

ACTS OF THE APOSTLES:
A History of the Early Church
Gulf Coast Baptist Church
Bible Institute

I. Introduction

A. Author: Luke

1. Greek (not mentioned among the Jewish believers) - Col. 4:12-14
2. Doctor - evidenced by medical terminology
3. Missionary and companion with Paul - Acts 16:10-17; 20:5-21:18; Co. 4:12; Philemon 24)

B. Authorship:

1. Historically accepted
2. Similar style, vocabulary, grammar as the Gospel of Luke
3. "We" sections of Acts

C. Audience: Theophilus - a wealthy believer (?) of whom there is little knowledge

D. Date of writing: circa A.D. 61-63

E. Purpose: The Acts of the Apostles gives a historical account of the Church during the first 30 years following Christ's ascension to Heaven. It provides evidence of the difficulties faced by 1st century believers during the transition that took place as God's program changed from dealing with the nation of Israel to calling out a people from the nations based on His New Covenant. This transition is carried out in two waves of activity. The first half of the book primarily focuses on the ministry of the Apostles to the Jews in Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria. The second half focuses on Paul's conversion and his ministry to the Gentiles in the Mediterranean world. All the while, God progressively reveals more and more revelation necessary for believers in the Church age. Although the seeds of doctrine for the Church were being sown by men like the apostles and the New Testament prophets during this time, Acts should not be viewed as a doctrinal book because God's revelation was still being completed during these early years.

II. Chapter 1 - A.D. 33

A. v.1-2: Luke picks up the account beginning with the Ascension of the resurrected Christ

B. v. 4: At His Ascension, Christ commanded the apostles to wait in Jerusalem, "*for the promise of the Father*"

1. What promise? - The Coming of the Holy Spirit

- a) Nicodemus had no experiential knowledge of the work of the Spirit in regards to salvation - Jo. 3:10
- b) The Holy Spirit had not been given during the time of Christ's earthly ministry - Jo. 7:39
- c) Christ promised the Father would provide another Comforter of the same kind as Himself, "in that day" (Pentecost) - Jo. 14:16-20

C. v. 6: "*Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?*"

1. The apostles still demonstrate a lack of awareness regarding the change in God's program enacted by Christ's death, burial, and resurrection
2. The apostles were still anticipating the inauguration of the promised Kingdom of the heavens
 - a) The kingdom of the Heavens is distinct from the kingdom of God - Lu. 17:20
 - b) The kingdom of the Heavens was anticipated by faithful Jews - Lu. 2:21-38
 - c) The kingdom of the Heavens was preached by John the Baptist - Ma. 3:2
 - d) The kingdom of the Heavens was anticipated by the disciples - Mk. 10:35-45
 - e) The nation of Israel rejected the rightful ruler of the kingdom of the Heavens - Jo. 19:15

- f) Christ's death and resurrection ushered in a new arrangement, the Church - Ma. 26:28
- 3. The apostles' lack of understanding, regarding God's change of program from the nation of Israel to the Church, intimates that there will be a lengthy transition period as the believers come to understand their new relationship to God through Christ
- D. v. 8: *"But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."*
 - 1. The Great Commission Revisited
 - a) Highlights: see lesson on the Great Commission and Evangelism in Ecclesiology
 - b) Conclusion: In light of the apostles lack of understanding about the Kingdom of Heaven, Christ gives instructions to the apostles that the coming of the Holy Spirit would result in a ministry that was focused on presenting the Good News in increasingly wider and wider circles -
 - (1) Christ's program would not be confined to Israel but would extend out into the Gentile world
 - (2) In the kingdom, Gentiles would come to Jerusalem
 - (3) In the Church age, these Jewish apostles would go out to the Gentiles
- E. v. 9-12: Christ's Ascension
 - 1. Christ received up into the heavens
 - 2. Angels: *"...this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven."*
 - a) Reference to Christ's second coming (not the Rapture)
 - (1) Location of Christ's Ascension: Mount of Olives
 - (2) At the end of the Tribulation Christ will return to earth at the same location from which He left - Zech. 14:4
- F. v. 12-14: The apostles returned to "The" Upper Room in Jerusalem with other disciples, Mary and some of the other women where they proceeded to wait and worship
- G. v. 15-26: Peter recommends selecting someone to replace Judas Iscariot's place among the apostles based upon OT passages (Ps. 69:25; Ps. 109:8)
 - 1. Qualifications:
 - a) A disciple of Christ since the baptism of John
 - b) A witness of the Resurrected Christ
 - 2. Method: Casting lots had an Old Testament Basis
 - a) An OT method of attempting to determine God's will - Prov. 16:33
 - b) Choice of the scapegoat - Lev. 16:8
 - c) Priestly offices - 1 Chron. 24
 - d) Division of land to the tribes of Israel - Josh. 18:10
 - e) Division of labor for the rebuilding of the Temple - Neh. 10:34
 - 3. Was this a hasty decision? Was this spot reserved for Paul?
 - a) Apostles acted in accordance with OT method for determining God's will
 - b) Other apostles in the NT
 - (1) Barnabas - Acts 14:14
 - (2) Andronicus and Junia - Ro. 16:7
 - c) Paul's ministry was distinct from the original 12 apostles