

Bibles???

The Word of God is the Absolute Truth and the Final Authority

Turn your bibles with me to the book of Acts.

This is going to be the book that we are going study on Wednesday nights probably until the end of the year –

There are 28 chapters in the book of Acts – there will be days when we do an entire chapter and other days we may break up a chapter into two or three weeks –

It is one of the more enjoyable (easier) books for a believer to read – because it reads almost like one would be reading a history book.

So I encourage everyone to read the entire thing -

We are going to be doing Acts 1 this evening.

Let's pray...

So before we start, I want to do a brief introduction on the book of Acts.

It was written by Dr. Luke – the same writer that the Holy Spirit inspired to write the gospel of Luke.

Since we are all very familiar with Hollywood movies, we can look at Luke's gospel as the Jesus Story Part 1 and the book of Acts as the Jesus Story Part 2.

The Gospel of Luke tells us the story of Jesus' ministry here on earth.

And the book of Acts tells us the story of how the followers of Jesus went on to carry on His mission through the work of the Holy Spirit.

If you look at your bibles, you might see the title – “The Acts of the Apostles”

Luke did not write that, it was man that wrote that many years later.

It ought to be “The Acts of Jesus through the Apostles.” Or the Acts of the Holy Spirit through the Apostles”

Acts is an important part of the NT because it provides a bridge between the Gospels and the Epistles.

Without Acts, we'd have no context for understanding how the first believers went about living out what they'd learn from Christ.

The Book of Acts tells us of the conversion of Paul, whose letters make clear how Christ fulfilled the Law and ushered in salvation by grace through faith.

And also, the Book of Acts tells us how the Early Church, which was entirely Jewish, understood how to embrace the inclusion of Gentiles.

[Act 1:1-26 NKJV] 1 The former account I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach,

I had you make note formal account – this is the Gospel of Luke.

I made the point on Good Friday as we were looking at the crucifixion that Luke was not an eyewitness to Jesus' earthly ministry –

He collected eyewitness accounts and organized them and presented them to Theophilus – that is who the Gospel of Luke was written for.

It says so at the beginning of Luke.

Many people believe that Theophilus was Luke's master.

He was a prominent Roman Official – because in Luke 1, Luke addresses Theophilus as “most excellent” – something reserved for an official.

So Luke was his slave.

Back then, doctors were not like they are today.

Those that were in authority or rich, as one of their slaves, each had a doctor.

I also had you make a note of the word began –

Luke sees the events in the gospels as only the beginning.

Now in the birth of the church, we'll see even more of what Jesus will do and teach through the work of the Holy Spirit in the ministry of the apostles and leaders.

2 until the day in which He was taken up, after He through the Holy Spirit had given commandments to the apostles whom He had chosen,

For three years, Jesus spoke to His disciples about His death, about the Kingdom of God and salvation and for the most part, the disciples didn't grasp what Jesus taught. However, things were going to be different now - His words were received by them as never before because they were now indwelt by the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit – the Third Member of the Holy Trinity – is the aspect of God that lives and empowers and inspires man.

The Holy Spirit has a work among those who are not yet believers, but also a great and significant work in those who believe.

Jesus relied on the Holy Spirit to do this – because that is the role of the Holy Spirit.

And we see the work of the Holy Spirit through in the early church in the same way we see it through the church today.

3 to whom He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.

One of the arguments that sceptics – both today and during the early church made was – that the disciples really did not witness a Resurrected Jesus – they didn't see Jesus in the upper room (twice) or on the shore of Galilee.

They make the claim that it was simply their desire to see Jesus again that caused them to have a shared hallucination of the Risen Christ.

So Luke understood this back then.

And he makes the point that many people saw Jesus after He rose again.

Turn with me to 1 Corinthians 15 –

[1Co 15:4-8 NKJV] 4 and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, 5 and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve. 6 After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep. 7 After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles. 8 Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time.

So Luke tells us that Jesus didn't only appear to a few individuals for an instance –

It was not a like bigfoot sighting –

He appeared to many people over a period of forty days.

