplished apart from prayer.

Not in your walk with God, your marriage, in the lives of your children, or in this church as a whole—

James 5:16 (NLT)

¹⁶ ...The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results.

And yet prayer has become the neglected weapon of the Christian arsenal.

One pastor put it this way—

“Churches today are packed for concerts or potlucks or special events—but announce a prayer meeting and a few faithful saints trickle in.”

No wonder the church is so powerless—it’s because it is so prayer-less.

Pastor Charles Stanley—

“If people in America would spend 1/10 of the time on their knees that they spend watching T.V.—God would bring about an awakening in America that would shake every square inch of this globe. It is a sin for Christians who have heard the gospel over and over and have seen God answer prayer to sit down and watch 1, 2, 3 or 4 hours of T.V.—filling their minds with the world and then crawl into bed and whisper, ‘Lord bless me tomorrow, help me with my job, bless my family, take care of my kids, supply my needs in Jesus name’ as they’re on their way to sleep.”

Now, as then, God works when people pray.

Ordinarily we would rather do anything than pray—but it’s only when we wait before God in desperate, believing, fervent, unhurried, united **prayer** that the reviving, energizing power of the Spirit of God is poured out.

As one pastor said, *“It cannot be emphasized too strongly that unity and prayer were the prelude to Pentecost.”*

Acts 1:14 (NKJV)

¹⁴ These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, **with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.**

This is the last mention of **Mary** by name in the NT and please note that—the disciples were praying *with* Mary and not *to* Mary as they were all waiting to receive the Baptism with the Holy Spirit.

The Roman Catholic Church (RCC) has elevated Mary to a place of worship—with some Catholic leaders believing that she even had a part in our redemption (‘co-redemptrix’)!

We remember Mary from Luke Chapter 1 and how that she was a godly young woman (teenager) when the angel Gabriel appeared to her and announced that she had been chosen by God to be the mother of the Messiah.

At that time, she had already been betrothed to Joseph (legally married) but had not yet entered into full marriage with him—meaning that she wasn't living with him and was still a virgin.

The Roman Catholic Church teaches that Mary was kept from the stain of *original sin* from the moment she was conceived in her mother's womb (the doctrine of 'Immaculate Conception').

The RCC also maintains that Mary was granted the grace from God to live a sinless life her entire life until she was 'assumed' into heaven without experiencing death—both are unbiblical.

Look, Mary was a tremendously godly young woman—but nowhere in the Scriptures is it taught that she was sinless—in fact in her 'Magnificat' (a.k.a. "the song of Mary") in Luke 1:47 she herself said—

Luke 1:47 (NKJV)

⁴⁷ And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior. (Only sinners need a Savior!)

Now, not only does the RCC teach that Mary was perpetually sinless her whole life—it also teaches that she remained a perpetual virgin her entire life as well. In other words, after she gave birth to Jesus—she had no more children.

Yet, here in Acts 1:14 it clearly says that Jesus had brothers (half-brothers of course):

Acts 1:14 (NKJV)

¹⁴ These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, **with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.**

Any Catholic who doubts this, simply take them to Matthew 13 and show them where the names of Jesus' half-brothers are mentioned—

Matthew 13:54–56 (NKJV)

⁵⁴ When He had come to His own country, He taught them in their synagogue, so that they were astonished and said, "Where did this *Man* get this wisdom and *these* mighty works? ⁵⁵ Is this not the carpenter's son? Is not His mother called Mary? And His brothers James, Joses, Simon, and Judas? ⁵⁶ And His sisters, are they not all with us? Where then did this *Man* get all these things?"

Something else that is important for us to take note of—the RCC is fond of referring to Mary as "*the mother of God.*"

But notice in Acts 1:14 **Mary** is called "**the mother of Jesus**" not "*the mother of God.*"

Jesus is the name of our Lord in His *humanity* and as such it is proper to call Mary the mother of Jesus—but the Bible never refers to her as "*the mother of God.*" It is therefore doctrinally inaccurate and absurd to speak of God as having a human mother—because as God, He existed from all eternity.

Let me end this discussion on Mary with a quote from one pastor and author—

"Much legend, myth, and faulty dogma have arisen over the centuries in connection with **Mary the mother of Jesus**. In contrast to the inordinate devotion to her in some religious systems, the Bible never exalts her. In fact,

this is the last reference to her in Scripture; she does not appear again in Acts, nor in any of the epistles. In Mark 3:31–32, she, along with Jesus’ brothers, tried to assume some special privileges based upon their earthly relationship to Him. Jesus replied, “ ‘Who are My mother and My brothers?’ And looking about on those who were sitting around Him, He said, ‘Behold, My mother and My brothers! For whoever does the will of God, he is My brother and sister and mother’ ” (Mark 3:33–35). In other words, their earthly, familial relationship to Him gained them no special spiritual recognition or privileges. That truth is applied specifically to Mary in Luke 11:27–28: “And it came about while He said these things, one of the women in the crowd raised her voice, and said to Him, ‘Blessed is the womb that bore You, and the breasts at which You nursed.’ But He said, ‘On the contrary, blessed are those who hear the word of God, and observe it.’”

