

Acts - Revelation (Part 1)
Selected Scriptures
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I want you to take your Bibles, tonight, and turn with me to the Book of Acts, to the Book of Acts. We have surveyed, so far **in** two messages, the ministry of Jesus in the gospels. But Jesus' work didn't end with His ascension. I think you understand that. Think about it this way. When Jesus ascended, He had approximately, in the land of Israel, 500 committed disciples. We know that because Paul tells us that He appeared to more than 500 at one time as he delineates those who witnessed the resurrected Christ in 1 Corinthians 15. And he says that in the context, I believe, of what we read at the end of the Gospel of Matthew. Jesus told His disciples to gather in Galilee. They assembled there at a mountain. And likely it is at that point, about two weeks after the resurrection, that Jesus gathers with His disciples in Galilee and there were about 500 of them. Apparently, most of them were from Galilee where the bulk of His ministry had occurred and where His ministry was headquartered in Capernaum. What's interesting is if you think about that in comparison, after the ascension you remember, his followers in the Jerusalem area gathered. And do you remember how many of them there were? 120, gathered in the upper room in Jerusalem. They were there to pray, the core of His followers, in Jerusalem. So, that means that after three and a half years, our Lord had about 500 committed disciples in the entire land of Israel and about 120 of them in the area of Jerusalem. So, the question is, how in the world did that small group grow into the massive movement that became the New Testament church and swept across the Roman Empire?

Well, the rest of the story of Jesus is not in the gospels. The rest of the story of Jesus Christ is contained in the fifth and last book of history in the New Testament. The four gospels, of course, are histories. The fifth historical book in the New Testament is the Book of Acts. The rest of the New Testament, with the exception of the Book of Revelation, is simply a collection of apostolic letters. Most of those letters, as we'll see next time, can be filed into the history of the Book of Acts. Just as the prophets of the Old Testament can be filed into **the** historical books of the Old Testament, in the same way **the** letters of the apostles fit into the historical account of the early church. And the historical account of the early church is called the Acts of the Apostles.

Now let me remind you, as we begin, just of a timeline of New Testament history. This is just a sweeping overview, but **we** looked at this with the life of Christ. Christ was likely born in 5 or 6 BC; certainly, had to be before the death of Herod in 4 BC. That means when He began His ministry, about 30 years of age as we looked at it, it would have been about 26 AD, with a summer baptism leading to the end of His ministry, His crucifixion, and His resurrection in the year 30 AD. Now **there's** some disagreement there. Let me just admit that. Some would say it's in 33. Could be. Those are the only two years though that could be possible where **the** Passover was on Friday; only in the year 30 and 33 that fits within the time frame that could work. I have adopted the 30 AD because I think it fits the data better but I just want to admit to you that that's not something, that's not a hill on which to die. Okay? So, 30 AD. Then April was the crucifixion and resurrection; May, the ascension 40 days after the resurrection; and then also in May, Pentecost, 50 days after the Feast of Passover.

Now shortly thereafter, somewhere around 32/33 AD, you have the conversion of Paul and his ministry begins. There are a number of silent years (and at some point, we'll talk about that), but his first missionary journey was in 47-48 AD; the Jerusalem council 49; his second missionary journey, including 18 months in Corinth, from 49-52; his third missionary journey, including almost three years in Ephesus, was from 52 to 57. Then he sails for Jerusalem, you remember - wants to be there for the feast in 57 AD. Then he's in custody on the coast of Israel and Caesarea from 57-59. He's then taken to Rome where he's imprisoned, waiting for his case to be heard by Caesar, from 60 to 62. Those two years end with an innocent verdict and he's released. And then, he's imprisoned again in his second Roman imprisonment 65-67 AD, dies in 67. Since he was a Roman, by the way, he was probably beheaded just outside the city of Rome. And then in 70 AD you have the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus. And sort of the last thing in New Testament history is the Apostle John on the Isle of Patmos getting revelation and that's in the 90s AD. The Apostle John dies shortly thereafter. So, that's a survey, a timeline of New Testament history.

