

CONCERNING THE WAY

February 2, 2010

LESSON 89: THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES



Introduction

Welcome to our new study on the book of Acts. Acts is properly called the Acts of the Apostles, and it continues the history of events that happened after Jesus was resurrected, and goes on to tell about the coming of the Holy Spirit, whom Jesus had promised to send, the beginning of the Church, and the spreading of the gospel beyond Israel.

Acts is a history book, but it is definitely not dry and boring. If you are a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, this is basically our history; how the Church began. It is a story about regular human beings just like us. It is our legacy, the record of our brothers and sisters who came before us, the foundation of our faith.

Acts is a book of beginnings in one sense, but it is more about transitions. Transition from the age of Law to the age of Grace, and transition from God reaching out to the Jews only to God making salvation available to all people. This book is misinterpreted and misunderstood by many, so we're going to take our time and study carefully what is going on. I guarantee you will be surprised at some of the things you see, and you will learn things that you never knew or noticed before.

The book was written between 62 and 63 A.D. by a physician named Luke. He is recognized as a reliable historian, being very accurate in using the proper terminology for places and political titles of the Roman Empire of that time. Luke was a Roman citizen, well educated and well trained, which we know because of his excellent literary skill and vocabulary usage. We believe he was a doctor because Paul calls him "beloved physician" in Colossians 4:14. As a physician, he would have been able to verify the many healing miracles he was a witness to.

Luke was a witness to many of the events in Acts, because he joined Paul on his missionary journeys, and we'll see when that happens because suddenly he starts saying "we" instead of "they". The other events he was not present for he obviously received from others who were involved in those events, by interviewing them. Luke lists over one hundred people by name in this book, so we know he was careful to get the facts right.

Luke has traditionally been known as a Gentile, but there is evidence that he could have been a Greek Jew. He uses some "Hebraisms" in his Greek text, for one thing, and he seems to have a great knowledge of Jewish theological issues, holidays, and the temple. He also quotes and alludes to the Hebrew scriptures throughout the book, so he definitely knew the Old Testament very well. Other than that, we don't know much about Luke. We don't know where he comes from, the Bible doesn't tell us. Luke was with the apostle Paul on some of his journeys, but escaped some of the persecution that Paul experienced because he was a Roman citizen and possibly because he may have been a Gentile.

The reason Luke wrote Acts is pretty clear. It is a sequel to his gospel, which was a chronological account of Jesus' earthly ministry, and Acts was written to record Jesus' continued ministry through the apostles. Luke wrote this book to carefully trace the growth and geographical expansion of the

Church over its first three decades. It also firmly associates Paul’s apostolic authority at the same level of Peter. Over and over again, Luke presents these two men as equal in supernatural ability, apostolic gifting, and divine commission.

Chronology of Acts and History Immediately Following

Event	Chapter	Date
Christ’s ascension	Acts 1	May, AD 33
Pentecost	Acts 2	May, AD 33
Peter and John arrested	Acts 3-4	Summer, AD 33
Apostles arrested	Acts 5	AD 34
Deacons appointed	Acts 6	Winter, AD 35
Death of Stephen	Acts 7	Spring, AD 35
Samaritans believe	Acts 8	Summer, AD 35
Saul’s Commission	Acts 9	Summer, AD 35
Saul’s Damascus Ministry	Acts 9	AD 35-37
Saul returns to Jerusalem	Acts 9	Fall, AD 37
Peter meets Cornelius	Acts 10	AD 40
Paul in Antioch	Acts 11	AD 42
Death of James and Herod Agrippa	Acts 12	AD 44
Saul and Barnabas in Jerusalem	Acts 12	Fall, AD 47
First Missionary Journey	Acts 13-14	Spring, AD 48 - Fall, AD 49
Jerusalem Council	Acts 15	Late AD 49 / Early AD 50
Second Missionary Journey	Acts 16-18	Spring, AD 50 - Fall, AD 52
Third Missionary Journey	Acts 18-21	Spring, AD 53 - May, AD 57
Paul Imprisoned	Acts 22-26	June, AD 57 - Summer, AD 59
Voyage to Rome	Acts 27	Summer, AD 59 - March, AD 60
Paul’s Roman Imprisonment	Acts 28	March, AD 60 - Spring, AD 62
Death of James		Spring, AD 62
Death of Peter		Summer, AD 64
Death of Paul		Early AD 68
Jerusalem Destroyed		Summer, AD 70

