

## Acts Chapter 1

The Book of Acts was penned by Luke, the physician. Many people call Acts the Acts of the Apostles, but really, if you want to add to the name Acts, perhaps, a better name would be the Acts of the early church. Really, very little is written about the apostles in Acts.

In (Colossians 4:14), Luke is called the beloved Physician. In (verse 24), Paul speaks of Luke as a fellow laborer. In (2 Timothy 4:11), Paul says that only Luke is with him. My own personal belief is that Luke and Paul were very good friends and perhaps, Luke being a physician was of some assistance to Paul with his (thorn in his side), illness. Paul had prayed three times for God to heal him, and the Lord had said no.

The Book of Luke (penned by Luke), and the Book of Acts (penned by Luke), were both addressed to Theophilus. The word Theophilus means friend of God. If there was a real Theophilus, he was probably a person high in government. I personally believe that for fear of the letter being intercepted and getting in the wrong hands, Luke wrote this to a friend of God (unnamed).

At the time this was written, many Christians were being killed for their belief. Perhaps, Luke was trying to protect whoever this was.

There are many who feel that Acts is one of the most important Books in the Bible, because it shows the struggles of the early Christians, and how many of the practices of the church were established.

In Acts, we see the departure and promise of the return of our Lord Jesus Christ. We also, see teachings on the power to minister or witness that the Spirit gives to the believers. We will see home missions and foreign missions dealt with as well. A great deal of Acts deals with Paul's journeys.

We see in the Book of Acts how the gospel of Jesus Christ is spread not only to the Hebrews, but to the entire world through the empowering of the Holy Spirit of God. One thing peculiar to Acts, is that Luke reassures in this letter that Christians are not trying to overthrow the Roman government.

**Acts 1:1 "The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach,"**

“The former treatise” must refer to Luke’s gospel. Both books were written to an otherwise unknown “Theophilus”. Theophilus probably was a Roman official, since Luke designates him as “most excellent Theophilus” (Luke 1:3).

That account, “Former treatise”; chronicled the life and teaching of Jesus, through His death, resurrection and ascension (Luke 24:51).

The Greek term (*kratistos*), is used only three other times in the New Testament. Each of these is used to address a Roman official: Felix (23:26; 24:3), and Festus (26:25). In the book of Acts, Luke continues the ministry of Christ he began in his gospel. Christ's ministry in Acts is carried on by His Spirit through His disciples.

We see here, that Luke is speaking of the Book of Luke which he had written prior to this Book of Acts. We see that Luke is explaining that the first letter was written about what Jesus taught and did. This Book will be written more about how the Christians handle the ministry after Jesus goes to heaven.

**Acts 1:2 "Until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen:"**

“Taken up”: Christ's ascension to the Father (Luke 24:51). Luke uses this term 3 other times (verses 9, 11, 22), to describe the end of the Lord's earthly ministry (John 6:62; 13:1, 3; 16:28; 17:13; 20:17).

“Through the Holy Ghost had given commandments”: The Spirit was the source and power of Jesus' earthly ministry (Matt. 4:1; 12:18; Mark 1:12; Luke 3:22; 4:1, 14, 18), and of the apostle's service (Luke 24:49; John 14:16-17; 16:7). Orders or “Commandments” are authoritative New Testament truths, revealed to the apostles (John 14:26; 16:13-15).

“He had chosen”: The Lord sovereignly chose the apostles for salvation and service (John 6:70; 15-16).

Jesus walked with the apostles forty days after His resurrection from the dead. He gave exact instructions for what they were to do after His departure. Jesus had promised He would send the Comforter (Holy Ghost), to teach them all truth.

This Holy Ghost, or Holy Spirit, would be their teacher and guide. As we said before, the purpose of having the Holy Ghost was to give them power and courage to be effective witnesses to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

**Acts 1:3 "To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God:"**

“Shewed himself ... many infallible proofs” (John 20:30; 1 Cor. 15:5-8). To give the apostles confidence to present His message, Jesus entered a locked room (John 20:19), showed His crucifixion wounds (Luke 24:39), and ate and drank with the disciples (Luke 24:41-43). “Forty days”: The period between Jesus' resurrection and ascension during which He appeared at intervals to the apostles and others (1 Cor. 15:5-8), and provided convincing evidence of His resurrection.

“Kingdom of God” (8:12; 14:22; 19:8; 20:25; 18:23, 31). Here this expression refers to the sphere of salvation, the gracious domain of divine rule over believer's hearts (see notes on 1 Cor.

6:9; Eph. 5:5; 17:7; Col. 1:13-14; Rev. 11:15; 12:10). This was the dominant theme during Christ's earthly ministry (Matt. 4:23; 9:35; Mark 1:15; Luke 4:43; 9:2; John 3:3-21).

For some specific "proofs" (see Luke 24:36-43).