4 And being assembled together with [them], He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, "which," [He said], "you have heard from Me; 5 "for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

On Sunday, we saw how Jesus had commanded the disciples to go to the mountains of Galilee –

After spending time there, they are instructed to return to Jerusalem where they are to wait for the promise of the Helper.

Something that we see Jesus repeatedly telling the disciples in the gospel of John.

[Jhn 15:26 NKJV] 26 "But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me.

[Jhn 16:7 NKJV] 7 "Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you.

And now Jesus is telling them that within a few days, the promise will come.

6 Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, "Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" 7 And He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority.

After seeing Jesus conquer death –

The disciples were wondering if the next thing to happen was for Jesus to establish His kingdom here earth.

After all, they knew the promises of the Old Testament – that the Messiah was supposed to reestablish the kingdom of Israel – (Isaiah 9:7 , Ezekiel 36,37)

So they ask – is it time yet?

And Jesus responds – “not yet”

And before the disciples could ask – “well then when?” – Jesus pre-empted them by saying God’s timetable for history is none of their concern.

They’re not to concern themselves with the when of His return.

Rather, they’re to focus on the what and the how.

The what is Jesus’ return

The how is what are they going to do to prepare themselves for His return.

The way they’re to do that is by being baptized with the Holy Spirit, Who will empower them to attain the thing, as disciples, they’d been aspiring to for the last 3 years; To be just like Jesus Christ.

8 "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

I had you make a note of the word upon –

Because there are three distinct relationships one can have with the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit can be with us, in us or upon us.

1. With

When the Holy Spirit is "with" us, He is along side of us to encourage us, comfort us, and to convict us.

The Holy Spirit may be doing these things in anybody's life, whether or not they are a believer.

2. In

When we receive Jesus in our heart, the Holy Spirit comes to live "in" us.

A person who does not have the Holy Spirit living "in" their heart cannot be a Christian.

[Rom 8:9 NKJV] 9 But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.

A case in point is the disciples – when did they become Christians/saved???

Because they all abandoned Jesus when He was arrested and they questioned the women when they were told that the tomb was empty.

It wasn't until later on Resurrection Sunday when Jesus appeared to them

[Jhn 20:22 NKJV] 22 And when He had said this, He breathed on [them], and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit was in them – but not yet upon them

3. Upon

When a person has the Holy Spirit come "upon" them – this is when the power of God is working dynamically in your life:

We'll see this next week in Acts 2

When Peter is filled with the Holy Spirit, after he preaches his first sermon. he stands up to explain what has happened to the crowd, and 3,000 people get saved (Acts 2:41)

Keep in mind, this is Peter, who had denied the Lord when confronted by a young servant girl, now boldly witnessing to the rulers!

This shows us that it really was the Holy Spirit at work, and not just that Peter was a bold, eloquent preacher!

And notice that Jesus also gives them instructions of the order they supposed to preach the gospel with the help of the Holy Spirit.

And that is what we see in the book of Acts.

Chapter 1-7 the gospel goes throughout Jerusalem

Chapter 8-12 the gospel spreads into Judea and Samaria

Chapter 13-28, Paul begins his missionary journeys and the gospel goes as far as Rome.

9 Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. 10 And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, 11 who also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This [same] Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven."

When I was younger, we would take grandma to the airport and back then, they allowed people into the gate area.

So we would see my grandmother get into the plane and then we would see the plane take off and once we couldn't see it anymore, we would return home.

I think that is what the disciples were doing, they see Jesus ascend and they keep staring at the sky and two angels, "Well what are you standing here for?"

"When He comes back, He is going to come the same way."

"Don't just stand there – Jesus gave you instructions" And that was to wait for the empowering of the Holy Spirit so that they could be witnesses to him from their homes, to the end of the earth

12 Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey.

The Jews were only allowed to travel no more than about .5 mile on the Sabbath – anything over that would be considered violating the Sabbath.

The reason that Luke mentions it because it shows the obedience of the disciples to the instructions that Jesus had told them – to remain in Jerusalem and wait for the Holy Spirit.

