

## Lesson 1 – Waiting in Jerusalem

Text: Acts 1

Main Characters: God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, the apostles, Matthias

Key Passages:

- Acts 1:4-8 – Jesus commanded the apostles to wait in Jerusalem for the coming of the Holy Spirit.
- Acts 1:23-26 – To replace Judas Iscariot, who had killed himself, God selected Matthias as an apostle.

Main Storyline:

The book of Acts describes the Early Church time period (approximately the middle third of the first century) beginning with the ascension of Jesus and ending with the imprisonment of Paul in Rome. During this time, the church is established in Jerusalem and begins to spread throughout the world. The book chiefly follows the works of Peter in the first part and the works of Paul in the latter part. Acts contains only a sampling of the work that was done by the apostles; it does not cover all of the early church history or all of the works of Peter and Paul.

It is almost unanimously agreed that Luke wrote Acts for a variety of reasons. The book is addressed to Theophilus and references a “former account” that was also apparently written to him which described the life of Christ. The book of Luke is also addressed to Theophilus and covers just that subject. The events at the beginning of Acts and the end of Luke also overlap with one another in a way that appears to be purposeful. Acts also contains numerous medical terms that indicate that a physician wrote it; Luke was called “the beloved physician” in Colossians 4:14. There are also certain sections of Acts where the writer joins Paul’s party and includes himself in the narrative by using the pronoun “we” (Acts 16:11-18; 20:5-16; 21:1-18; 27:1-28:16). Based on other passages in the epistles, we can deduce that Luke was the companion of Paul at these times. Finally, many early church historians who lived in the first century and immediately thereafter also credit Luke with the book of Acts.

Before Jesus ascended back to Heaven, he appeared to many disciples in the forty days after his resurrection (ultimately concluding in his ascension). He taught the apostles numerous commandments through the Holy Spirit. Jesus also spoke to the apostles about the kingdom of God, explaining that they needed to wait in Jerusalem until they received the promise of the Father. Jesus told them, “...for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.” When Jesus and the apostles came together immediately before Jesus’ ascension, they asked him if he was about to restore the kingdom to Israel. Jesus explained that it was not for the apostles to know the time when God would fulfill his promises. However, Jesus said, they would receive power when the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they would be witnesses to Jesus in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth. With that said, as the apostles watched, Jesus was taken up to Heaven behind a cloud. While they were still gazing up at the sky, two angels appeared and told them that Jesus would return in the same way as he had gone to Heaven.

The apostles then returned to Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives and stayed in the upper room. They were in prayer continually with many of the other disciples. During that time, Peter stood up with the disciples around him (about 120 people were there). Referencing a few different Psalms, Peter explained that Judas Iscariot, the apostle who had betrayed Jesus and committed suicide, would need to be replaced. He said that one of the men who had witnessed Jesus from the beginning (John’s baptism) to the end (Jesus’ ascension) must become an apostle with them. They proposed two possible men: Joseph (or Barsabas or Justus) and Matthias. They prayed to God, asking that he would reveal who should be chosen. Then they cast lots, and the lot fell on Matthias. From then on, Matthias was considered an apostle with the other eleven.

Lessons/Applications:

- 1.) It is often not for us to know what God’s future plans are (for us or for others); we must wait on him.
- 2.) The prophecies given by the prophets and Psalms would not be ignored; they would all be fulfilled.
- 3.) Before making a particularly difficult or important decision, it is always wise to pray to God for help.