

Acts 1 - A New Beginning

1:1-8 JESUS CHRIST'S COMMISSION TO HIS APOSTLES

Luke explains the reason for writing, showing that the apostolic ministry is an extension of his narrative concerning Christ. The Lord also leaves further instructions. **v1 Former:** means *the first*, thus linking **Acts** to Luke's gospel. They are inseparable, **Luke** being the cause (the work of God in Christ), **Acts** being the effect (the work of Christ in his apostles). **Treatise:** Gr. *logos*, the thinking, or reason, behind the words expressed. Luke's record is not merely for historical interest. **Have I made, O Theophilus:** Name means *friend, or lover, of God*. It appears in **Lk 1:3** in a context that suggests he was then newly converted (cp **1:4**). His name suggests he was a Gentile, therefore stands as a type of Gentile believers. Obviously Luke's gospel achieved its purpose in this man, and is retained by the Spirit for the benefit of all those who are *lovers of God* (**1 Cor 8:3; 2 Thess 3:5**).

Of all that Jesus began: Gk. *be first to do, to lead that others may follow*. The message of salvation began in the Lord Jesus (**Heb 1:3; 2:3**), established by his ministry and perfect life. It is important to understand both the words and actions of Christ ("*both to do and to teach*"), as being essential to salvation. Each complements the other, and cannot be separated. The Lord was different from the leaders of the Jews, of whom he declared: "*do and observe whatever they tell you, but not the works they do. For they preach, but do not practice.*" **Mt 23:3** (ESV).

v2 Until the day: His ascension commenced a new stage in the redemptive process. The suffering servant was to become the Apostle and High Priest of our profession: **Heb 3:1. Holy Spirit:** He was guided by the Spirit: **Isa 61:1; Lk 4:18; Acts 10:38. Apostles chosen:** An apostle is *one sent*, and describes one who is a representative or ambassador for a superior. Apostles were originally sent forth in pairs: **Mk 6:7. v3 Shewed himself alive:** To confirm to Thomas (**Jn 20:27**), and the unbelieving disciples (**Mk 16:11,13-14**). It was the risen Christ that confirmed their faith, and strengthened their beliefs. Peter had been told: "*when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren*" **Lk 22:32**. Similarly, Christ will reveal himself to unbelieving Jewry, when he appears the second time "*without sin, unto salvation*" **Zech 13:6**.

After his passion: *Sufferings:* **1 Pet 1:11; 4:13; Col 1:24**. These sufferings earlier caused them to "*forsake him and flee*" **Mt 26:56**. Now they became evidence of the "*determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God*" **Acts 2:23. Many infallible proofs:** His immortality. Later Peter told Cornelius that the Lord was shown "*openly*" to witnesses: **Acts 10:41**. Paul testified of those who witnessed the resurrection: **2 Cor 15:5-8**. Also the fulfillment of Scripture to the letter. **Forty days:** Time of probation after the pattern of Israel in the wilderness. **Kingdom of God:** This deeply engaged the thoughts of the disciples: **Lk 19:11**. Now they were to preach it: **Acts 20:28**. However a time of persecution would come: **Acts 14:22. v5 Baptised with water:** John's baptism was one of repentance: **Acts 19:4. Holy Spirit:** They previously possessed the Holy Spirit and performed miracles: **Mt 10:7-8**. Once baptised, they could now confer this to others: **Acts 8:18**. This helped them in understanding and remembering: **Jn 14:26**.

v6 Were come together: The importance of unity. Earlier the disciples were separated: **Mk 14:50**. Now they are strengthened with their risen Lord, joyfully moving from Galilee to Bethany: **Lk 24:50**. Unity is continually emphasised in the opening chapters of **Acts** ("*in one accord*" **1:14; 2:1, 46; 4:24; 5:12**). The disciples and the Lord were previously on the Mount of Olives when they received the Olivet Prophecy: **Mt 24; Mk 13; Lk 21..**

They asked of him: It was this question that prompted the Lord to provide the parable of the nobleman: **Lk 19:11** cp. **Mk 13:32**. Looking for a fulfilment of prophecies such as **Dan 7:27**, they earnestly seek an answer! **At this time:** They earlier thought the kingdom would soon appear: **Lk 19:11; 24:21. Restore:** *to establish; set up; return to its former estate*. The type was initially revealed in King Solomon: **1 Chr 28:5; 29:23**. David's throne was consequently overturned (**Ezek 21:24**), but God's intention was to restore its glory in due time: **Mic 4:8; 5:2; 7:16-20; Amos 9:11**. This was the constant anticipation of believers: **Lk 2:38. Kingdom to Israel:** Synonymous with the "*kingdom of God*" **1:3**. To be accomplished through its future restoration: **Ezek 11:19-20**.

