

# ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

# NOTES 1

## ACTS 1:1-11

FORMER ADVENTIST FELLOWSHIP BIBLE STUDY

## THE BEGINNING OF SOMETHING NEW

The book of Acts was the second book written by Luke. Luke, a Gentile, traveled with Paul and was an eyewitness to many of the events of the early church.

Verse 1-2 refers to Luke's first account, the gospel of Luke, and states that it recorded all the Jesus "began to do and teach, until the day when He was taken up to heaven." He suggests here that the purpose of Acts is to continue narrating the work of Jesus on earth. The significant thing about this is that Jesus is not now on earth in person. Luke connects the work of Jesus' ministry with the work of the church which is the continuation of Jesus' work on earth. The miracle of new birth puts the Spirit of Jesus on earth within the human bodies of believers, and in this way, Jesus Himself is at work in the world, taking the news of salvation to the uttermost parts of the earth.

The book of Luke ended with Jesus' instructing His disciples to stay in Jerusalem until they would be clothed with power from on high. The gospel of Matthew echoes Acts 1:8, where Jesus gave His commission to His disciples—the commission that is still the marching order for the church: "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Mark 16:14-16 also recounts Jesus delivering this great commission.

John records the same commission but from a different angle. In John 20:19-23 he records Jesus appearing in the room where His disciples were waiting. He revealed His wounds to them, confirming it was really Him, and then He said He was sending them into the world as the Father had sent Him. He breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld."

He was not granting them intrinsic power to forgive, but Jesus was commissioning His disciples to take the gospel and the reality of forgiveness of sins to all people. If people accepted it, they would be forgiven. If they did not, the disciples would not be able to assure them that their sins were forgiven. He was, however, giving them the same commission as was recorded in the other gospels. The acceptance of the gospel

brings forgiveness of sins. In this way Jesus' disciples would be carrying out the work of Jesus—and this work would not be possible without the empowering of the Holy Spirit. The disciples would have no defense against evil and opposition without the Holy Spirit, nor would their preaching have any power.

When Peter preached to Cornelius and his household, the first Gentiles to receive the Holy Spirit and to become part of the church, Peter recounted Jesus' command to preach and testify "that he is the one appointed by God to be judge of the living and the dead."

From the start of the book of Acts, Luke lays the foundation for his narrative by connecting the spread of the gospel throughout the world with Jesus' work on earth. He makes it clear that the building up of the church is Jesus' own work on earth, and His commission to all believers through the ages is to be His witnesses and to take the news of forgiveness of sins and salvation by faith to all nations and tongues and people.

## JESUS' LAST 40 DAYS ON EARTH

In verse 3, Luke tells us two important things Jesus did during his last 40 days on earth. We often ignore the significance of those days of Jesus being on earth in a resurrected, glorified body. In fact, His earthly ministry did not end with His resurrection; it ended with the ascension. During those last 40 days, Jesus did several things: He confirmed that He was indeed risen from the dead; He appeared specifically to the 11 apostles several times and to larger groups of disciples repeatedly. He demonstrated that He was not mortal even though He had a body; He did what no other human could do, appearing in rooms, talking with others who did not fully recognize Him at first as on the road to Emmaus. He demonstrated that He was indeed risen, and He also showed that a glorified human body can live and interact with a still-mortal creation.

Finally, He taught His followers about the kingdom of God. Following His resurrection, the mystery of the gospel was far more clear than before His death. While the mystery would not totally clarify until the disciples received the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, still the fact of Jesus' resurrection gave a foundation to Jesus' telling them about the spiritual nature of

the church that was about to form. He had a chance to teach the first members of His church their own role in bringing the kingdom of heaven to a fallen world.

The gospels confirm these facts. Matthew 28:1-20 records Jesus giving His disciples the Great Commission. Mark 16:9-18 tells of Jesus appearing to Mary Magdalene, to two disciples as they walked, and to the eleven. Luke 24:13-28 recounts the walk to Emmaus and shows how Jesus preached the first expository sermon. He began with Moses and the Prophets and showed how all of Scripture was pointing to Himself—and He demonstrated that the entire Old Testament was fulfilled in Him. He also appeared to the disciples, and when they were frightened, He asked them why they doubted.

John records Jesus appearing to the disciples as they hid behind locked doors (John 20:19). John 21: 1-14 describes Jesus appearing to Peter, Thomas, and Nathanael, James, John, and two other disciples at the Sea of Galilee after a futile night of fishing. Jesus told them to cast on the other side of the boat, and they caught so many fish their net broke. As they haled the net ashore, Jesus cooked fish and fed them breakfast. This was the third time he revealed Himself to the disciples. It was also at this time that Jesus restored Peter following his betrayal of Jesus. Three times he asked him if he loved Him, and then He commissioned Peter to feed His sheep.

In verses 4-5 Jesus announces the imminent event that would change forever the nature of believers who live after His death and resurrection: they would be baptized with the Holy Spirit. They didn't understand what that meant; they were still thinking Jesus' kingdom was about routing the Romans and restoring Judea to Israel. In verse 7, however, Jesus replies with a foundational statement about God's sovereignty: "It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority." With these words Jesus declared that the times and events of all history—past, present and future—are already determined by God and will come to pass at exactly the right time. No human can thwart or rush these plans; they will occur, and they will happen when God has already decided they will happen.

Matthew 24:36 and Mark 13:32 also confirm this fact.

Jesus redirected the disciple's attention away from political power and gave them a huge promise and prophecy: "you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you;

and you shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth." This commission was impossible for the disciples as they were before Pentecost. Only the Spirit of God could empower them to carry out this commission, and only the Holy Spirit could help them to see that this commission would belong to all who received the good news and were themselves baptized with the Holy Spirit. The kingdom would grow because believers would receive the Holy Spirit. The literal presence of Jesus would go into the world exponentially because of believers receiving the Holy Spirit. Jesus, as a human, could only be one place at a time; the church, however, would be the hands and feet and mouth of Jesus to the entire world.

Verses 9-11 tell us that we can know Jesus will come back exactly as He left: in the clouds, visible to all. Mark confirms this fact in his gospel (Mark 16:19) where he states that Jesus was taken up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God. Matthew tells us (Matt. 16:24-28) that Jesus told His disciples that they would suffer for His sake, but that He would come back with His angels in the glory of the Father and repay everyone for the work each has done. In Acts 3:19-21 Peter preaches at the temple, and he states that heaven had to receive Christ "until the time for restoring all the things about which God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets long ago."

We also know from Acts 1:9-11 that Jesus will return with a resurrected, physical body. By this we know that Jesus' resurrection body is a promise and a glimpse of our own. We see that it is related to our mortal body; Jesus, in His glorified body, still bore the scars of His death. Moreover, people could recognize Him, although sometimes they didn't recognize Him at first. We also know that His glorified body functions differently inside time than ours do; He was able to appear without using the normal means of doors. We also know that He was able to function physically with mortal people.

## MEDITATE

Ask God to reveal to you the significance of being part of His body the church and to make your heart willing to submit to His commission to you to participate in being His witness in the world.

# ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

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ACTS 1:1-11

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FORMER ADVENTIST FELLOWSHIP BIBLE STUDY

## STUDY

1. From the first sentence, the author Luke presented the subject of this book. What does he suggest his purpose is, and what is significant about the verb “began” in verse 1? (Compare with Luke 3:23)

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2. Acts 1:2 mentions that Jesus had given orders to the apostles by the Holy Spirit. Acts 1:4-5, 8 restate Jesus’ orders. Compare the ending of Luke’s first book, the gospel Luke, with Acts 1:4 and 8 (see Luke 24:45-52). What were the orders he had given the apostles by the Holy Spirit before His ascension?

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See also:

Luke 24:49 \_\_\_\_\_

Matt. 28:19 \_\_\_\_\_

Mark 16:14-16 \_\_\_\_\_

John 20:19-23 \_\_\_\_\_

Acts 10:42-43 \_\_\_\_\_

3. In verse 3, what does Luke suggest was the two-fold purposes of Jesus’ 40 days on earth following His resurrection, and how did He confirm His resurrection?

Matt 28:1-20 \_\_\_\_\_

Mark 16:9-18 \_\_\_\_\_

Luke 24:13-14, 27-31; 26-28 \_\_\_\_\_

John 20:19 \_\_\_\_\_

John 21:1-3, 9-14 \_\_\_\_\_

4. How will post-resurrection believers' experience differ from pre-resurrection believers, according to verses 4-5?

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5. What do we learn in verse 7 about God's sovereignty over human events?

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See also:

Matthew 24:36 \_\_\_\_\_

Mark 13:32 \_\_\_\_\_

6. Jesus' command in verse 8 to this handful of disciples was staggering. How would its accomplishment be possible?

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7. What do verses 9-11 tell us about what we can expect in the future?

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See also:

Mark 16:19 \_\_\_\_\_

Matthew 16:24-28 \_\_\_\_\_

Acts 3:19-21 \_\_\_\_\_

8. What can we know about the physical reality of Jesus when He returns (and also about us) according to verse 11?

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See also:

1 Cor 15:35-49 \_\_\_\_\_

1 Cor 15:50-54 \_\_\_\_\_

## MEDITATE

*How has the Lord Jesus asked you to participate in His command to be His witness in the world? What has the Holy Spirit empowered you to do that you could not have done previously? Thank God for transferring you into the kingdom of His beloved Son, and ask Him to teach you His own truth and show you how to learn to live by the Spirit as part of His body, the church.*

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"He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed. For you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls." 1 Peter 2:24-25, NIV