Mary was a woman of singular virtue, or she would never have been chosen to be the mother of the Lord Jesus Christ. For that role she deserves respect and honor (cf. Luke 1:42). But she was a sinner who exalted God her Savior. She referred to herself as a humble bondservant to God, who needed mercy (cf. Luke 1:46–50). To offer prayers to her and elevate her to a role as co-redemptrix with Christ is to go beyond the bounds of Scripture and her own confession. The silence of the epistles, which form the doctrinal core of the New Testament, about Mary is especially significant.

If she played the important role in salvation assigned her by the Roman Catholic Church, or if she were to receive prayers as an intercessor between believers and Christ, surely the New Testament would have spelled that out. Nor do such Roman Catholic teachings as her virgin birth and bodily assumption into heaven find any biblical support; they are fabrications.”

Acts 1:15–16 (NKJV)

¹⁵ And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples (altogether the number of names was about a hundred and twenty), and said, ¹⁶ “Men *and* brethren, this Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke before by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus;

Two things I want you to notice.

First, Peter (speaking for the Jewish people in general) expressed his confidence and belief in the Jewish Scriptures (our Old Testament) that because it was written—it had to come to pass!

If God said it, it’s got to happen! The Jewish people had great confidence in the Word of God. However, don’t think that this meant that Judas was forced by God to betray Jesus against his free will.

Secondly, the recognition that the Scriptures were inspired by the Holy Spirit— **“which the Holy Spirit spoke before by the mouth of David...”**

This tells us that they believed in the *inspiration* of the Scriptures (that they were ‘*God breathed*’—2Tim.3:16) and therefore were inerrant. If a Christian or a church is going to be used by God and have the power of the Holy Spirit flowing through them in ministry—they have to believe these two basic and fundamental doctrines:

That the Bible is the inspired Word of God and as such is inerrant (free from error in the original handwritten manuscripts).

And secondly, **that if God said it, it’s going to happen—the Scriptures *must* be fulfilled.**

So those important, basic, foundational beliefs are essential if the power of God is going to flow through us to reach this world for Jesus.

The Word of God is living and powerful—but it will only be living and powerful in our lives if we have confidence that the Bible has come from God and can be trusted in all matters of faith and life.

Acts 1:16–19 (NKJV)

¹⁶ “Men *and* brethren, this Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke before by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus; ¹⁷ **for he was numbered with us and obtained a part in this ministry.**” ¹⁸ **(Now this man purchased a field with the wages of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst open in the middle and all his entrails gushed out.** ¹⁹ **And it became known to all those dwelling in Jerusalem; so that field is called in their own language, Akel Dama, that is, Field of Blood.)**

Verses 18 and 19 are a parenthesis written by Luke and not a part of Peter’s message. They complete the historical facts concerning Judas through the time of his death and thus pave the way for the appointment of his successor. There is no contradiction between the mode of Judas’ death as given here, and that which is found in Matthew 27:3–10.

Matthew states that after Judas had reconsidered his betrayal of Christ and had given the thirty pieces of silver back to the chief priests and elders—he went out and hanged himself.

The chief priests then took the money and bought a burial ground—a ‘potter’s field.’

Here in Acts, Luke says that *Judas purchased a field with the money*, and that he fell **headlong ... and all his entrails gushed out**.

Putting the two accounts together, it appears that the actual purchase transaction concerning the field was arranged by the chief priests—however, Judas ‘*bought the field*’ in the sense that it was *his* money, and they merely acted as his agents representing him.

He hanged himself on a tree, but the rope probably broke, causing his body to tumble down the rocky, jagged ravine causing it to **burst open**.

As this incident became known **in Jerusalem**—the potter’s field came to be called **Akel Dama, that is, Field of Blood** or “*bloody field*” in Aramaic.

It was a **Field of Blood** not only because Judas spilled his blood there, but also because the field was purchased with the “*blood money*” given to the betrayer of Jesus.

Acts 1:20 (NKJV)

²⁰ “**For it is written in the Book of Psalms: ‘Let his dwelling place be desolate, And let no one live in it’; and, ‘Let another take his office.’**”

Peter here is quoting from two separate Psalms—Psalm 69:25 and Psalm 109:8.

That Peter could quote the Scriptures *extemporaneously* as he did, tells us that he was no ignorant fisherman—he knew the Scriptures!

