The Early Church of Jesus Christ

A Bible teaching commentary on the Acts of the Apostles in easy-to-read English

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The Holy Spirit descends upon the followers of Jesus

Acts Unit 1 of 12

Chapters 1:1-2:47

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Introduction and Acts 1:1 to 2:47

Introduction

The book THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES, or Acts, was written by Luke. Luke wanted his friend Theophilus to know about Jesus, so he first wrote the book called the Gospel of Luke. His gospel is the third book of the part of the Bible that we call the New Testament. It is one of four Gospels which tell the Good News of Jesus Christ.

The book of Acts begins with the last few days of Jesus on Earth after His resurrection from death on the cross. The beginning of the Church of Jesus soon followed. First, Luke tells us that Jesus went back to His Father in Heaven, which we call His ascension. Read about it in Mark 16:19, Luke 24:51 as well as Acts 1:9. Luke then wrote about the ministry of the disciples of Jesus later called apostles.

Luke was a doctor. He became Paul's friend and went with Paul on some of his missionary journeys to tell others about Jesus. Paul called Luke his 'dear friend Luke, the doctor" (Colossians 4:14). Luke's family were Greeks, so he was not a Jew.

Luke knew about Jesus from reading Matthew's and Mark's gospels. He also talked to some of the apostles and people who had met Jesus and His followers. Luke was well-educated. As a doctor, he checked every story very carefully. When Luke wrote the book of Acts, the story of the beginning of the Christian Church, he spent time with some of the apostles.

Acts Chapter 1:1 to 2:47

Jesus returns into Heaven

After rising from death, Jesus met his followers many times in 40 days (Acts 1:3). He taught them many things, especially things about the Kingdom of God.

Before Jesus left His disciples He promised to send the Holy Spirit to be with them. "I will not leave you as children without parents," He told them. "I will come to you" (John 14:18).

He also said, "Do not leave Jerusalem. Wait for the gift My Father promised. You have heard Me talk about it … in a few days you will be baptised with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 1:4,5). The Greek word 'with' here means 'in' or 'into' the Holy Spirit.

The disciples then wanted to know if Jesus would restore the Kingdom of Israel to the Jews (1:6). At that time Israel was ruled by the Romans. Jesus said that God will set the time and date of this (1:7).

"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" (1:8).

When Jesus was 'taken up into heaven' (1:9) two angels told the followers of Jesus: "He will come back in the same way as you saw Him go" (1:11). This is why Christians believe that Jesus will come back again one day soon.

Then the Apostles obediently returned to Jerusalem and went up to the room where they were staying. Here, they were in constant prayer along with the women and the mother of Jesus and His brothers (1:12 to 14).

The disciples and two angels watch Jesus ascend into Heaven

They prepared for the day when Jesus established His church. They chose Matthias to take the place of Judas as an apostle, 'to join us in telling others that Jesus rose from the dead' (1:22 to 26). (Tradition says that Matthias took the Good News of Jesus Christ to North Africa.) They were united in prayer and love and purpose and action.

Their prayers prepared the way for a worldwide ministry in the power of the Holy Spirit. This ministry has lasted for nearly 2000 years and has changed the lives of billions of people who have repented and put their trust in Jesus, the Son of God.

Acts Chapter 2: 1 to 2:47

Jesus sends His Holy Spirit

Ten days after the ascension of Jesus into heaven, early in the morning, the 120 believers were waiting and praying. A strange thing happened. They heard a noise and saw what looked like flames of fire. The flames rested on the head of each man and woman. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in languages that they had never learned (2:4).

It was a special Feast day when the Jews came together to thank God for the harvest. Many Jews came to Jerusalem from other countries (Acts 2:9 to 11) to worship God. Thousands of Jews filled the streets of the city.

These people heard the followers of Jesus praising God in different languages. Each person heard the 'wonders of God' in their own language (2:8 to 11). They were amazed and asked each other, "What does this mean?" (2:12). The Holy Spirit gave the disciples power to speak boldly. They remembered that Jesus told them, "In a few days you will be baptised by the Holy Spirit" (1:5). Now it was happening.

Peter speaks to the people

Peter spoke to the crowd of people in Jerusalem. The Holy Spirit gave him the power to do this. These people knew the Old Testament, so Peter used the words of the prophet Joel (2:16; Joel 2:28 to 32).

Peter told the people that God had kept the promise He had made through Joel. He had sent His Spirit. Peter also told them these things:

- God was pleased with Jesus and enabled Him to do miracles (2:22)
- It was God's plan that Jesus should die (2:23)
- The Old Testament spoke of Him (2:25)
- God raised Jesus from death (2:32)
- Jesus is now with God the Father (2:33)
- God sent the Holy Spirit in the name of Jesus (2:33).

Then Peter told them: "You nailed Jesus to the cross. But God has made Him both Lord and Christ" (2:36). Peter told them that Jesus was the Christ, the promised Messiah, who came to save the world from sin. They thought they had killed Jesus by nailing Him to a cross, but they were wrong! Many felt ashamed (2:37). They wanted to know what to do to be saved from the power of sin in their lives.

The message of salvation: set free from our sins

Many people believed what Peter said. They believed that Jesus died because of their sins. They believed that this was God's plan. They believed that Jesus was the Christ, God's Messiah (2:37).

Then Peter told the people to repent and be saved. "All of you must turn away from your sins and be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ. Then your sins will be forgiven. You will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (2:38).

Peter then added, "This promise is for you and your children ... It is for all whom the Lord our God will choose" (2:39). All people can be saved, not just the Jews and their families. It is for all people everywhere who know that the Spirit of God is calling them.

About 3000 people were saved that day (2:41). This happened after God came down with power and with fire (2:2 to 3). God's Spirit was given to ordinary men and women who believed in Jesus and knew they needed a Saviour.

This salvation of God through Jesus was for the people of all nations and languages including the Jews. This fellowship of new believers was blessed by God.

The Church after the Holy Spirit came

In Acts 2:42 to 47 we read how the new followers of Jesus met together after Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to them. They met each day in public in the Temple courtyard area in Jerusalem (2:46; 3:1).

- They prayed together to know God's ways for their lives (2:42).
- They shared their lives together and enjoyed the friendship and fellowship of other Christian believers (2:42,44).
- The apostles led them and cared for them (2:42 to 43).
- The believers studied the Word together from the Old Testament (2:42).
- They shared what they had with each other or sold their things to help other believers (2:44 to 45).

- They shared bread and wine together in believers' homes; remembering the death of the Lord Jesus as He asked them to do at His Last Supper (2:42,46; Luke 22:19).
- They knew God was near them. They were amazed at what God was doing (2:43).
- The apostles did many miracles in the name of Jesus (2:43).
- They met daily in public places and in homes (2:46).
- They were happy and humble (2:46).
- They praised God together (2:47).
- Other people thought well of them (2:47).
- Every day more people believed in Jesus and met with them (2:47).

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