The “big idea” of Acts is found in Acts 1:8, where Jesus commissions the disciples to be His witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. Luke seems to have organized the book geographically and biographically, because we see the book split in two. The first part, from chapters 1 through 12, is about the first part of Jesus’ command. Acts 1:1 - 8:4 is about the gospel being preached in Jerusalem, and Acts 8:5 - 12:25 is about the gospel being spread to Judea and Samaria. Acts 13 - 28 is about the second half of Jesus’ command, to spread the gospel to the ends of the earth. The main character in the first half of the book is Peter, and the main character in the last half is Paul.

Acts is actually part two of Luke’s written history book. Part one is the Gospel of Luke, which takes you from the birth of Jesus to His appearance to the disciples after His resurrection. Acts picks up the story where Luke leaves off. So it is two volumes of a historical narrative. Let’s see how Luke starts:

Luke 1:1-4 Now many have undertaken to compile an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, (2) like the accounts passed on to us by those who were eyewitnesses and servants of the word from the beginning. (3) So it seemed good to me

as well, because I have followed all things carefully from the beginning, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, (4) so that you may know for certain the things you were taught.

Luke is writing this book to a man named Theophilus (which means “friend of God”), who we believe was a Roman official and may have been fairly high up. It is assumed that Theophilus was a believer who wanted to know more about the history of his faith. Luke is telling us here why and how he wrote this narrative. This man believed in Christ and apparently commissioned Luke to carefully investigate what had happened and write it down. We learn from these verses that Luke researched existing accounts and interviewed eyewitnesses, including the disciples who were with Jesus. He verified that Jesus actually lived and walked in time, died and rose again. He verified that these things actually happened in history. Our faith is not founded on a mystical Jesus or mystical thinking, as some would practice it and prefer it, but it is grounded in a real person who really existed in time and did all these things. Many churches are descending into the mysticism of the middle ages. That’s not what Christianity is about.

Remember that Luke could not have written falsehoods in these books. He wrote them in a time that many of the eyewitnesses still lived. If he had gotten it wrong, it would have been discredited immediately in the Christian community. But it was accepted because of the confirmation of the apostles and many others that had actually been with Jesus.

Chapter 1

Acts 1:1-2 I wrote the former account, Theophilus, about all that Jesus began to do and teach (2) until the day he was taken up to heaven, after he had given orders by the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen.

The “former” account, of course, is the Gospel of Luke. Luke will give us the story of Jesus’ ascension in just a little bit. In case we haven’t mentioned it before, let’s discuss what an apostle is, since it is used about thirty times in Acts.

The term means a representative of Christ who is empowered by His authority. There are two classifications of apostle in the New Testament. The primary category was restricted to the Twelve disciples, which is almost always what “apostle” refers to in the book of Acts. The Twelve were personally selected by Jesus to be His representatives, witnesses of His ministry, and the founding leaders of His Church. Jesus said in the coming kingdom the Twelve will rule over the twelve tribes of Israel (Matthew 19:28). This is why the eleven faithful apostles thought it was so important to replace Judas - not because there has to be a constant succession of replacements for each of the Twelve, but because one of them had abandoned his present and future position of responsibility. The disciples assumed that the Kingdom would be coming soon, and they wanted to be ready to assume their roles. It’s interesting that when the first apostle was martyred, James (Acts 12:2), they did not replace him.

You cannot get the idea of an apostolic succession, which is what some sects in Christianity teach, anywhere in the book of Acts. By definition, only those who had seen Jesus could ever be apostles. It was never something that could be passed down to succeeding generations. The office of the Twelve apostles ended with their deaths, until they are resurrected to fulfill their positions in the Kingdom. There are no apostles of this category or authority alive today!