13 And when they had entered, they went up into the upper room where they were staying: Peter, James, John, and Andrew; Philip and Thomas; Bartholomew and Matthew; James [the son] of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot; and Judas [the son] of James. 14 These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.

In the gospels – one of things that we see over and over again was that the disciples spent so much of their time arguing amongst themselves who was greater –

The gospels even tell us that Jesus's half-brothers did not believe Him. (John 7:5)

But now, everyone is on the same page.

Mary and Jesus' brothers are not asking for special treatment, the disciples are not fighting among themselves.

There was unity –

How were they united,? Through prayer and supplication -

A church that prays is a united church and a church where the Holy Spirit freely works.

It's hard to be arguing with each other or gossiping about one another when everyone is praying.

15 And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples (altogether the number of names was about a hundred and twenty), and said, 16 "Men [and] brethren, this Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke before by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus; 17 "for he was numbered with us and obtained a part in this ministry."

So Peter here takes the initiative at one of the early meetings of the early church as they wait for the Holy Spirit.

And he makes the declaration that he doesn't see Judas' betrayal as some sort of a tragic accident, but that it was all in God's plan.

And he is most likely pointing to Psalm 41:9 -

[Psa 41:9 NKJV] 9 Even my own familiar friend in whom I trusted, Who ate my bread, Has lifted up [his] heel against me.

Now, verse 18 and 19 – is Luke's commentary.

He provides the details of what happened to Judas.

18 (Now this man purchased a field with the wages of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst open in the middle and all his entrails gushed out. 19 And it became known to all those dwelling in Jerusalem; so that field is called in their own language, Akel Dama, that is, Field of Blood.)

The gospels tell us when Judas realized his betrayal would lead to the execution of Jesus, he was filled with remorse.

He tried to give the bribe money back to the priests but they refused, saying it was "blood money." (Matthew 27)

Judas, threw the 30 pieces of silver into the temple & went out & hanged himself.

The priests couldn't put the money back into the treasury since it was morally tainted, so they used it to buy a field in which to bury the poor.

Because the field was bought with blood money, it was called the field of blood

Matthew 27:5 says Judas hanged himself. But Luke here says Judas fell & burst open.

So is this a contradiction – No

In order for his body to burst open, Judas would have to fall from a significant height.

So Judas hangs himself on the many cliffs around Jerusalem, the rope breaks and he lands on the jagged rocks below – bursting open.

20 "For it is written in the Book of Psalms: 'Let his dwelling place be desolate, And let no one live in it'; and, 'Let another take his office.' 21 "Therefore, of these men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, 22 "beginning from the baptism of John to that day when He was taken up from us, one of these must become a witness with us of His resurrection."

Peter quotes 2 Psalms [69:25 & 109:8]

As good students of Scripture, Peter & the other disciples knew that their number needed to be 12, corresponding to the 12 tribes of Israel which Jesus said in Luke 22:30, they would judge.

So Peter takes the initiative to fill the vacant spot.

The question becomes - was this a true need?

Later events will bear out that the apostles jumped the gun.

Jesus had selected the original apostles, and He'd find a replacement for Judas.

He didn't need Peter's help.

So even though Peter was able to call up some scripture to validate what they were doing, that didn't mean it was in fact directed by God.

Notice that no where do we read this was directed by the Holy Spirit.

23 And they proposed two: Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias. 24 And they prayed and said, "You, O Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which of these two You have chosen 25 "to take part in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place." 26 And they cast their lots, and the lot fell on Matthias. And he was numbered with the eleven apostles.

2 guys fulfilled the criteria the Apostles established; Justus & Matthias.

When lots were chosen, Matthias was the winner.

Was Matthias really God's choice as the replacement for Judas?

Think about this -

This is the only time he's mentioned in the Scripture – it doesn't mean he was a failure as the only other apostles mentioned from here on out are Peter, John and James.

So then the question becomes – why did the lot fall on Matthias –

Because lots are like flipping a coin.

You could get heads or tails – Matthias or Justus

There is no neither.

