

# A New Beginning

Chris Starn / General

Acts of the Apostles / Acts 1

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## Scripture:

**Acts 1** - In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach, until the day when he was taken up, after he had given commands through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. He presented himself alive to them after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God. And while staying with them he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, "you heard from me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now." So when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. 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 end of the earth." And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, and said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven." Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey away. And when they had entered, they went up to the upper room, where they were staying, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot and Judas the son of James. All these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers. In those days Peter stood up among the brothers (the company of persons was in all about 120) and said, "Brothers, the Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke beforehand by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus. For he was numbered among us and was allotted his share in this ministry." (Now this man acquired a field with the reward of his wickedness, and falling headlong he burst open in the middle and all his bowels gushed out. And it became known to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the field was called in their own language Akeldama, that is, Field of Blood.) "For it is written in the

Book of Psalms, “ ‘May his camp become desolate, and let there be no one to dwell in it’; and “ ‘Let another take his office.’ So one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us—one of these men must become with us a witness to his resurrection.” And they put forward two, Joseph called Barsabbas, who was also called Justus, and Matthias. And they prayed and said, “You, Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which one of these two you have chosen to take the place in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place.” And they cast lots for them, and the lot fell on Matthias, and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.

**Matthew 4:17** - From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

**Luke 17:20-21** - Being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, he answered them, “The kingdom of God is not coming in ways that can be observed, nor will they say, ‘Look, here it is!’ or ‘There!’ for behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you.”

**John 14:16-17** - And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.

**John 14:12** - “Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father.

**Jeremiah 31:31-33** - “Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

**Galatians 3:29** - And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to promise.

**Revelation 19:11-16** - Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. 12 His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems, and he has a name written that no one knows but himself. 13 He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God. 14 And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses. 15 From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to

strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. 16 On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords.

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## Sermon Notes

Today we are starting a new series by looking at the book of Acts. We spent the beginning of this year looking at Gospel Fluency. We learned how the Gospel needs to be the center of our lives and we need to not only speak the Gospel, but think in the Gospel language.

And towards the end of that series, the world blew-up. We found ourselves, and continue to find ourselves, **in the middle of a world-wide crisis that will forever change our society and culture.** For many of us, the world seems out of control, and we want to just pull in our cocoon and let the world fall apart without us. But we are not to withdraw from our culture, but **we must engage and influence our culture.**

We looked at **what it meant to be a Gospel Community.** And now we are going to look at the first, and I believe the greatest Gospel Community that ever existed.

Understand that this is not the greatest Gospel Community because it was perfect. **We will learn that this first community had its issues just like we all do.** But Acts is the story of how we began. To understand who we are at Living Faith, you must understand where we came from, and we all came from a small group of Jesus followers in Jerusalem.

**The Gospel Community of Acts found itself in a hostile environment.** The culture of the Roman Empire did not openly accept the message of the cross. While many looked at this group of Jesus followers as a sect of Judaism, the Jews did not always embrace them as brothers.

**And just like our culture today, the society during the 1st century desperately needed the Good News of Jesus Christ.**

This first church **lived out the Gospel daily,** just as we should be doing, and **because of it they grew by great numbers, but also suffered great persecution.**

Our goal in looking at this book is to see where we came from so we can understand better where we are and where we are going.

So I am going to read through the whole chapter of Acts 1 and then pray. After that we will get into it.

**Acts 1 ESV**

In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach, until the day when he was taken up, after he had given commands through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. He presented himself alive to them after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God. And while staying with them he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, "you heard from me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now." So when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. 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 end of the earth." And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, and said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven." Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey away. And when they had entered, they went up to the upper room, where they were staying, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot and Judas the son of James. All these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers. In those days Peter stood up among the brothers (the company of persons was in all about 120) and said, "Brothers, the Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke beforehand by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus. For he was numbered among us and was allotted his share in this ministry." (Now this man acquired a field with the reward of his wickedness, and falling headlong he burst open in the middle and all his bowels gushed out. And it became known to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the field was called in their own language Akeldama, that is, Field of Blood.) "For it is written in the Book of Psalms, " 'May his camp become desolate, and let there be no one to dwell in it'; and " 'Let another take his office.' So one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us—one of these men must become with us a witness to his resurrection." And they put forward two, Joseph called Barsabbas, who was also called Justus, and Matthias. And they prayed and said, "You, Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which one of these two you have chosen to take the place in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place." And they cast lots for them, and the lot fell on Matthias, and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.

Prayer

## Acts 1:1-2

*1 In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach,*

Luke had sent an account of Jesus to his friend Theophilus giving him an account of all that Jesus had done.

