



Living Walking Serving

FAITH AND GRACE CHURCH

BIBLE STUDY NOTE ON THE ACTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE EARLY CHURCH (A BOOK STUDY OF THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES)

(Rom.15:4, Joel 2:28-32, Luke 24:49, Acts 1:4-5)

STUDY 20-16: THE BOOK OF ACTS 1:1-11

SCRIPTURE REFERENCES: Acts 1:1-11, Luke 1:3, 24:50, Rom.15:4, Eph.5:17-18, John 16:7.

A. INTRODUCTION

The Book of Acts is God's own defining church history book, it is the beginning of the outcome of Jesus' promises and commands. One would possibly think that whatever is found in this book is to be the norm for the church of Jesus until He returns.

The recurring theme of this Book is that our spiritual ancestors were empowered by the Holy Spirit. That same power is available to us. God has not left us at the mercy of our weaknesses, He has sent the Holy Spirit to help us follow their example (Rom.15:4, Eph.5:17-18), and to be Jesus' witness

A believer's faith rests upon the facts of history: The life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. The Book of Acts reassures believers that our faith in Christ rests on fact. The extraordinary growth of the early Church was based directly on the resurrected Christ. His command and empowerment of the disciples through the Holy Spirit is the only reasonable explanation for the incredible and rapid spread of the gospel in the first century.

(Act 1:1) Reference to former writings.

The former account is the Gospel of Luke. At one time the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts were joined together as one book with two "volumes."

Theophilus might have been a Christian wanting instruction. He might have been a Roman official being briefed by Luke about the history of the Christian movement; or the name could be symbolic, because the name Theophilus means "God-lover."

In the introduction to the first volume (Luke 1:3), Luke addresses Theophilus with title most excellent, which was a way to address people who held high office.

Notice that **the former account** concerned **all that Jesus began both to do and teach**. Luke's Gospel describes only the beginning of Jesus' work; Acts describes its continuation; and the work of Jesus continues to our present day.

(Act 1:2-3) The last work of Jesus before His ascension to heaven.

Jesus, **through the Holy Spirit**, instructed the apostles regarding what to do in His absence. 1:2 Jesus also established the fact of His resurrection with **many infallible proofs** during the forty days after his resurrection but before His ascension.

The teaching Jesus gave during that period is not recorded, but we are told that He used that time to **speak of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God**.

B. The ascension of Jesus.

(Act 1:4-5) Jesus' final instructions to the disciples.

He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem: Jesus has nothing else for the disciples to do other than to wait for the coming of the Holy Spirit. He knows that they really can do nothing effective for the Kingdom of God until the Spirit comes.

You shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit: The idea of being baptized is to be immersed or covered over in something; even as John baptized people in water, so these disciples would be "immersed" in the Holy Spirit.

(Act 1:6) The disciples ask Jesus a final question before His ascension.

Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel? This was a question asked many times before.

The verb *restore* shows that they were expecting a political and territorial kingdom; the noun *Israel* that they were expecting a national kingdom; and the adverbial clause *at this time* that they were expecting its immediate establishment.

(Act 1:7-8) Jesus' final teaching and final promise before His ascension.

It is not for you to know: Jesus warned the disciples against inquiring into aspects of the timing of God's kingdom, because those things belong to God the Father alone (**which the Father has put in His own authority**).

But you shall receive power: If the political kingdom they wanted would be delayed, power would not. They would shortly receive power with the coming of **the Holy Spirit**. The natural result of receiving that power would be that they would be **witnesses** of Jesus, all over the earth.

Notice that this really isn't a command; it is a simple statement of fact: **When the Holy Spirit has come upon you ... you shall be witnesses of Me.** Jesus wasn't recommending that they become **witnesses**, He was saying they would **be witnesses**.

If we want to be witnesses, we need to be filled with the Holy Spirit! Far more important than the best course in evangelism is the filling of the Holy Spirit!

The progress of the spread of the Gospel from **Jerusalem**, to **Judea and Samaria**, and then **to the end of the earth** becomes the outline of Acts. Acts chapters 1 through 7 describe the gospel in Jerusalem, chapters 8 through 12 speak of the gospel in Judea and Samaria, and chapters 13 through 28 tell of the gospel going to the end of the earth.

(Act 1:9-11) Jesus ascends into heaven.

Jesus was taken up from them, as He was blessing them (Luke 24:50). As He slowly disappeared into the sky, surrounded by a **cloud**, they continued to gaze upward.

Why did Jesus ascend this way? He certainly could have simply "vanished" to the Father's presence in a secret sort of way. But with the ascension, Jesus wanted His followers to know that He was gone for good, as opposed to the way He appeared and reappeared during the forty days after the resurrection.

Remember Jesus' words to His disciples in John 16:7. Now the disciples could know that that promise would be fulfilled.

Why do you stand gazing up into heaven? The two men (apparently angels) told the disciples to put their attention in the right place (obedience to Jesus' command to return to Jerusalem), not in wondering where and how Jesus went. Jesus told them to go to the ends of the earth, and they stood gazing up into heaven.

Will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven: Jesus will return just as He left: physically, visibly, and to the Mount of Olives.

NEXT: THE ACTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE EARLY CHURCH CONT'D (ACTS 1:12-END)