The other category of apostle is the focus of Acts 13-28. The requirement for this type of apostle was that they had seen the resurrected Lord Jesus (1 Corinthians 9:1). We don't know how many this group included, but Paul gives us a list of those who had seen the resurrected Christ in 1 Corinthians 15:5-8. James, the brother of Jesus, Barnabas, and Paul were definitely called apostles. And Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 15:8-9 that he was the last of the apostles (and considered himself the least). So there can never be any other apostles after Paul.

The other credential of an apostle is that they were able to perform signs, wonders, and miracles (2 Corinthians 12:12). This validated them as true apostles. Paul actually refers to apostleship as one of the gifts of the Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:28, Ephesians 4:11), but one that has obviously ceased, since Paul was the last.

Acts 1:3 **To the same apostles also, after his suffering, he presented himself alive with many convincing proofs. He was seen by them over a forty-day period and spoke about matters concerning the kingdom of God.**

Luke tells us that Jesus presented Himself after He rose from the grave with many "convincing proofs". The word "proofs" (*tekmēriōis*) is found only here in the New Testament and looks at demonstrable evidence in contrast with evidence provided by witnesses. In other words, the Resurrection was proven by touch, sight, and feel. We also learn here the time between His resurrection and ascension was forty days, in which He appeared to many people.

"It is appropriate that the word (proofs) occurs only once, for no other event of Biblical history has been confirmed more certainly than His bodily resurrection. Not only His ten or more appearances to the disciples, but also the otherwise inexplicable evidence of the empty tomb, the remarkable change in the disciples, the development and spread of the church as a result of its preaching, the change to worship on the first day of the week, the age-long observance of Easter and the Lord's supper, all in addition to the testimonies of the writers of the New Testament, as led and empowered by the Holy Spirit. These all combine to make it certain that Christ died for our sins and rose again for our justification." Henry Morris

Notice what Jesus talked to them about - the kingdom of God. And that's not the Church, it's the literal reign of Christ on earth, the Messianic reign (Ezekiel 36-37, Zechariah 14), which is what the disciples would have understood it to be, as we'll see in verse 6.

Acts 1:4 **While he was with them, he declared, "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait there for what my Father promised, which you heard about from me.**

What had the Father promised? In case you don't remember, let's go back to the book of John to see.

John 14:16-17 **Then I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate to be with you forever — (17) the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot accept, because it does not see him or know him. But you know him, because he resides with you and will be in you.**

So Jesus is telling the disciples to wait there in Jerusalem for the coming of the Holy Spirit. One of the ministries of the Holy Spirit is to confirm to us what is true and what is false - He is the Spirit of

Truth. Notice the world cannot accept Him. This is why unbelievers cannot understand us who have trusted Christ, because they can't really know truth. And He is our Advocate, our comforter, helper, one Who comes alongside us. And He illuminates the Word of God to us.

Acts 1:5 For John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

This verse is what causes many people to think that you get saved and then sometime later you get the Holy Spirit. But they forget that this book is a transitional book. These people who had believed in Jesus were saved in the Old Testament way. They believed in what God said, which was that He had sent a Messiah, that Messiah was Jesus, and that was credited to them as righteousness, like Abraham. They were not part of the Church yet. You cannot apply Church terminology to what is going on here.

They were already saved, and the Holy Spirit resided with them (John 14:17), but they had not yet been indwelt by the Spirit. Beginning at Pentecost, ("not many days from now"), new believers trust Christ and are immediately baptized by the Holy Spirit (washed) and placed into the Body of Christ. The only reason these men hadn't received the Spirit yet is because they were saved before the Church started - it was still the Old Testament age, the age of the Old Covenant, the Mosaic Law, and Jesus was still with them. The Spirit wouldn't come until Jesus left.

It's important to understand that Pentecost is the beginning of what we know as the "New Covenant", which Jeremiah prophesies in Jeremiah 31:31-34. It is made with Israel, that's very important (also see Ezekiel 36:24-28, 37:21-28). And the Church begins with the Jews, but you will see about halfway through the book of Acts that the nation as a whole rejects the gospel and then the apostles turn their attention to preaching the message to the Gentiles. We Gentiles benefit from the New Covenant, but the Jews will fulfill it in the future when the nation recognizes Jesus as their Messiah and the Kingdom begins.