In the Book of John, we saw where Jesus even showed the disciples the nail prints in His hands and His side which was pierced after He had risen from the grave. John tells of three very dramatic appearances to the apostles of Jesus after His resurrection.

Perhaps, the most vivid one is where Jesus is on the side of the Sea of Galilee and prepares a meal for His followers. In this incident, Peter and the others had fished all night and caught none. Jesus told them to cast their net on the right side of the boat and they caught one hundred and fifty-three large fish.

During these forty days after the resurrection, Jesus prepared His followers for the trial they would face. It is nothing for God who breathed the breath of life in man in the first place to rise again.

We will read just a few verses down, a very important appearance when some of the apostles see Jesus go to heaven on a cloud in front of their eyes. Our hope of resurrection is because He rose again.

Verses 4-5: Compare Luke's gospel account of John the Baptist's words where a baptism of fire is also predicted (Luke 3:16-17). Christ excluded that work from what would shortly occur on Pentecost, for it refers to a more remote work involving judgment (Luke 3:17).

**Acts 1:4 "And, being assembled together with [them], commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, [saith he], ye have heard of me."**

"Assembled together": An alternative reading, "eating with them," is preferred (10:41; Luke 24:42-43). The fact that Jesus ate provides additional proof of His bodily resurrection.

"Wait for the promise of the Father": Jesus repeatedly promised that God would send them His Spirit (Luke 11:13; 24:49; John 7:39; 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7; see note on John 20:22).

This is saying that while Jesus was gathered with the disciples (followers of Jesus), not just the eleven but one hundred and twenty. He not only asked, but commanded them to stay in Jerusalem until the Comforter, the Holy Spirit of God, came to them.

In John, Jesus had told them of this Comforter.

John 14:15-17 "If ye love me, keep my commandments." "And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever;" "[Even] the Spirit of

truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you."

**Acts 1:5 "For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence."**

"John truly baptized with water" (see note on 2:38).

Baptized with the Holy Ghost": The apostles had to wait until the Day of Pentecost, but since then all believers are baptized with the Holy Spirit at salvation (see note on 1 Cor. 12:13; Rom. 8:9; 1 Cor. 6:19-20; Titus 3:5-6).

"Not many days hence": God's promise was fulfilled just 10 days later.

John the Baptist's baptism was the baptism of repentance as we will see in chapter 19 of Acts verse 4. This baptism of the Holy Ghost, spoken of here, is the baptism of fire. It will set you on fire to work for Jesus. In (Mark 1:8), John the Baptist tells us:

"I indeed have baptized you with water: but he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost."

In (Matthew 3:11), John the Baptist goes into these two baptisms a little further.

Matthew 3:11 "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and [with] fire:"

Verses 6-8: The disciples' question concerning the nearness of Christ's literal kingdom is not incongruous with Old Testament promises (Isa. 9:6-7; Dan. 2:44-45), nor with the gospel teachings misunderstood God's kingdom program.

The words "restore again the kingdom to Israel" imply four facts:

- (1) this kingdom had once literally existed with Israel;
- (2) this kingdom is not now present;
- (3) this kingdom will come in God's unrevealed time (Matt. 24:36, 42); and
- (4) this kingdom will be the same, literal kingdom that once existed, only now with the promised Christ as King.

**Acts 1:6 "When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?"**

"Restore again the kingdom to Israel": The apostles still believed the earthly form of the kingdom of Messiah would soon be re-established (Luke 19:11; 24:21). They also knew that

(Ezekiel 36 and Joel 2), connected the coming of the kingdom with the outpouring of the Spirit whom Jesus had promised.

The disciples expected Jesus to set up His Kingdom immediately. They were like so many people today, who want to know the exact day and hour when Jesus will take over as King of kings and Lord of lords.

**Acts 1:7 "And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power."**

This verse shows that the apostles' expectation of a literal, earthly kingdom mirrored what Christ taught and what the Old Testament predicted. Otherwise, He would have corrected them about such a crucial aspect of His teaching.

Times or the seasons": These two words refer to features, eras, and events that will be part of His earthly kingdom reign, which will begin at the second coming (Matt. 25:21-34). The exact time of His return, however, remains unrevealed (Mark 13:32; Deut. 29:29).

We see here, that even though we are to remain ready always, no one, except the Father know the exact time.

**Acts 1:8 "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."**

The apostles' mission of spreading the gospel was the major reason the Holy Spirit empowered them. This event dramatically altered world history, and the gospel message eventually reached all parts of the earth (Matt. 28:19-20).

"Receive power": The apostles had already experienced the Holy Spirit's saving, guiding, teaching and miracle-working power. Soon they would receive His indwelling presence and a new dimension of power for witness (see notes on 2:4; 1 Cor. 6:19-20; Eph. 3:16, 20).