v7 Times or seasons: These are under control of the Father **Heb 11:3**. Later, the apostles became more familiar with the "*times and seasons*" **1 Thess 5:1-2** (cp. **Dan 2:21**) yet no-one knows the "*day and hour*" **Mt 24:36. v8 Ye shall receive power:** This Holy Spirit was conferred on the apostles in order that they might more effectively witness to the Truth in an age when the fullness of inspired writings was not complete: **1 Cor 13:1. Holy Spirit:** At Pentecost: **2:1-3. Ye shall be witnesses:** Gk. *martus* (ie. *martyr*). A witness is one who testifies in the dock. An important theme in **Revelation**. This witnessing theme is found 18x in **Revelation** (incl. **1:2,5,9; 2:13; 3:14**) and 47x in **John**. The same commission was later given to Paul: **Acts 26:26**.

Jerusalem: Appropriately, the gospel commenced to be declared in the city that rejected God's Son. **In all Judea:** By the testimony of Stephen: **Acts 7. And in Samaria:** Preaching to the Gentiles. **Utmost parts of the earth:** Paul preached in Rome: **Acts 28**. Believers through the ages in the Roman Empire (**Rev 11:1-7**), then to the rest of the world after the French Revolution: **11:8-13**.

1:9-11 ANGELIC MESSAGE OF PROMISE AND HOPE

v9 Taken up: The angels who had overseen the Master achieve victory over sin and death (**1 Pet 1:12**), now participated in his honour and joy, as will be repeated when the Lord "*takes to himself his perfected bride*" in the presence of the Elohim: **Lk 12:8. v11 Why stand gazing up into heaven: Key verse!** Their hope was to be realised on earth: **Phil 3:20-21; Heb. 9:28; 2 Tim 4:8. Key Scripture:** "*God also hath highly exalted him*" **Phil. 2:9-11**.

1:12-14 PERIOD OF PRAYER AND WAITING IN JERUSALEM

In great anticipation, the apostles walk down the Mt of Olives to Jerusalem, marvelling at the amazing sight just witnessed. This is a different group of men from those who had been scattered in fear just prior to the Lord's trial and crucifixion. They were now completely changed in attitude and imbued with conviction.

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v14 These all continued with one accord: The unified spirit in the early ecclesia was seen in unity of prayer (**1:14**), worship (**2:1**), fellowship (**2:46**), praise (**4:24**), witnessing (**5:12**), obedience (**8:6**), decisions (**15:25**). This reflected the harmony established in the temple service of Solomon (**2 Chr. 5:13**), and is the example to be followed by true disciples (**Eph 4:3,13**). This was Christ's ultimate desire: **Psa 133:1-3; Jn 17:21-26. With the women:** These had wholeheartedly given themselves to ministering and supporting the Lord: **Lk 8:2; 23:27,49,55. Mary the mother of Jesus:** How beautiful. She would now have fully understood.

1:15-26 APPOINTMENT OF MATTHIAS TO AN APOSTLE

Judas' betrayal was prophesied long before: **Psa 41:6-9; 69:4,25; 109:16**. The opportunity was now given to one whom God chose.

FINAL THOUGHTS ON CHRIST'S ASCENSION

The following unfathomable words present us with Christ being taken to the right hand of his Father in heaven. The angels had waited thousands of years for this moment:

"With the clouds of heaven there came one like the Son of Man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him." Dan 7:13

We cannot begin to comprehend the depth of emotion in this meeting. We do get a faint insight when we consider the parable of the prodigal son in **Lk 15:11-32**. That story is one of a wayward son. The Father was watching every day for the return of that son. As soon as that son returned in his heart, the Father was running to him. But Jesus wasn't a prodigal son. This was an absolutely obedient, perfect, loving and adoring son. Here is a scene like nothing else in all history. This hope is what gave Jesus strength.

I have set the LORD always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be shaken... In your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore. Psa 16:8,11 (cp. Psalm 27:4-6)

We have seen that he also gained strength with the hope of being with his brethren in the Kingdom. A man who never married or had children "*shall see his seed*" (**Isa 53:10; Psa 22:30**). There is nothing greater in life than the love of Jesus Christ. He is the perfect representation of God's infinite love. The love of Christ compelled Paul (**2 Cor 5:14**) to do what in his own strength was impossible. This same Jesus is coming again very soon. The invitation to be a part of this purpose is surely too great to refuse.

And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed ...The saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever, forever and ever." Daniel 7:14,18 ESV