Remember, this action was taken BEFORE Pentecost when the Holy Spirit came upon them in power & filled them with what they needed to complete their mission.

This drawing of lots was poorly conceived as later events revealed.

Who was the one who emerged as God's choice for Judas' replacement? Paul.

In 1 Cor. 15:8 he refers to himself as the apostles who was born out of due time.

An important note -

After the pouring out of the Holy Spirit – we will see next week, we see no more instances of the church using "lots" to decide God's will!

Let's pray...

To Receive Christ do the following:

Admit, "I am a sinner."

Confess and be willing to turn from your sin.

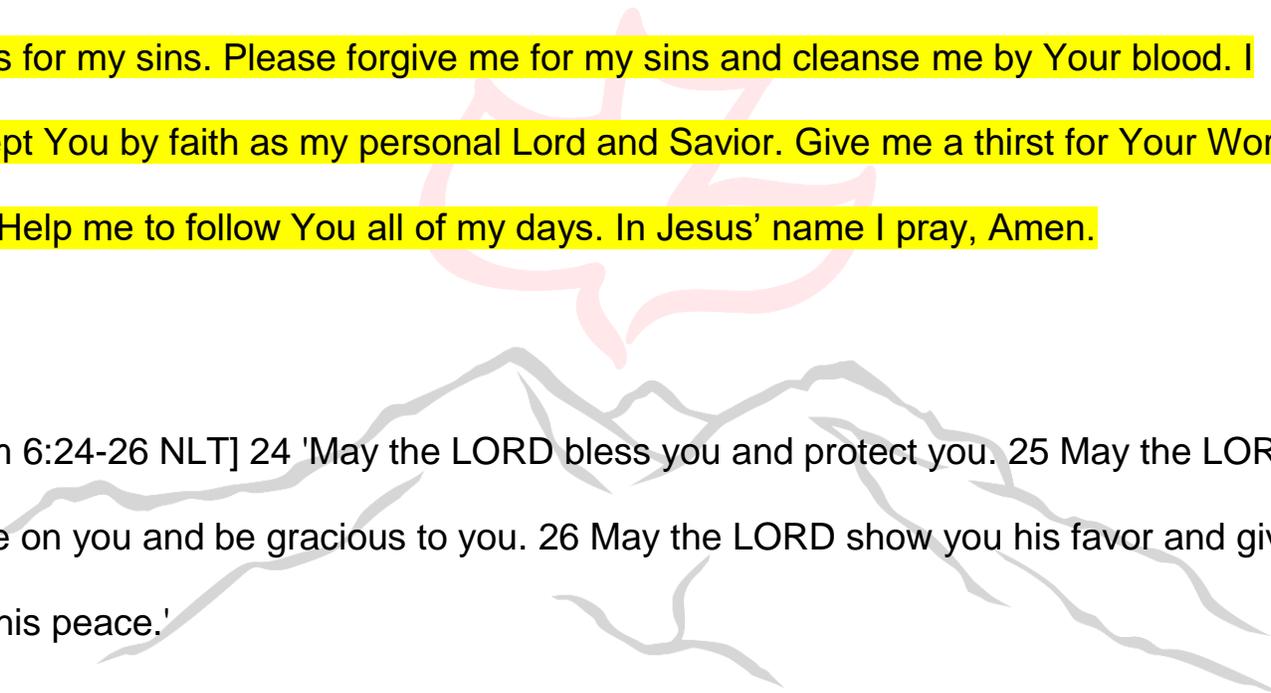
Believe, by faith that Jesus Christ died for you on the cross.

Receive, through prayer, Jesus Christ into your heart and receive eternal life.

Dear Lord Jesus,

I know that I am a sinner and need Your forgiveness. I believe that You died on the cross for my sins. Please forgive me for my sins and cleanse me by Your blood. I accept You by faith as my personal Lord and Savior. Give me a thirst for Your Word and Help me to follow You all of my days. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

[Num 6:24-26 NLT] 24 'May the LORD bless you and protect you. 25 May the LORD smile on you and be gracious to you. 26 May the LORD show you his favor and give you his peace.'



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