This isn't to say that Jews aren't coming to Christ today, they are, in ever increasing numbers. The Holy Spirit is beginning to really move among the Jews - those OT prophesies are starting to be fulfilled and it seems like the blindness Paul spoke of is beginning to lift. But the New Covenant will be fulfilled with Israel at the coming of the Kingdom. It's also important to understand that the New Covenant is bound up with the land of Israel (read those OT verses again).

John 7:37-39 On the last day of the feast, the greatest day, Jesus stood up and shouted out, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me, and (38) let the one who believes in me drink. Just as the scripture says, 'From within him will flow rivers of living water.' " (39) (Now he said this about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were going to receive, for the Spirit had not yet been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.)

Here Jesus talks about the coming of the Spirit. This is why the Spirit had not been given until this point - not because this would be the normal order of things, but because Jesus had not been glorified until now.

Acts 1:6-7 So when they had gathered together, they began to ask him, "Lord, is this the time when you are restoring the kingdom to Israel?" (7) He told them, "You are not permitted to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority.

These verses are key verses to understanding the book. Jesus had been speaking to them of the kingdom of God that was coming, so the disciples logically asked when it was going to start. Jesus' answer is profound. Please notice the word "restore". The kingdom of Israel will be restored (Ezekiel 37,38, Zechariah 14). Jesus did not tell them that, no, that's out the window now. He doesn't brush them off or tell them that they're wrong in their assumption that the kingdom would come.

If the kingdom was now to take a different form because Israel had rejected their Messiah, if the kingdom was now going to be the church, Jesus would have corrected their false understanding. But he in effect told them, "The kingdom, as you expect it from the writings of the prophets, will most definitely come, but it is not for you to know when."

He just told them that it wasn't for them to know when, because you're going to be given a different task in just a little while. And this goes for us as well. It's not for us to know the chronology of the future and the set time of the beginning of the kingdom.

Jesus is telling the disciples it was not for them to know the chronology of the next two thousand years or the fixed time that God has set for the kingdom to start. Notice that the times and periods are SET in advance by the Father! The Kingdom will begin after a period of intense suffering (the Tribulation), after the Jews have returned to the land of Israel, and when Jesus' feet touch the Mt. of Olives. The time is set, it is sure, a specific time in the future.

And He did not say that it would start at Pentecost! If the kingdom was the Church, then it would have begun at Pentecost, which was only ten days from then, and Jesus surely would have told them this. But Jesus didn't explain what was going to happen over the next two thousand years, because they wouldn't have understood it, and, actually, it might have disheartened them.

Jesus spoke many times of a real, coming kingdom in which He would rule over Israel. He said He would not eat another Passover meal until that festival was fulfilled in the kingdom (Luke 22:16-18). He promised, as we said previously, that the disciples would sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel (Luke 22:30). There is no question that both Testaments of the Bible teach a coming literal, physical kingdom with Jesus Christ ruling and reigning from David's throne in Jerusalem.

Now, here's another good reason why the disciples asked Jesus about the kingdom here. He had just told them in verse 5 that they were going to be baptized with the Holy Spirit. The Jews associated the coming of the Spirit, the Shekinah glory of the Lord, with the coming of the kingdom (Isaiah 32:15-20, 44:3-5, Ezekiel 39:28-29, Joel 2:28 - 3:1, Zechariah 12:10 - 13:1)! So when Jesus talked about the Spirit coming they assumed that the kingdom would be coming then as well. They knew that the coming of the Spirit had to do with the restoration of Israel and her salvation. And they were right about that. But the coming of the Holy Spirit was a foretaste, a down payment, as Paul puts it in Ephesians 1:13-14, of what's to come in a permanent more powerful way in the kingdom to come.

Acts 1:8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the farthest parts of the earth."