I strongly suspect Peter’s knowledge of the *written* Word came from hanging out with the *living* Word, Jesus Christ for three and a half years! So, Peter’s argument, based on Scripture, that they needed to choose another disciple to replace Judas—was on solid ground biblically speaking. Yet there was a problem in choosing Judas’ replacement—let’s continue reading:

Acts 1:21–26 (NKJV)

²¹ “Therefore, of these men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, ²² beginning from the baptism of John to that day when He was taken up from us, one of these must become a witness with us of His resurrection.” ²³ And they proposed two: Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias. ²⁴ And they prayed and said, “You, O Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which of these two You have chosen ²⁵ to take part in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place.” ²⁶ And they cast their lots, and the lot fell on Matthias. And he was numbered with the eleven apostles.

Peter laid out the qualifications for the person who was to replace Judas as the twelfth apostle—

- They had to be a disciple who had been with them from the time Jesus was baptized by John
- to His ascension back to His Father after His resurrection
- Also, that they had to have seen the risen Christ.

It seems that Peter was right on the second qualification—but not the first.

First of all, let’s talk about the **casting of lots** to determine the will of God. The casting of lots was a common practice in Old Testament times. In Old Testament times if a Jew wanted to know God’s will in a given situation, he would go to the High Priest who had the Urim and the Thummim in his breastplate.

The Urim and the Thummim were possibly two stones—one black and one white.

When asked a question, the High Priest would offer a prayer and then reach into the breastplate and pull out a stone—perhaps black meaning “No” and white meaning “Yes” or “Go”.

The second way they would discern the will of God in a matter was to cast lots.

A specific example of an Old Testament character involved in the casting of lots is found in the Book of Jonah. The sailors on the ship cast lots to determine whose fault the storm was—the lot fell on Jonah and he was thrown overboard to appease the ‘sea gods’ to make the storm stop (Jonah 1:7).

People today still think that ‘*casting lots*’ is a sure-fire way to discern God’s will—and have borrowed an idiom from the account of Gideon in Judges 6, calling it “*setting out a fleece*” (see Judges 6:36–40). But after Pentecost and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit—we never see believers using the casting of lots to determine God’s will in a given situation.

An example would be when Paul and Barnabas were commissioned for ministry in Acts 13—it was not through the casting of lots, but through the voice of the Spirit.

➤ *How did He speak?*

I suggest it was through the gift of prophecy (Acts 13:2).

The main problem with casting lots or laying out a fleece to discern God’s will is—it limits God and seeks to force Him to act according to our ‘timetable.’

You see, even though Peter knew the Word and was right in discerning that Judas needed to be replaced—I believe he and the other disciples erred when they chose two men and said, “Now, Lord, which of these two do You want?”

I believe God's choice was neither man! I believe that God's choice to replace Judas was Paul! I believe the disciples limited God by giving Him *their* two choices to replace Judas and got ahead of the Lord by trying to make something happen before the power of the Spirit came upon them on the Day of Pentecost.

When Paul finally showed up, he said that the Lord Jesus had appeared to him and called him to be an apostle (the apostle who was to replace Judas).

And that's why he said, *"I'm an apostle, not by the will of man but by the will of God."*

He said he was an apostle chosen *"out of due time"* (he wasn't one of the original apostles chosen by Jesus at the start of His public ministry)—but that he himself had also seen the risen Christ! (1 Corinthians 1:1; 1 Corinthians 9:1).

In Revelation 21:14 when it tells us that the names of the twelve apostles will be written on the twelve foundations of the city of New Jerusalem—it's my personal conviction that we won't see Matthias' name on any of those foundations—we'll see Paul's name.

I believe Paul was the one who filled Judas' office.

***This is an important lesson for us to learn—
but a mistake we commonly make as Christians.***

We see a principle in God's Word and say, *"Okay, now how can I make this happen?"* instead of saying, *"I see the principle, Lord. Now I'm going to wait on You for the power of Your Spirit to bring it about."*

Remember that when Mary got the news that she had been chosen by God to be the mother of the Messiah—it says she *"pondered it in her heart"* but not that she went about trying to make it happen!

One pastor said with regard to this—

"Maybe you're wrestling with a decision right now, saying, "Which one is it, Lord? This or that? Here or there? What do You want, Lord? Here are Your choices."

In Numbers 11, we see something so typical of what we do. The Israelites were murmuring, saying, "We're sick and tired of this manna." Hearing their complaints, Moses said to the Lord, "What am I supposed to do? You told me You would give them meat. Do You want me to kill the flocks and the herds we're bringing into the Promised Land? Or do You want us to fish all the fish out of the Red Sea? Which is it, Lord?"

But the Lord said, "Trust Me, Moses, and you'll see that I have more choices than just those two. I have options you would never think about, even in your wildest dreams." And suddenly quail by the thousands flew into the camp two feet off the ground—right in the strike zone. The Israelites grabbed sticks and batted them down. I know that's what happened because verse 32 says, "He that gathered least gathered ten homers."

There are two main problems with 'fleecing God'—first, it puts limits on God ("Which of these two job offers do you want me to take?")

Second, it's an effort on our part to be in control and to get God to act according to our timetable.

If you would like to know more about what it means to be a Jesus-follower— please, reach out to us. It would be our greatest privilege to lead you into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ.

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