

Brookland Baptist Church
Bible Study
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Lecture III

February 16, 2022

The Book of Acts
Acts 1:7-22

Acts 1:7 – *“He said to them: “It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority.”*

Neither the *times chronous* referring purely to chronology nor the *dates (kaipous)* were really not any of the disciples’ business. These are set by the Father’s *authority*, and as far as the disciples were concerned, it was out of their jurisdiction. Later revelation through Paul and others would help clarify the issue (*1 Thessalonians 5:1–2*). What *should* concern and consume the disciples was the loaded statement that follows.

Acts 1:8 - *“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”*

This is the last recorded statement of Christ on earth. It is thus final, authoritative, and of utmost importance. The Holy Spirit is a major theme in Luke and Acts and is the major point of continuity between the life of Jesus and the ministry of the church.

When Jesus ascended into heaven, His physical presence left the earth, but he promised to send the Holy Spirit so that His spiritual presence would still be among mankind (*Luke 24:49*). The Holy Spirit first became available to all believers at Pentecost. Whereas in Old Testament days the Holy Spirit empowered specific individuals for specific purposes, now all believers have the power of the Holy Spirit available to them.

Luke’s Gospel emphasizes the role of the Holy Spirit in the ministry of Christ. Luke continued that emphasis here as he focused on the Holy Spirit’s role in the early days of the church. Christ had just reminded His followers that they would soon receive the Holy Spirit. When the Spirit comes, he told His followers, *you will receive power*. **Power** translates *dunamis*, from which

the English word “**dynamite**” derives. All believers have in them spiritual dynamite for use of gifts, service, fellowship, and witness. To do what? To *be my witnesses*. Power from the Holy Spirit is not limited to strength beyond the ordinary; that power also involves courage, boldness, confidence, insight, ability, and authority. The disciples would need all these gifts to fulfill their mission.

Jesus promised the disciples that after they received the Holy Spirit would enable them two things:

- (1) **The Holy Spirit would give them power.**
- (2) **They would witness with extraordinary results.**

The term “**witness**” (*martures*) provides remarkable insight into the nature of the disciples’ task. A witness gives testimony based on what the witness knows, what he or she has seen—not hearsay, not rumor, not something someone else saw, but what *he* or *she* has experienced, seen, or heard. In effect, Jesus was saying to His followers: “*There is going to be a period of witnessing by you about me between my two visits to your planet. Go out and tell people what you know — what you’ve seen, experienced, and learned. I’ll be back.*”

They were to start right there in *Jerusalem*. *Judea* was the region surrounding Jerusalem *Samaria* was Judea’s hostile next-door neighbor, a more difficult but equally important place to take the Gospel. The “**ends of the earth**” suggesting that perhaps the reference is to Rome or the Roman empire, the world power at that time. In other words, not stopping at just your city or state but moving on beyond regional influence to the very “**ends**” of the earth. In other words, reach it *all!*

The disciples took Jesus at His word and went about their task exactly as he directed: they began in Jerusalem, spread to Judea and Samaria, then filtered out across the world to the imperial capital, Rome.

Acts 1:9 – “*When he had said this, as they were watching, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight.*”

After giving this important charge, Jesus was *lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight*. The disciples needed to see Jesus make this transition. The Ascension confirmed for them that Jesus truly was God. In addition, they witnessed the fact that he had physically left earth and

had returned to His heavenly home; thus, the remaining work would be done by the witnesses he had left behind, operating in the power of the promised Holy Spirit.

Acts 1:10–11 – “As they were straining their eyes to see him, two white-robed men suddenly stood there among them. They said, “Men of Galilee, why are you standing here staring at the sky? Jesus has been taken away from you into heaven. And someday, just as you saw him go, he will return!”

While the disciples were *straining their eyes*, staring into the sky, two angelic messengers appeared *among them*. The angels confirmed what had just happened: indeed, Jesus had been *taken away ... into heaven*. They also reminded the disciples of Jesus’ promise: *Someday, just as you saw him go, he will return!* The question, of course, is what part of Jesus’ departure will be reproduced upon His return: The Jesus in heaven is the same Jesus the disciples knew — the one who was their Lord and Savior; the One who came to earth to be their close companion, their Advocate, their Mediator, their Representative before God. Therefore, when He returns, He will be coming back to receive all believers unto Himself. He will be coming back that we may all be where He is (John 14:2-3).

We should be ready for his sudden return (*1 Thessalonians 5:2*), not by standing around “*staring at the sky*” but by working hard to spread the Good News and help build Christ’s church so that others will be able to share in God’s great blessings.

Having been instructed to wait for the coming of the Holy Spirit, the disciples withdrew to an upstairs room in Jerusalem. There they wisely spent time praying. It was during this lull that the apostles, under Peter’s leadership, filled the vacancy in their ranks created by the defection of Judas. It was important for them to have twelve apostles, representing the twelve tribes of Israel.

Acts 1:12–13 – “The apostles were at the Mount of Olives when this happened, so they walked the half mile back to Jerusalem. Then they went to the upstairs room of the house where they were staying. Here is the list of those who were present: Peter, John, James, Andrew, Philip, Thomas, Bartholomew, Matthew, James (son of Alphaeus), Simon (the Zealot),

This list of names of the eleven disciples parallels the lists in the Gospels (*Matthew 10:2–4; Mark 3:16–19; Luke 6:14–16*).