The “power” associated with the coming of the Holy Spirit on a believer is more than just a dynamic preaching style. It will also involve “boldness” and “great grace” (Acts 4:31, 33) in witnessing, centered in the wisdom of God rather than the wisdom of men (1 Corinthians 2:4-6). This is something that wasn’t just for the apostles, but is ours today when we come to Christ. We may not be able to do great signs and wonders like they did, but we have power, through the Holy Spirit, to be witnesses just like they were. **Our job is not to convince people, but to testify of the truth of the gospel.**

The phrase “you will be my witnesses” has been said by God before about Israel (Isaiah 43:12, Isaiah 44:8). Israel was chosen by God to be His witness to the world, but they failed at that, so they were set aside temporarily and God is now beginning a new program in history where He is calling out Jews and Gentiles for His name, to be His witnesses.

Notice that Jesus doesn’t mention any conditions or things they have to do for the Spirit to come upon them. It is not dependent on the disciple’s faith, attitude, or behavior. It is entirely a work of God and it will come in His timing.

And as I said in the introduction, Luke structures the book of Acts around Jesus’ prophecy here, that the disciples would be His witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the farthest parts of the earth. This means they would share the gospel in all of the historic land of Israel, and all the cities and countries where the Jews had migrated to (the Diaspora). That’s how the disciples would have understood that phrase. And you’ll be able to see that throughout the book of Acts. The first thing Paul did when he went to any town was go to the local synagogue. Jesus was commissioning them to go to every Jewish community both inside and outside the land of Israel.

This wasn’t just a command of Jesus, but a fulfilled prophecy! A motley crew of followers of an itinerant preacher who only preached for three years travelled to the ends of known civilization and changed the world.

Acts 1:9 After he had said this, while they were watching, he was lifted up and a cloud hid him from their sight.

Jesus’ physical work on earth was now completed. From then on He would work through the apostles and to this very day He works through the Church, by the Holy Spirit. Jesus had mentioned His ascension before to the disciples (John 6:62, 20:17). Peter understood this to be Jesus taking His rightful place at the right hand of the Father (Acts 2:33-36, 5:31). And the book of Hebrews agrees (Hebrews 1:3, 8:1, 12:2).

Acts 1:10-11 As they were still staring into the sky while he was going, suddenly two men in white clothing stood near them (11) and said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand here looking up into the sky? This same Jesus who has been taken up from you into heaven will come back in the same way you saw him go into heaven."

I guess maybe the disciples kept staring because they thought He would be turning around and coming right back! He had come and gone by appearing and disappearing over the last 40 days, so he could have just bid them goodbye and disappeared, entering into the spirit realm. But He decided to leave in a more formal way, showing that He was leaving the earth and not going to just pop back and see them again once in a while. Did you know that angels are usually described as wearing white (Matthew 28:3, Mark 16:5, Luke 24:4, John 20:12)?

The angels didn't specifically say Jesus would be coming back to exactly the same place, but that has always been the Jewish and Christian expectation of where Messiah would appear, and we get that from Zechariah 14:3-5. Devout Jews for thousands of years have been buried on the Mount of Olives so they would be close by when Messiah came and they would be one of the first ones to be resurrected. Today that hill is covered with thousands of ancient and modern graves.

As the angels said, Jesus won't be coming back in just a spiritual way, but it will be a visible, bodily, physical arrival, just as He left. Popular Bible teachers like Hank Hanegraff (the so-called Bible Answer Man) and R. C. Sproul teach that Jesus has already come back, in a spiritual way - like a ghost, I guess. That is heresy. To deny that Jesus will come back visibly and physically is blasphemy. If you follow after the teaching of men like this, get away from it! They are false prophets! They are against a literal kingdom of God on earth, which is the plain teaching of the Bible. It may partially be anti-Semitism on their part. I cannot be any plainer than that. Do not listen to men like this!

By the way, orthodox Jews also believe that Zechariah 14 will be fulfilled literally. They also believe that the Messiah will come physically to the earth; they just don't believe that it will be Jesus.

Acts 1:12 Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mountain called the Mount of Olives (which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey away).

A "Sabbath day's journey" is the distance the rabbis permitted a person to travel on the Sabbath without breaking the law of the Sabbath. It was about half a mile or one kilometer.

Acts 1:13-14 When they had entered Jerusalem, they went to the upstairs room 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 were there. (14) All these continued together in prayer with one mind, together with the women, along with Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers.

