

## Acts Chapter 1 – The Coming Holy Spirit

THEME: Preparation for the coming of the Spirit.

As suggested in the Introduction, in my opinion the proper title for the Book of Acts would be: The Lord Jesus Christ at Work by the Holy Spirit through the Apostles. And the first seven chapters reveal the Lord Jesus Christ at work by the Holy Spirit through the apostles in Jerusalem. The first chapter, which is the preparation for the coming of the Holy Spirit, includes a brief introduction; a resume of the forty-day post-resurrection ministry of Jesus; His ascension and promise of return; then the apostles waiting for the Spirit, and their appointment of an apostle to take the place of Judas.

***Act 1:1-2 The former account I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, until the day in which He was taken up, after He through the Holy Spirit had given commandments to the apostles whom He had chosen,***

The “former treatise” was Luke's Gospel, which also was directed to Theophilus—whose name means “lover of God.” I totally reject the idea that just any lover of God is intended. Obviously, Luke knew a man by the name of Theophilus, and undoubtedly the name was appropriate—a lover of God. Luke's Gospel was “all that Jesus began both to do and teach,” and in the Book of Acts Jesus continues to do and to teach. Today He is still at it, if I may use that expression, and He will continue on with this present program until He takes His own out of the world.

“Until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Ghost [Spirit]” makes it clear that just because Jesus was taken up into heaven didn't mean He ceased doing and teaching. But now, from the vantage place of the right hand of God, He is continuing to work through the Holy Spirit. As in the army where commands pass from one man to another, so the Lord Jesus Christ is working through the Holy Spirit; the Holy Spirit operates through the apostles and on out to you and to me where we are today. This is a remarkable statement here. – McGee

Strong Dictionary – Apostle - a delegate; specifically, an ambassador of the Gospel; officially a commissioner of Christ (“apostle”), (with miraculous powers): - apostle, messenger, he that is sent. Note: Dictionaries and commentaries disagree on the exact limits of who is an apostle, but the 12 plus Paul are the clearest examples with a physical encounter and calling directly from Jesus.

***Act 1:3 to whom He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.***

He showed Himself alive by many infallible proofs after His suffering and death. There are ten recorded appearances of Jesus after His resurrection. His post-resurrection ministry, as revealed in His appearances, has a more important bearing on the lives of Christians today than does the three-year ministry recorded in the Gospels. I have a little book entitled The Empty Tomb, which tells of this post-resurrection ministry of the Lord Jesus. Paul stated it this way: “Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more” (2Co\_5:16).

You and I do not know Him today as the One who walked on this earth over nineteen hundred years ago. We know Him as the one Man in the glory. He is up there right this moment, and He is real. How often the church loses sight of this fact.

Recently a letter came to me from a person who said he had been a church member all his life. He had gone through all the prescribed rituals, and he thought he was a Christian. Then through hearing the Word of God he learned that he didn't even know Jesus. The wonderful discovery for him was that not only did Jesus walk on this earth nineteen hundred years ago, but also, He is alive today and is sitting at God's right hand. He came to the living Christ and received Him as Savior and Lord. How wonderful that is! Jesus showed Himself alive by many infallible proofs.

The problem of the unbeliever today is not with the facts but with his own unbelief. The facts are available. I wonder whether anyone doubts that the Battle of Waterloo was a historical event. Very frankly, I believe that Napoleon lived, and

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I believe that he fought the Battle of Waterloo. But I have very little evidence for it. Actually, there is ten thousand times more evidence for the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ than there is for the Battle of Waterloo, and yet there are people today who say they do not believe it. Where is the problem? The problem is in the heart, the unbelieving heart. There is a natural tendency for man to run away from God just as Adam did. Man turns his back upon God today. If you are an unbeliever, the problem is with you. The problem is not in the Word of God. He showed Himself alive by many infallible proofs. You can know if you really want to know. The problem is that you don't want to know. The problem is not in the mind; the problem is in the will.