Back in the Gospel of Luke, Luke states that he thought it would be a good idea to write **an orderly account about Jesus and that the purpose was so that Theophilus would be certain of what he believed (Luke 1:3-4)**. So you can bet that we are going to find that the book of Acts is written in a similar manner, very orderly.

And here in the first two verses of Acts we see two of the main themes that will continue through the whole book of Acts. We see Jesus and we see the Holy Spirit.

# Jesus is the Meaning

**The book of Acts is about Jesus**

**In fact the whole Bible is about Jesus.**

**There is no Christianity without Jesus. There is no early church without Jesus.** And if the church today does not preach Jesus, then it is not a church, it is a club.

**Christianity is not a philosophy built on doctrine or ideas. Christianity is uniquely built upon the resurrected person of Jesus Christ.**

So since the Book of Acts is about the beginning of the church, which is His body, then the Book of Acts is about Jesus.

And even though we do not physically see Jesus after the 1st chapter of Acts, it is the continuing story of Jesus. **Jesus is the meaning of everything.**

As we journey through this book we will see that **what the early church does is in reality the work of Jesus in them, through them, and by them.**

# The Holy Spirit is the Muscle

**Acts 1:2**

*until the day when he was taken up, after he had given commands through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen.*

We also see that the Book of Acts is about the Holy Spirit. Many of you might know the book of Acts as the Acts of the Apostles. I would argue that it should actually be called the Acts of the Holy Spirit. **We will discover that once the early church receives the Holy Spirit, it is a whole new ballgame.**

All that Jesus did while He was on the earth was done through his humanness. All the miracles that Jesus performed were not done through His own power, but were done by the power of the Father.

But now that Jesus is ascending to be with the Father, everything changes and Jesus will now be working through the Holy Spirit.

### **Acts 1:3-5**

***3 He presented himself alive to them after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God.***

## The Kingdom is the Means

When Jesus began His ministry, He began to preach about the coming Kingdom

### **Matthew 4:17**

***From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."***

It was not there yet. Jesus did not come to setup His physical kingdom on earth, not yet at least. **He came to prepare the world for the coming of His kingdom.**

### **Luke 17:20-21**

***Being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, he answered them, "The kingdom of God is not coming in ways that can be observed, nor will they say, 'Look, here it is!' or 'There!' for behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you."***

**The Kingdom of God is not a geographic kingdom, but a spiritual kingdom.** God rules in the heart of some people. So when Jesus said that the Kingdom of God is in the midst of you, he was telling the Pharisees that they were standing in the kingdom and the king was right there with them, and yet they were clueless.

We will see in the Book of Acts **the fruition of the spiritual Kingdom of God coming fully into place.**

## Acts 1:4-5

***4 And while staying with them he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, "you heard from me; 5 for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."***

**Jesus tells them to wait in Jerusalem.** He did not want them to begin their mission too soon and to move without the Holy Spirit. I am sure they were chomping at the bit to begin to share the Gospel. Jesus had encouraged them over the last 40 days and they by now knew what they needed to do, even if they did not know what that would exactly look like and entail.

## The Promise

Jesus had promised that He would send someone to help them.

## John 14:16-17

***And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, 17 even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.***

What I find most interesting in John 14 is that they had the Holy Spirit before Jesus left. Look at what it says,

***"You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you."***

The Holy Spirit had been **with them** all along. But soon His importance to them and how He interacts with them will be completely different. **He will be in them.**

In Acts 1:5, Jesus tells them that they will be "**baptized**" by the Holy Spirit. **The Greek word here is "baptizo," which means to immerse.** They will be immersed in the Holy Spirit.

So while the Holy Spirit has always been with them and around them, soon He would be in them. A completely different encounter that alone has some very interesting repercussions.

## Acts 1:6

***So when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?"***

They do not quite understand, but they soon will. Jesus is less concerned about the Kingdom of Israel than He is about the Kingdom of God.

## **Acts 1:7-8**

*He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. 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 end of the earth."*

To this day we want all the details, but some of them are not for us to know. **We must have faith that God is on His throne and has plans way beyond what we can comprehend.**

He then tells them what will happen when they will be baptized by the Holy Spirit.

### **They will receive power.**

This power would be beyond anything they could imagine.

It would be a supernatural power.

## **John 14:12**

*"Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father.*

### **They will be witnesses to the whole world.**

This must have been unthinkable to a bunch of tradesmen from Galilee

This might be considered a second "Great Commission."

**But without receiving power, the witnessing would not be possible.**

What Jesus says here is what we will be seeing throughout the Book of Acts

# The Ascension

## **Acts 1:9-11**

*And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. 10 And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, 11 and said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven."*

After this second Great Commission and the promise of the Holy Spirit, Jesus rises before their eyes into the sky.

