

Acts 1

The Holy Spirit moves through the Apostles

Background & Setting

Acts is the second of a two-volume set (Gospel of Luke being the first) penned to Theophilus[1] by Luke, the physician (Col 4:14), and could easily be read sequentially, one immediately after the other. Almost certainly written together, they had to be separated because of the unmanageable size of a scroll needed to conjoin them. Luke was likely the only Gentile writer of any part of the NT, and was a personal friend and companion of Paul. Interestingly, Luke is the only NT writer to mention the ascension of Christ in His resurrected body. In fact, Luke mentions it twice - once at the end of his Gospel (see Luke 24:50), and then again at the beginning of Acts (see Acts 1:9-11). The Gospel of Luke offers a sweeping history of the birth of Christianity through the incarnation of Christ and ends at His ascension. The book of Acts begins at Jesus' ascension and continues a fascinatingly detailed historic account of the growth of the early church by the power of the Holy Spirit moving through specific people. The book of Acts ends abruptly with Paul under house arrest in Rome, suggesting a time of writing of AD60-61.

Summary:

Luke reminds Theophilus that his first account, the Gospel of Luke, dealt with the things Jesus *BEGAN* to do. Overlapping his Gospel only with a short narrative of the ascension, Acts picks up where Luke's epistle left off and continues the earlier narrative in chronological fashion. He tells us that for 40 days Christ was on earth post-resurrection doing "...many proofs[2] and talking about the kingdom of God" for the remaining 11 Apostles. Luke then repeats his account of the ascension, adding detail not mentioned in his Gospel. The second half of Acts 1 offers a description of the replacement of Judas[4] with Matthias to bring the number of Apostles back to 12.

Before ascending, Jesus reminds the eleven of the OT promise[3] of the coming of the Holy Spirit, and the power they will receive from Him. He tells them to await the coming of the Spirit in Jerusalem, surely generating no small degree of anticipation.



Chapter Outline

- A. v.1-5 Intro & promise of the Holy Spirit
- B. v.6-11 The bodily Ascension of Christ
- C. v.12-20 Peter takes charge and explains they have to replace Judas
- D. v.21-26 Matthias is chosen as 12th Apostle

Vocabulary, Names & Cultural Influences

1. **v.1. Theophilus** - a Name meaning "Lover of God" (theo=God; phileo=brotherly love). Thought to be a high official of Rome. Lukes reference to him as "most excellent Theophilus" in Luke 1, but only "Theophilus" in Acts may imply that this official had come to faith by the time of the writing of Acts.
2. **v.4. "Many proofs"** - For example, entering a locked room (John 20:19), showing his crucifixion wounds (Luke 24:39). eating with them (Luke 24:31), the many post-resurrection appearances in many places, etc.
3. **v.4. "Promise of the Father"** - The promise of the coming of the Holy Spirit. Look fwd to Acts 2:17-8; 33. See Helpful Connections below for several examples of OT promises of the Spirit and Jesus' comment "Repeated by Me." [9]
4. **v.26. Casting lots** - Prior to the coming of the Holy Spirit, this was a common OT practice for divining God's will (Lev 16; Josh 7; Josh 14; ; 1 Sam 14; 1 Chron 25; Jonah 1; Prov 18).