Let me insert a comment here about the Resurrection. There is a verse which I think has been twisted and distorted. The Lord Jesus Christ said, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me" (Joh\_12:32). How was He lifted up? He was lifted up in the Resurrection, friend, lifted up from the dead. That is the message. Regardless of how much you talk about Jesus or how lovely you say that He is, the message is that He has been lifted up from the dead. He is risen! The reason that more people are not drawn to Christ is that there is not the preaching of a resurrected Christ. How the Book of Acts puts the emphasis on the resurrection of Jesus Christ! – McGee

***Act 1:4 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;***

That's the end of the sentence—these first four verses are all one sentence! The apostles are to wait for the coming of the Holy Spirit. Until that event takes place, His command is to wait. - McGee

***Act 1:5 for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."***

The risen Jesus appeared to the apostles and gave them these instructions. He tells them that something is going to happen to them. They are going to be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days hence. This baptism of the Holy Spirit is the promise of the Father, and Jesus had previously told them about it.

It is very important to point out that this is not talking about water baptism, which is ritual baptism. This is the baptism with the Holy Spirit. The baptism of the Holy Spirit is real baptism. It is this baptism of the Holy Spirit which places a believer into the body of believers, which we sometimes refer to as the church.

When we get to the second chapter, which tells of the coming of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, we will learn that they were filled with the Holy Spirit. Filling was necessary in order that they might serve. The fact that they were filled with the Holy Spirit for service indicates that the other ministries of the Holy Spirit had been performed. – McGee

### ***The Ascension***

***Act 1:6 Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, "Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?"***

You will find that some of the commentators rebuke the apostles for asking this question—they feel the apostles made a mistake. I believe that the answer the Lord gives them indicates they made no mistake. Their question was a legitimate question, a natural question, and one that our Lord answered as such. He did not rebuke them. He did not call it a foolish question.

The apostles were brought up and schooled in the Old Testament. They had waited for the coming of the Messiah. They understood that the Messiah is the One who will establish the Kingdom upon this earth. That was their hope. It is still the hope for this earth. God is not through with this earth. God does not intend to sweep this earth under the rug. Although it is small enough to be swept under His rug, He is not going to do that. God has an eternal purpose for the earth. It was the Kingdom of God that they talked about, which involves the re-establishment of the house of David. These were the

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things He talked about after His resurrection—we see in verse Act\_1:3 that He spoke of things “pertaining to the kingdom of God.” – McGee

***Act 1:7 And He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority.***

He let them know, at this particular time, that the Kingdom would not be established. Rather, He would call out a people to His name, the church. In chapter 15 of Acts, when the apostles met for the first council in Jerusalem, James pointed out this fact: “Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name. And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things. Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world” (Act\_15:14-18). This is what God is doing today. He is visiting the Gentiles to take out of them a people to His name. That is, God is calling out of the world those people who will trust Christ, and the Holy Spirit baptizes them into the body of believers, the church.

So, when the apostles asked Jesus whether He would restore the Kingdom “at this time,” His answer was that this was not the subject for discussion at that time. Nor is it the subject for discussion today. There are a great many people who say to me, “Don't you think the Lord will be coming soon?” Well, now, I'll let you in on something that is confidential between you and me: I do believe that He is coming soon. However, I don't have any authority to tell you that He is coming soon, because I don't know. Our Lord said it is not for us to know the times or the seasons. That is not the important part for us.

I do believe in prophecy. However, I think one can overemphasize it. To be built up in the faith you need more than prophetic study.