Let's quickly go through the eleven disciples here, just to refresh your memory:

Apostle Roll Call: The Eleven	
Peter	Originally named Simon, renamed Peter (the Rock) by Jesus, quick-tongued, denied Jesus three times, reinstated by Jesus after His resurrection
James	Brother of John, he was the first apostle martyred (Acts 12:1-2)
John	Brother of James, wrote Gospel of John, Revelation, and three epistles
Andrew	Brother of Peter - brought strangers to Jesus (John 1:35-42, 12:22)
Phillip	Among the first five to connect with Jesus (John 1:43-45)
Thomas	Called Doubting Thomas for refusing to believe in Jesus' resurrection until he saw Jesus alive (John 20:25-29)
Bartholomew	Also called Nathanael, called a true Israelite by Jesus when they first met (John 1:46-49)
Matthew	Also called Levi, a former customs officer, held a banquet to introduce Jesus to his friends (Luke 5:29), and wrote the gospel of Matthew
James	Called "the Younger", or "Junior", he was Matthew's brother. Legend says he'd been a right-wing revolutionary

Simon	Nicknamed “Zealot”, came from the militant wing of the Jewish independence movement
Judas	Alias Jude, Judah, or Thaddeus, to distinguish him from Judas Iscariot, may have been the apostle James’ son

They return to the upper room, where they had the last supper with Jesus. This must have been their headquarters while they stayed in Jerusalem all this time. All eleven disciples, the female followers of Jesus, and Jesus’ family were all there, praying continually with one mind. Those men who had frequently bickered with each other in the past, now, because of all they had been through, were of one mind. What did they pray about? Most likely, the main thing was for the coming of the Holy Spirit, the promise of the Father.

The phrase “with one mind” means people thinking like-mindedly. It does not mean people who all think and feel the same way about everything, but to people who set aside personal feelings and commit themselves to one task—in this case witnessing to others about the Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 15:5, 6). Jesus said the world would know that He was sent from the heavenly Father when people saw the love between believers (John 17:21): the unity among the believers we see in Acts was a demonstration of this love.

This was Jesus’ half brothers here, not cousins as the Catholic church would like you to think. Mary did not stay a virgin, but had other children after Jesus. By the way, this is the last time Mary is mentioned in the New Testament. James and the other brothers had all come to faith in Jesus by this time. Before His crucifixion they had all been skeptical and opposed to His ministry, and apparently they weren’t even there at His death, which is one reason why Jesus asked John to take care of Mary. James and Jude both wrote letters in the New Testament, and James became a leader in the Jerusalem church.

We’re not told specifically which women were there except for Mary, but since it says “the women”, we assume it was all of the faithful female followers of Jesus, including Mary Magdalene, Mary, the apostle James’ mother (Mark 16:1), Salome (Mark 16:1), Joanna (Luke 8:3), Susanna (Luke 8:3), Mary and Martha (John 12:2-3), Jesus’ aunt Mary (John 19:25), and the wives of some of the apostles. They are not named here, but at least it mentions the women here and they’re mixing with the men, which is highly unusual for 1st century literature. Actually, the fact that so many women are mentioned and have a role in the New Testament accounts is evidence of the inspiration of the Holy Spirit in these books, because this was just not done in the male-dominated society of those days.

Acts 1:15-17 In those days Peter stood up among the believers (a gathering of about one hundred and twenty people) and said, (16) "Brothers, the scripture had to be fulfilled that the Holy Spirit foretold through David concerning Judas — who became the guide for those who arrested Jesus — (17) for he was counted as one of us and received a share in this ministry."

“In those days” means in the ten days between Jesus’ ascension and Pentecost. This was a pretty good size gathering of people - 120. This can’t be all of the believers in Jerusalem, there had to be hundreds more, at least. You can see Peter assuming the leadership role here, as Jesus had asked him to do at the end of the gospel of John. We’ve talked about Peter before, but I don’t think we’ve talked about the fact that Peter was married (Mark 1:29-31, 1 Corinthians 9:5), and during the events of the gospels he lived in Capernaum in a large home which evidently was close to the

synagogue (Mark 1:29, Luke 4:38). Jesus often stayed with Peter and his family there - he even healed Peter's mother-in-law (Luke 4:38-39).