With Jesus' death, resurrection, ascension and the soon to be filling of the Holy Spirit we see what is known as the New Covenant.

## New Covenant

This is important because the new covenant is not like the old.

### **Jeremiah 31:31-33**

***31 "Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, 32 not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the Lord. 33 For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people.***

**God's law is now written on our hearts and this new covenant now includes men and women from every tribe, tongue, and nation.**

The old covenant was solely for Abraham's descendants, but the new covenant also includes Abraham's spiritual children.

### **Galatians 3:29**

***29 And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.***

As the disciples stand and stare up into the sky, two men appear and ask what they are looking at. These are obviously angels sent to kind of get them back on task.

These two angels mention an important theological theme in Acts - **the parousia, arrival or advent. These two messengers are referring to the second coming of Jesus.**

**Jesus first came as a humble baby, but His second coming will be quite different.**

### **Revelation 19:11-16**

***11 Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. 12 His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems, and he has a name written that no one knows but himself. 13 He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God. 14 And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses. 15 From his mouth comes a sharp sword with***

*which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. 16 On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords.*

The one thing the angels wanted the disciples to remember is that even though Jesus had just left, He is coming back.

Sometimes we forget this today. We get wrapped-up in our lives and **forget that our lives are not the main theme of the story of this world.** Jesus will return whether you are ready or not.

**We must live by faith and trust that Jesus reigns on the throne,** we must do so with the ever-present thought that Jesus will one day return to bring His physical kingdom.

While Jesus is gone, we must look for His return with eyes of faith and trust that our King will come again.

#### **Acts 1:12-14**

*12 Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey away. 13 And when they had entered, they went up to the upper room, where they were staying, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot and Judas the son of James. 14 All these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers.*

Luke gives us the attendance sheet for the upper room. We also see that the women of the group and Jesus' family are with them.

**And what are they doing? They are devoting themselves to prayer.**

Prayer is a powerful demonstration of the unity of the group...of the unity of the church.

This group is unified. **This idea of church unity is key to the success of the early church and of our church today. The enemy wishes to divide and break the unity because he knows that disunity breeds division and destruction.**

But one person is missing. Where is Judas?

#### **Acts 1:15-26**

*In those days Peter stood up among the brothers (the company of persons was in all about 120) and said, 16 "Brothers, the Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke beforehand by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus. 17 For he was numbered among us and was allotted his share in this*

**ministry.” 18 (Now this man acquired a field with the reward of his wickedness, and falling headlong he burst open in the middle and all his bowels gushed out. 19 And it became known to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the field was called in their own language Akeldama, that is, Field of Blood.) 20 “For it is written in the Book of Psalms, “ ‘May his camp become desolate, and let there be no one to dwell in it’; and “ ‘Let another take his office.’ 21 So one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, 22 beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us—one of these men must become with us a witness to his resurrection.” 23 And they put forward two, Joseph called Barsabbas, who was also called Justus, and Matthias. 24 And they prayed and said, “You, Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which one of these two you have chosen 25 to take the place in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place.” 26 And they cast lots for them, and the lot fell on Matthias, and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.**

Judas in grief for his actions committed suicide. And Peter understands that his position amongst the Apostles must be filled. There is a significance to there being 12 Apostles that mirror the 12 tribes of Israel.

And Peter looks to scripture, which any good leader should do, to get guidance. Peter is not acting on his own authority, but the authority of God in Scripture.

Guidelines are laid down for who qualifies. And when Matthias and Justis are put forward they cast lots.

This does not mean we need to cast lots to make decisions today. This is the only place we see this happening. The Holy Spirit MUST guide our decisions in the church and in our personal lives.

## Take Away

We can take huge comfort in the fact that our faith is not based on hearsay, rumor, or wishful thinking.

Our faith is based on the historical fact of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, substantiated by hundreds of eyewitnesses in the early church, including the Apostles themselves.

Christianity is not based on an idea or a philosophy, but on a person: the historical person named Jesus Christ, who 2,000 years ago died for our sins and the rose from the dead.

The resurrection is not just some speculative idea, it is an historical fact.

And in the same way, the return of Jesus is a future fact that we can look forward to with faith and assurance.

### **Questions for Further Thought**

1. What, in your opinion, are the main challenges or barriers that keep us from obeying and fulfilling the Great Commission today? What can you do to combat these issues?
2. What does the work of waiting for Jesus' return involve? How do we do this on a daily basis?
3. What evidence could you point to that shows the Spirit's power at work in your life?
4. How can you make your prayer life an instrument toward "going"?