

Three Months with the Spirit Bible Study on The Acts of the Apostles

Acts 1:1-2:41

1 ¹In the first book, **Theophilus**, I wrote about all that Jesus did and taught from the beginning ²until the day when he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. ³After his suffering he presented himself alive to them by many convincing proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God. ⁴While staying with them, he ordered them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait there for the promise of the Father. “This,” he said, “is what you have heard from me; ⁵for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.”

⁶So when they had come together, they asked him, “**Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?**” ⁷He replied, “**It is not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority. ⁸But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.**” ⁹When he had said this, as they were watching, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. ¹⁰While he was going and they were gazing up toward heaven, suddenly two men in white robes stood by them. ¹¹They said, “**Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up toward heaven?** This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.”

¹²Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a sabbath day’s journey away. ¹³When they had entered the city, they went to the room upstairs where they were staying, Peter, and John, and James, and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James son of Alphaeus, and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James. ¹⁴All these were constantly devoting themselves to prayer, together with certain women, including Mary the mother of Jesus, as well as his brothers.

¹⁵In those days Peter stood up among the believers (together the crowd numbered about **one hundred twenty persons**) and said, ¹⁶“Friends, the scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit through David foretold concerning Judas, who became a guide for those who arrested Jesus— ¹⁷for he was numbered among us and was allotted his share in this ministry.” ¹⁸(Now this man acquired a field with the reward of his wickedness; and falling headlong, he burst open in the

1:1 Dedication to Theophilus.

The name Theophilus literally means “God-lover.” Was Theophilus Luke’s benefactor? Was Theophilus an actual person? Or, was Theophilus a name chosen to represent anyone that was a lover of God? Regardless of how one answers that question, it does let us know that Acts serves as a volume 2 to the Gospel of Luke.

1:6-8 Is This the Time?

When is the world going to end? When will all these rapturous things spoken of and imagined so intensely through the ages actually come to pass? Well, Jesus tells his disciples that they need to stop asking that question because it is none of their business! It is their business to be witness to others about what God has done in the person of Jesus Christ and in their own lives. Why do persons even need to know this unless they are attempting to live their lives in a manner inconsistent with Christian principles and then repent on their deathbed or just before Jesus returns?

Witnessing/Action is higher than knowledge! It is the point of this study not just to give you *information* about the early church, but to also help with your own personal *transformation* into a better servant of Christ here and now.

1:9-11 The Ascension of Jesus

Compare this to Luke 24:50-52 and notice that Luke is the only one of the Gospel writers who mentions the ascension of Jesus. We still have a tendency to gaze upward instead of “going on to Jerusalem.” Waiting for the reward of heaven is not all that Christians are supposed to be doing. We are also supposed to be acting in the here and now instead of using heaven as our crutch or our excuse for not acting against injustice and oppression.

1:12-26 The Replacement of Judas Iscariot

Peter felt like since there were originally twelve disciples that this should be continued on. Are there structures in our church that we think should continue on forever, or does the changing culture and society necessitate that the church also change its structures to deal accordingly with a new reality?

Notice that the early church in Jerusalem consisted of only 120 persons. Think about the change in our world that those few people helped to make! That is about the size of most congregations...food for thought!

middle and all his bowels gushed out. ¹⁹This became known to all the residents of Jerusalem, so that the field was called in their language Hakeldama, that is, Field of Blood.) ²⁰For it is written in the book of Psalms, ‘Let his homestead become desolate, and let there be no one to live in it’; and ‘Let another take his position of overseer.’ ²¹So one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, ²²beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us—one of these must become a witness with us to his resurrection.” ²³So they proposed two, Joseph called Barsabbas, who was also known as Justus, and Matthias. ²⁴Then they prayed and said, “Lord, you know everyone’s heart. Show us which one of these two you have chosen ²⁵to take the place in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place.” ²⁶And they cast lots for them, and the lot fell on Matthias; and he was added to the eleven apostles.

2 ¹When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. ²And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. ³Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. ⁴All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

⁵Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. ⁶And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. ⁷Amazed and astonished, they asked, “Are not all these who are speaking Galileans?” ⁸And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? ⁹Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, ¹¹Cretans and Arabs—in our own languages we hear them speaking about God’s deeds of power.” ¹²All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, “What does this mean?” ¹³But others sneered and said, “They are filled with new wine.”

¹⁴But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them, “Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say. ¹⁵Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o’clock in the morning. ¹⁶No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel: ¹⁷‘In the last days it will be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams. ¹⁸Even upon my slaves, both men and women, in those days I will pour out my Spirit; and they shall prophesy. ¹⁹And I will show portents in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood, and

2:1-15 The Day of Pentecost

The point of the speaking in tongues that day was not to show how great the speaker was but to enable those who were gathered to hear about God in their own language so that they could understand. Speaking in tongues is not meant to reflect on the speaker but on the person being spoken to—otherwise it is useless.

From the birth of the Church at Pentecost, it has been multicultural and multilingual! Yet it has been said that 11:00 am on Sunday morning is the most segregated hour in the week! At Pentecost the Spirit did not reject the diversity of the Church, but celebrated it! What are things we can do to be more welcoming to “foreigners?”

2:16ff The quotation from Joel and Peter’s speech suggests that the gift of the Holy Spirit undermines the distinctions of power and hierarchy that exist in the world—thus sons *and* daughters prophesy, the young *and* the old, etc.

The church should be a community where there are no inequalities, yet there seem to always be some that still linger. Sometimes this comes in the form of those who may give a lot to the church budget and expect to receive more than their fair share in return when it comes to having their say as to how things should be in the church. Still other times it comes in the form of “I’ve been a member of this church for 64 years...” And again sometimes it comes in the form of a certain group within the church claiming ownership of a particular area or job in the life of the church (The UMW claiming sole control of the kitchen, etc.). Are there inequalities that we should particularly look out for in our own congregation?

fire, and smoky mist. ²⁰The sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the coming of the Lord's great and glorious day. ²¹Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved. ²²“You that are Israelites, listen to what I have to say: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with deeds of power, wonders, and signs that God did through him among you, as you yourselves know— ²³this man, handed over to you according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of those outside the law. ²⁴But God raised him up, having freed him from death, because it was impossible for him to be held in its power. ²⁵For David says concerning him, ‘I saw the Lord always before me, for he is at my right hand so that I will not be shaken; ²⁶therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced; moreover my flesh will live in hope. ²⁷For you will not abandon my soul to Hades, or let your Holy One experience corruption. ²⁸You have made known to me the ways of life; you will make me full of gladness with your presence.’ ²⁹“Fellow Israelites, I may say to you confidently of our ancestor David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. ³⁰Since he was a prophet, he knew that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would put one of his descendants on his throne. ³¹Foreseeing this, David spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah, saying, ‘He was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh experience corruption.’ ³²This Jesus God raised up, and of that all of us are witnesses. ³³Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you both see and hear. ³⁴For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he himself says, ‘The Lord said to my Lord, “Sit at my right hand, ³⁵until I make your enemies your footstool.”’ ³⁶Therefore let the entire house of Israel know with certainty that God has made him both Lord and Messiah, this Jesus whom you crucified.”

³⁷Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and to the other apostles, “Brothers, what should we do?” ³⁸Peter said to them, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹For the promise is for you, for your children, and for all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him.” ⁴⁰And he testified with many other arguments and exhorted them, saying, “Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.” ⁴¹So those who welcomed his message were baptized, and that day about three thousand persons were added.

2:36ff This Jesus Whom You Crucified

It is a well-attested fact that Jesus' death was not brought about by only “the Jews” as has been shamefully offered up in years past as nothing more than anti-Semitism. Jesus' death was a product of the chief priests, the Pharisees, the crowd that was gathered in Jerusalem that week, and many Roman authorities as well—after all, it was only Rome that had the power to execute a person for their crimes. However, Peter is telling the crowd that they are all as guilty of Jesus' death as any of the direct participants. The implication being that those who hide behind the powers of the time without opposing them are just as guilty as the perpetrators themselves.

Peter Storey has said that we create institutions to do our sinning for us so that we can claim that we are not to blame for the consequences of our actions. To Peter, if you are not opposing the evil powers of this world then you are a part of the machine that lets it happen!

2:41 About Three Thousand People Were Added

This is one of the only times that actual numbers are mentioned in the book of Acts. The other time was in the first chapter when we were told that the number of Christians in Jerusalem was about 120.

This leads me to think that numbers are not the most important thing in the life of the church. So often congregations are judged faithful or unfaithful by the number of people worshiping in the pews each week and/or by the size of the church's budget and offering—what one person has termed “nickels and noses.” How much do numbers really matter in the life of the church? Can a church be healthy/faithful with few in attendance and not enough money to maintain the institution? Can a church be unhealthy/unfaithful when it is well-attended and well-funded?