"Witnesses": People who tell the truth about Jesus Christ (John 14:26; 1 Pet. 3:15). The Greek word means "one who dies for his faith" because that was commonly the price of witnessing.

"Judea": The region in which Jerusalem was located.

"Samaria": The region immediately to the north of Judea (see note on 8:5).

The first part of this verse is better translated, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you." The disciples were to be concerned with world evangelism and discipleship.

This Great Commission still applies today since the promise underlying it, the Holy Spirit, the Book of Acts: witness in "Jerusalem" (chapters 1-7), witness throughout "Judea" and "Samaria" (chapters 8-12), and witness to the distant parts of "the Earth (chapters 13-28).

We see (in verse 8 above), why we need to receive power from God. It is not for our own use so that we can brag to someone else; it is to make our witness of Jesus more powerful. We can see here, that the message of the gospel is not just for Israel, but to all nations. We read in Revelation how people of every nationality will be represented in heaven.

Verses 9-11: "While they beheld" suggests several things that are not apparent. Unlike the appearances and disappearances of the former 40 days in which Jesus instantly appeared and vanished, this was a gradual and visible departure.

This was different and final. He would no longer appear to them. His next appearance on earth will be at the Second Coming when He visibly (Rev. 1:7), and bodily sets His feet on Mount Olives (Zech. 14:4).

**Acts 1:9 "And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight."**

"Taken up" (see note on verse 2). God the Father took Jesus, in His resurrection body, from this world to His rightful place at the Father's right hand (Luke 24:51; Acts 2:33; John 17:1-6). "A cloud": A visible recession. For some of them, this was not the first time they had witnessed divine glory (Mark 9:26); neither will it be the last time clouds accompany Jesus (Mark 13:26; 14:62; see note on Rev. 1:7).

After His resurrection, Christ ascended physically to heaven to reassume His glory and enthronement. He also began His high priestly ministry in heaven for believers which continue until this day.

It is doubtful that the disciples who watched His physical ascension completely understood all that it signified at first.

When the Christian understands the ascension of Christ, he looks forward to His imminent return and appropriates His present ministry as well. First reference (John 16:28, Primary Reference, Acts 1:9; John 17:5).

If there had ever been any question as to who He was, this should answer it. They were looking at Jesus as He rose up into the cloud before their very eyes.

**Acts 1:10 "And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel;"**

"Two men stood by them in white apparel": Two angels in the form of men (Gen. 18:2; Joshua 5:13-15; Mark 16:5).

So many people who read the Bible try to rationalize how Jesus is going to be in our heart and therefore He has already come back. This is not what this Scripture above says. It says that while

we are gazing into heaven, someday we will see the clouds open up and we will see Jesus coming in the clouds. These two men in white apparel were angels.

**Acts 1:11 "Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? 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."**

“Men of Galilee”: All the apostles were from Galilee except for Judas, who had killed himself by this time (verse 18).

“In like manner”: Christ one day will return to earth (to the Mt. of Olives), in the same way He ascended (with clouds), to set up His kingdom (Dan. 7:13; Zech. 14:4; Matt. 24:30; 26:64; Rev. 1:7; 14:14).

Steadfastly means that they did not look around, but kept their eyes on Jesus as long as they could see Him.

In (1 Thessalonians 4:13-17) we read of Jesus when He comes.

1 Thessalonians 4:13-17 "But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope." "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him." "For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive [and] remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep." "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:" "Then we which are alive [and] remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."

## **Acts Chapter 1 Questions**

1. Who wrote the Book of Acts?
2. What earthly occupation did he have?
3. What extended name does most call Acts?
4. What would be a better extension to the name?
5. What is Luke called in Colossians 4:14?
6. In Philemon, what does Paul call Luke?

7. What other Book of the Bible was written by Luke?
8. What does the Book of Acts show about the Christians?
9. Name several things the Book of Acts show us?
10. Who is the Book of Acts addressed to?
11. Jesus taught the disciples until when?
12. How many days did Jesus walk with the apostles after His resurrection?
13. What was possibly the most vivid time Jesus showed Himself to the disciples?
14. What did Jesus command the disciples to do in verse 4?
15. What do we read in John 14 about the Comforter?
16. What is another name for the Comforter?
17. In verse 5, we read that John baptized with what?
18. Give a more vivid explanation from the Scriptures on the baptism of the Holy Ghost?
19. In Matthew 3:11, we find that John baptized with what?
20. What did the disciples ask Jesus if He would now do?
21. What was His reply to them and us?
22. What is the Power of the Holy Ghost for?
23. Where were they to witness?
24. When Jesus had spoken these things, what happened?
25. What received Jesus out of their sight?
26. Who appeared to the disciples as they looked up?
27. What did they tell the disciples?
28. Where can we find a very descriptive explanation of Jesus' return?