Acts 1:14 – “*They all met together continually for prayer, along with Mary the mother of Jesus, several other women, and the brothers of Jesus.*”

Luke took special note of the fact that the disciples were joined by *Mary the mother of Jesus* and *several other women*, likely the ones who had been present at the Crucifixion and at the empty tomb (*Luke 8:2–3*; Also present were *the brothers of Jesus*. During his lifetime, Jesus’ brothers did not believe he was the Messiah (*John 7:5*) and actually thought he was out of his mind (*Mark 3:21–35*). But Jesus’ resurrection must have convinced them otherwise. As believers, they joined the disciples during the time of prayer and waiting.

Acts 1:15–16 – “*During this time, on a day when about 120 believers were present, Peter stood up and addressed them as follows: “Brothers, it was necessary for the Scriptures to be fulfilled concerning Judas, who guided the Temple police to arrest Jesus. This was predicted long ago by the Holy Spirit, speaking through King David.”*

Peter pointed the gathered believers to the Scriptures. He showed that he had been paying attention during his training under Jesus. Peter put the events concerning Judas’ betrayal and suicide into biblical perspective by explaining how *it was necessary for the Scriptures to be fulfilled*, and then he called the believers to the task of choosing Judas’s replacement, something he likewise said was necessary. The Greek word used both here and in *Acts 1:21* is *dei* (meaning “*it is necessary*”); it is used to show logical or divine necessity. Peter and the disciples believed it was necessary for these verses to be fulfilled. They were regarded as prophecy.

Acts 1:17–19 - “*Judas was one of us, chosen to share in the ministry with us.*” (*Judas bought a field with the money he received for his treachery, and falling there, he burst open, spilling out his intestines. The news of his death spread rapidly among all the people of Jerusalem, and they gave the place the Aramaic name Akeldama, which means “Field of Blood.”*)

Judas had received the same calling and teaching as everyone else. It is hard to believe that someone who had been with Jesus daily could betray him. Though *chosen to share in the ministry* by Christ himself, Judas hardened his heart and joined in the plot with Jesus' enemies to put him to death.

The gospels have different perspectives on the actual way that Judas died. Luke says that he fell. Matthew on the other hand, reports that he hung himself in explaining the suicide of Judas.

Acts 1:20 – “Peter continued, “This was predicted in the book of Psalms, where it says, ‘Let his home become desolate, with no one living in it.’ And again, ‘Let his position be given to someone else.’ ”

The psalms picture the Messiah as the ideal king. Thus the enemies of King David (*addressed in certain psalms where curses are called on God's enemies*) are a prototype or foreshadowing of the enemies of the Messiah. Peter applied the meaning in those psalms to the enemies of Jesus, particularly here to Judas. Peter saw *Psalms 69:25* as a prediction of Judas's horrible end, the “**desolate**” name of the place of his demise. Peter then quoted *Psalms 109:8* as the basis of the necessity of choosing someone to replace Judas. Thus Peter's Spirit-led application of David's Spirit-inspired prediction became the basis for the gathered believers' first significant decision — replacing Judas.

Acts 1:21–22 - “Therefore it is necessary to choose one of the men who have been with us the whole time the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from John's baptism to the time when Jesus was taken up from us. For one of these must become a witness with us of his resurrection.”

The main reason for this process was to make sure that there were twelve apostolic witnesses. They also believed that a twelfth disciple would be necessary to fulfill such promises as *Matthew 19:28* and *Luke 22:28–30* (the twelve disciples sitting on twelve thrones in the kingdom government). The church was regarded as a fulfillment of the Old Testament righteous remnant, those faithful to God, and so must assure its rightful place. The Twelve were needed to lead. Because Judas betrayed Christ, he had to be replaced because twelve faithful leaders were needed. James was not replaced after his death because he had not defected from the faith. Even after James's death, he still was regarded as one of the Twelve.

Peter pointed out the qualifications of the one who was to be chosen. Notice that it had to be someone who had been with Jesus and the other disciples *the whole time the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from John's baptism to the time when Jesus was taken up*. Such eyewitness involvement was absolutely necessary for the credibility of the person bearing witness to the words and the works of Christ. This one would join the other apostles in being *a witness ... of his resurrection*. What this witness said would be a testimony to the credibility of the life of Christ and the words of Christ. It is clear that, in addition to the twelve disciples, many others had consistently followed Jesus throughout his ministry on earth. The Twelve were his inner circle, but many others shared deep love for and commitment to Jesus. It was now simply a matter of finding the one who would be elevated to the title of apostle.

Wise Decisions:

In choosing a replacement for Judas Iscariot, the apostles outlined specific criteria for making the choice. When the “**finalists**” had been chosen, the apostles prayed, asking God to guide the selection process. Their deliberate actions serve as a good example of how to proceed when making important decisions. We should set up criteria consistent with the Bible, examine the alternatives, and pray for wisdom and guidance to reach a wise decision.