Then what is our business today? Notice again that the Lord did not rebuke them. Instead, He showed that He had something else in mind. There is something else for us to do. It is not for us to know the times nor the seasons—the Father has put those in His own power—but here is your commission: - McGee

***Act 1:8 But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."***

This is the commission that still holds for today. This is not given only to a corporate body, to the church as a body; it is not a corporate commission. This is a very personal command to each believer—personally, privately. This was given to these men even before the Holy Spirit had come and formed the church. It is a direct command for you and for me today. It is our business to get the Word of God out to the world. We can't say that it is up to the church to send missionaries and to give out the gospel, and then sit back and let others do it. The all-important question is whether you are getting out the Word of God. Have you gone to the ends of the earth as a witness to the gospel? Or do you support a missionary or a radio program that does? Are you personally involved? Today there are a great many people who want to talk about the times and seasons of His coming, but they don't want to get involved in getting out the Word of God. But that is His commission—not only to the apostles—that is His commission to you and me. I am of the opinion that if the Lord should suddenly appear to you or to me right where we are at this moment, He would not talk about the time of His coming, but He would talk about getting out the gospel. He wants people to be saved. This is our commission.

In order to get this gospel out, we need power. That was His promise: “Ye shall receive power.” And we need the leading of the Lord. Although it is our business today to get out the Word of God, there is no power in us, there is no power in the church, but there is power in the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit who moves through an individual or through the

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church or through a radio program. The question is whether we permit Him to do so. “Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you.”

“Ye shall be witnesses unto me.” Our witness is to Christ. He is the center of attraction. “In Jerusalem,” which applied to us means our hometown, there should be a witness to Christ. “All Judaea” is equivalent to our community; “Samaria” represents the other side of the tracks, the folk we don't associate with. Although we may not meet with these people socially, we are to take the gospel to them. Of course, we can't associate with everybody. We can select our friends as everyone else does. That is part of the freedom which we have. There are folk who wouldn't want to associate with us. There are lots of folk who wouldn't want me around; I would crimp their style. But we have both the privilege and the responsibility to get the Word of God out to folk whether or not we associate with them socially.

Finally, this witness to Christ is to go to the uttermost part of the earth. We should never lose sight of the fact that this is the Lord's intention. He has told us if we love Him to keep His commandments. His command is personal. We can't pass this off on the crowd, and say “The church is doing it; so, I don't need to get involved.” How much are you involved, friend? What is your witness to Christ? - McGee

***Act 1:9 Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight.***

The ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ is an important and significant miracle in the ministry of the Lord. This is especially true for our space age when eyes are turned aloft, and we are talking about travel in space. Space travel isn't really new. The Lord Jesus took off, and He didn't need a launching pad or a space suit or a missile.

There was a cloud to receive Him. What kind of cloud was that? Was it a moisture cloud? No, this was the same shekinah glory cloud that had filled the tabernacle. In His high priestly prayer, He had prayed: “And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was” (Joh\_17:5). When He was born into this world, He was wrapped in swaddling clothes. When He left this earth, He was wrapped in glory clouds. This is the way He returned to the Father's right hand.

While the apostles are watching all this, two angels appear to them. They look like men, and they have an important message. - McGee

***Act 1:10-11 And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, 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.”***

It is the glorified Jesus who went up into heaven. This same Jesus, the glorified Jesus, will return in like manner and to the same place. Zec\_14:4 tells us: “And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south.” He took off at that place, and He will come back to that place. - McGee

***Matthias Chosen to Replace Judas***

***Act 1:12 Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey.***

“A sabbath day's journey,” which was less than one mile, kept people pretty much in their location. That was why they would all camp very close to the temple during the feast days when they came to Jerusalem to worship. The Mount of Olives would probably be covered with people camping out, possibly several hundred thousand of them at the time of the feasts. Why? Because they needed to stay within a Sabbath day's journey of the temple. - McGee

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**Act 1:13-14** *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. These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.*

I rejoice that Mary, the mother of Jesus, was there. Her reputation has now been cleared. At this point it was obvious that Jesus was the Son of God, and virgin born, as she had claimed.

The attitude of the apostles and the other believers was that of oneness, of prayer, and of waiting.