Verse 16 tells us how the Bible was written - "the Holy Spirit foretold through David concerning Judas". Men wrote Scripture through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. This is a profound statement!

Acts 1:18-20 (Now this man Judas acquired a field with the reward of his unjust deed, and falling headfirst he burst open in the middle and all his intestines gushed out. (19) This became known to all who lived in Jerusalem, so that in their own language they called that field Hakeldama, that is, "Field of Blood.") (20) "For it is written in the book of Psalms, 'Let his house become deserted, and let there be no one to live in it,' and 'Let another take his position of responsibility.'

Well, there's some detail about Judas' death that we probably didn't want to know, but there it is. Matthew 27:5 tells us he hung himself, so he may have done a bad job of it. Either the branch broke or the rope broke, he fell, and his body broke open. The other possibility is that someone took his body down and tossed it into the Hinnom valley, and the body broke open there.

Some think this is a contradiction, because Matthew 27:3-10 says that the priests bought the field. But the priests would have purchased the field in Judas' name, according to Jewish custom. By Jewish Law, wrongfully gained money had to be returned to the owner. Judas gave the money back to the priests, and so the priests had to spend the money in his name, to buy something for the common good. So, actually, the field did belong to Judas. The exact location of that field is unknown, but traditionally it is believed to be near the Greek Orthodox Church and Convent of Saint Oniprius, where the Valley of Hinnom joins the Kidron Valley, southeast of Jerusalem.

Verse 20 comes from Psalm 69:25 and Psalm 109:8.

Acts 1:21-22 Thus one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time the Lord Jesus associated with us, (22) beginning from his baptism by John until the day he was taken up from us — one of these must become a witness of his resurrection together with us."

Peter is saying that they need to replace Judas as the 12th disciple. We see here the criterion for being one of the select 12 disciples. It must be a man who had been with them from the beginning - from Jesus' baptism by John all the way through His resurrection. Keep in mind that, though we just think of 12 disciples following Jesus around, there were many other disciples and followers, some of which had been with Jesus from the beginning.

Acts 1:23-26 So they proposed two candidates: Joseph called Barsabbas (also called Justus) and Matthias. (24) Then they prayed, "Lord, you know the hearts of all. Show us which one of these two you have chosen (25) to assume the task of this service and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place." (26) Then they cast lots for them, and the one chosen was Matthias; so he was counted with the eleven apostles.

So Matthias replaces Judas to round out the 12 disciples. Some believe that the eleven did this apart from the will of God, because they didn't wait for Pentecost to make a decision like this, but

there really isn't a reason to assume that. They had been in continual prayer, and the first thing they feel like they needed to do after all this prayer was choose a disciple to replace Judas. We shouldn't criticize them for that. Matthias seems like a good choice - he had been a faithful follower of Jesus from the beginning and been a witness to everything that the other disciples had been.

Some believe that the disciples should have waited and nominated Paul to be the 12th disciple, but by Peter's definition, Paul does not qualify to be one of the twelve. He was not an eyewitness of Jesus' ministry, but had seen Jesus through a unique revelation (which we'll see later), and only qualifies for the second category of apostle.

Joseph, or Barsabbas, or Justus, whatever you want to call him, who was also qualified, is never mentioned again in the Bible. But then Matthias, the new 12th disciple, is never mentioned by name again either. But he will be sitting on a throne ruling one of the twelve tribes of Israel in the Kingdom, and his name will be written on one of the twelve foundation stones of the New Jerusalem.

Casting lots was a common way in the Old Testament of determining God's will (Leviticus 16:8, Joshua 14:2, Nehemiah 10:34, 11:1, Proverbs 16:33, 1 Chronicles 24:7, 25:8). Two stones, each one having the name of the candidate's names scratched on it, were put in a metal pot or some other container. The container was shaken, and if one of the stones popped out, that one was chosen, otherwise a stone was drawn out and the chosen stone was considered to be God's choice. After the baptism of the Holy Spirit, this method of determining God's will was no longer necessary, and we never see it used again in the Bible. The only reason they used this method here was because Jesus was gone and the Holy Spirit had not yet come.

Next lesson - the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost!