

Discipleship Questions

What are some basic facts about the book of Acts?

What is the main purpose of Acts?

Where did Luke begin this second writing?

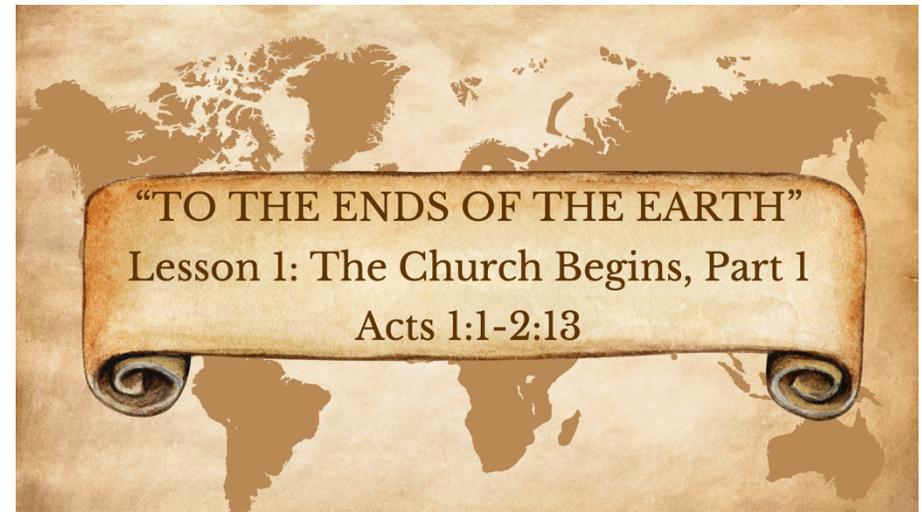
What did Jesus command His apostles before His ascension?

What was the significance of Jesus's ascension to Heaven?

What did Jesus's apostles do after Jesus's ascension?

What qualities were necessary in selecting Judas's replacement as an apostle?

What happened on the day of Pentecost?



The book of Acts (or, Acts of the Apostles) is the second account Luke wrote to a man named Theophilus (compare with Luke 1:1-4). Luke was likely a Gentile who had become a Christian (Colossians 4:10-14), a physician (Colossians 4:14), and a travel companion to the apostle Paul (2 Timothy 4:11; Philemon 1:24; also in Acts when the author is with Paul, Acts 16:10-17; 20:5-21:18; 27:1-28:16). Process of elimination and what is known about Luke's travels (plus external evidence) leads to the conclusion that he was the author. It was written after Paul's Roman imprisonment (Acts 28), perhaps around 62-63 A.D. The theme of the book may be identified from Acts 1:8 as: "To the ends of the earth."

A Second Narrative (Acts 1:1-3)

1:1-3. Luke begins by addressing the same man as he did in the gospel of Luke (Theophilus, a name meaning "friend of God"). His identity is unknown, though apparently of some noble rank (Luke 1:1-4). The first narrative (the gospel of Luke) dealt with all Jesus began to do and teach until His ascension, after instructing the apostles He had chosen (Luke 24:44-49). Through it, Theophilus would know the certainty concerning Jesus of Nazareth (Luke 1:1-4). Luke now adds that after Jesus suffered, He presented Himself alive to the apostles (and others) by many convincing proofs (Luke 24:36-43; John 20-21; 1 Corinthians 15:3-8) for 40 days. During this time, Jesus also spoke more about the kingdom of God.

Jesus's Final Words And Ascension (Acts 1:4-11)

1:4-8. Jesus commanded the apostles not to leave Jerusalem. This was the place God had appointed for what was about to take place concerning the preaching for the forgiveness of sins (Luke 24:46-47; Isaiah 2:1-4; Micah

4:1-8). There, the apostles were to wait for the Father's Promise, the baptism (immersion) of the Holy Spirit (Luke 3:16; 24:48-49; John 14:25-26; 15:26-27; 16:12-15). This would happen within a few days of Jesus speaking. After hearing this, they asked Jesus if He would restore the kingdom to Israel at this time (perhaps indicating a continued misunderstanding of the nature of Jesus's kingdom as a physical kingdom). Jesus, though, indicated it was not for them to know when the Father determined to do what He would regarding His kingdom. The apostles would receive power when the Holy Spirit would come on them (Acts 2:1-4) and they would serve as eyewitnesses of Jesus's resurrection (Acts 1:21-22; 2:32; 5:32) beginning in Jerusalem, then throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, and then to the ends of the earth (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16)!

1:9-11. After saying these things, Jesus was taken up to Heaven in a cloud as they watched, until He was out of their sight (Mark 16:19; Luke 24:50-51). This fulfilled Daniel's prophecy and Jesus took His place as King at the right hand of God (Daniel 7:13-14; Acts 2:32-35; Ephesians 1:20-23). As they were gazing into the sky, two men in white clothes (apparently two angels, Luke 24:4; Mark 16:5; John 20:12) appeared and said Jesus would come in the same way He went into heaven (1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:11; 2 Thessalonians 1:6-10; 2 Peter 3:10-13)!

Waiting In Jerusalem (Acts 1:12-26)

1:12-14. Jesus's ascension took place in the vicinity of Bethany (on the eastern side of the Mount of Olives, Luke 24:50), which was a Sabbath day's journey (about 3/4 of a mile) from Jerusalem. The 11 apostles (minus Judas Iscariot, Luke 6:12-16) returned to Jerusalem, went to an upstairs room where they were staying, and spent considerable time united in prayer. With the apostles were also women (Luke 8:1-3; 23:49; 24:10), Jesus's mother (Mary), and Jesus's brothers (Mark 6:3, who had previously not believed, John 7:3-5).

1:15-26. There were about 120 altogether and Peter began addressing them. He indicated it was necessary for the Scriptures to be fulfilled concerning Judas, as foretold by the Holy Spirit through David's mouth. Although Judas shared in the apostolic ministry, he betrayed Jesus (being a guide to those arresting Him, Luke 23:47-53; John 18:1-12) and had now fallen headfirst and his body burst open with his intestines spilling out into a field, which was purchased by the Jewish leaders with his thirty silver pieces after Judas hanged himself (Matthew 27:3-10). These events became known throughout Jerusalem so that this field was called "Hakeldama" (Aramaic, meaning, "Field of Blood"; perhaps because it was purchased with blood money received for betraying Jesus). The Scriptures were fulfilled in Psalms (Psalm 69:25; 109:8) that Judas's dwelling (house) was left empty and another would be needed to take Judas's office (as an apostle). Peter said

another should be chosen from among the men who had accompanied them the whole time Jesus was with them, beginning from John's baptism through His ascension so that one could join in being a witness of Jesus's resurrection (thus providing a qualification to be an apostle that cannot be met by anyone today). Two people were put forward: Joseph (also called Barsabbas and Justus) and Matthias. Prayer was offered that God (who knows the hearts of people) would choose the right one. They cast lots to see which name would be chosen. Matthias was chosen and added as an apostle.

The Day Of Pentecost Arrives (Acts 2:1-13)

2:1-4. The day of Pentecost had arrived. Pentecost was the 50th day after the Sabbath that followed Passover (Leviticus 23:15-16, thereby occurring on the first day of the week). It was also called the Festival of Weeks (approximately seven weeks after Passover) and the Festival of Harvest or Firstfruits (when the firstfruits of the wheat harvest would be offered, Exodus 34:22; Numbers 28:26). It was one of three yearly festivals when all able-bodied Jewish men were expected to travel to Jerusalem (Exodus 23:14-17). On this day, when the apostles were all together, there was a great sound like a violent rushing wind from heaven that filled the house. They saw tongues like flames of fire that separated and rested on each of the apostles. Then, the apostles began to speak in different tongues (languages they had never studied, Acts 2:8) as the Holy Spirit enabled them.

2:5-13. There were many devout Jews in Jerusalem at this time from every nation. When this sound occurred, a crowd came together and became confused because they heard each of the apostles speaking in their own native languages. They were amazed and questioned how these Galileans (the apostles) could speak the magnificent acts of God in their native languages. Luke specifically mentioned 15 nations/regions represented at Pentecost, including visitors from Rome who were both Jews and proselytes (converts to Judaism). They were all astounded and perplexed, asking what these things meant, though others ridiculed that they were drunk.

Conclusion

Jesus had prepared His apostles to wait in Jerusalem for the Holy Spirit. Then, He ascended to Heaven and took His place as King at the right hand of God. Now, with all that Jesus had accomplished, the time had come on

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