There is no way that we can duplicate this period today. Remember that this is in a time period, a time capsule, between His ascension into heaven and the coming of the Holy Spirit. You and I do not live in that time period. It cannot be duplicated. We are not waiting for the coming of the Holy Spirit; He came over nineteen hundred years ago. - McGee

**Act 1:15-18** *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, "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; for he was numbered with us and obtained a part in this ministry." (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.*

Here is Simon Peter speaking up again. Note that this is before the Holy Spirit came at Pentecost. This man needs the filling of the Holy Spirit—and so do you and me.

He certainly gives a vivid picture of Judas, doesn't he?

If you are bothered by a seeming discrepancy here and with Mat\_27:5, the following quotation from Unger's Bible Dictionary by Merrill F. Unger (pp. 615–616) will be helpful to you.

NOTE. —Between these two passages (Mat\_27:5; Act\_1:16-25) there appears at first sight a discrepancy. In Matthew it is stated "He cast down the pieces of silver in the temple and departed and went and hanged himself." In Acts (ch. 1) another account is given. There it is stated: (1) That instead of throwing the money into the temple he bought a field with it. (2) That instead of hanging himself, "falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out." (3) That for this reason, and not because the priests had bought it with the price of blood, the field was called "Aceldama." The fact would seem to be that Judas hanged himself, probably with his girdle, which either broke or became untied, and threw him heavily forward upon the jagged rocks below, thus inflicting the wound mentioned by Peter in the Acts. The apparent discrepancy in the two accounts as to the disposition of the money may be thus explained: "It was not lawful to take into the temple treasury, for the purchase of sacred things, money that had been unlawfully gained. In such case the Jewish law provided that the money was to be restored to the donor, and, if he insisted on giving it that he should be induced to spend it for something for the public weal. By a fiction of law, the money was still considered to be Judas's, and to have been applied by him in the purchase of the well-known 'potter's field'" (Edersheim, Life of Jesus, ii, 575). - McGee

**Act 1:19-20** *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.) "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.'*

There is always a question about what happened here. Should Simon Peter have held this election to choose a man to take the place of Judas? I don't think so. - McGee

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***Act 1:21-22 "Therefore, of these men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, 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."***

I believe that the election to choose a successor to Judas Iscariot was conducted by Peter without the presence and guidance of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit had not yet been given. Matthias was evidently a good man. He met the requirements of an apostle, which meant he must have seen the resurrected Christ, as that was a necessary requirement. – McGee

**Assuming this McGee interpretation is correct, do you like Peter sometimes get ahead of the Holy Spirit?**

***Act 1:23-26 And they proposed two: Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias. And they prayed and said, "You, O Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which of these two You have chosen to take part in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place." And they cast their lots, and the lot fell on Matthias. And he was numbered with the eleven apostles.***

I can't see that this was the leading of the Holy Spirit, nor that it was God's leading in the casting of lots. Is Matthias actually the one who took the place of Judas? I don't think so. I believe that in His own time, the Lord Jesus Himself appointed one to take the place of Judas Iscariot. We don't hear another word about Matthias—nothing is recorded of his ministry. I think the Holy Spirit ignored Matthias. It is my conviction that the man the Lord chose was Paul. You may ask, "Do you have an authority for that statement?" Yes. Listen to Paul as he writes to the Galatian believers: "Paul, an apostle, (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead;)" (Gal\_1:1). Paul is saying that he was chosen by God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. How did He do it? Through the Holy Spirit whom He had sent into the world. The ministry of Paul certainly justifies the fact that he was the one to take Judas' place. Of course, I realize that the majority of good Bible commentators disagree with me, but I am just passing on to you my own conviction.

It is remarkable, and I want to mention again how Acts 1 brings the four Gospels to a focal point. Matthew concludes with the Resurrection, Mark with the Ascension, Luke with the promise of the Holy Spirit, and John with the promise of the Second Coming. Acts 1 brings all four records together and mentions each of them. The four Gospels funnel into Acts, and Acts is the bridge between the Gospels and the Epistles. - McGee