Now, before we walk through and begin to walk through the history of Acts, let me give you a little introduction to the book. By the way, I should warn you that, you know, I have two

messages to cover the rest of the New Testament. Tonight, we're only going to get through Acts 2. So, don't worry about that. It really does fit. And I think you'll see that. But I think you need to see the sort of foundation that's laid here.

Alright. So, let's begin, then, with a little background. We look at the Book of Acts. The author of Acts is Luke, Luke. How do we know that? Well, there's some external evidence we see from the early church fathers. Irenaeus said that Luke was the author of the third gospel and Acts. The earliest list of New Testament books that we have, called the Muratorian fragment from AD 170 says this: "The Acts of all the apostles were written in one volume. Luke compiled, for most excellent Theophilus, what things were done in detail in his presence as he plainly shows by omitting both the death of Peter, the departure Paul from the city when he parted from Spain." Clement of Alexandria writes, "As Luke in the Acts of the Apostles writes..." So, you have this external evidence. Tertullian of Carthage says, "In the selfsame commentary of Luke, the third hour is demonstrated as the hour of prayer" - that's from the early chapters of the Book of Acts. So, they're talking about Luke as the author of this book.

But there's also internal evidence, that is, within the Book of Acts there is evidence that it's Luke. **I'm not** going to give you a lot of detail on this one, but we could walk through a lot here. But there are sections in the Book of Acts called the "we" sections. In other words, there are times when the writer says Paul - "Paul did this", "Paul did that", "Paul did that". Other times the writer says we - "We went here" and "We went there". **I've** given you some of the references there. So, the author of this book was clearly one of Paul's companions on his journeys. All of his traveling companions can be ruled out as a writer of Acts except Luke and Titus. And there's no internal or external evidence for Titus but there is strong evidence for Luke. In addition, Acts is obviously a continuation of the Book of Luke. If you connect Luke 24 and Acts 1, you see that they tie together beautifully. **They** simply...one picks up where the other leaves off. But I think one of the strongest internal evidences is that both of these books, Luke and Acts, are addressed to Theophilus. Notice how Acts 1 begins: "The first account I composed, Theophilus..." He's referring back to an earlier count. Keep your hand there and turn over to Luke 1. He says in verse 3 of Luke 1: "it seemed fitting for me...having investigated everything carefully from the beginning, to write it out for you in consecutive order, most

excellent Theophilus...” So, both of these are written to the same person and it makes perfect sense, since we know that Luke wrote Luke, that he also wrote this as well. The medical language in the **books of** Luke and Acts may confirm that Luke was the writer. Most scholars don’t press this too much, but Luke does show more interest in disease and sicknesses than Mark, for example, **when he** records the same instances. That’s not a strong argument but it is one. Nevertheless, it’s clear that Luke wrote the Book of Acts; he wrote Luke, and he wrote Acts. And he was a traveling companion of the Apostle Paul.

Let me give you just a brief sketch of Luke and who this man was. Luke, in Greek, is *Lukas*, probably an abbreviation of *Lukanus*. And he was a Gentile. We know that because in Colossians 4 Paul contrasts him with those from the circumcision, that is, Jews. He was well-educated **in** Greek culture and language. His hometown was Syrian Antioch. Go up the coast from Israel and you find there, on that side of the Mediterranean, Antioch; that’s his hometown. When did they become connected? Well, we know that Luke joined Paul in Troas, on Paul’s second missionary journey. And then he stayed in Philippi until Paul came through on his third missionary journey. And once reunited, they’re almost inseparable. We know that Luke was a physician by profession. It’s interesting that there were three educational centers in the 1st century, three major educational centers - Athens, Alexandria, and Tarsus. Now there’s no proof for this, but it is possible that Luke and Paul may have met while Luke attended university in Tarsus. He was Paul’s only companion during his second imprisonment according to 2 Timothy 4:11: “Only Luke is with me”, Paul says. And then one little interesting tidbit. A Latin writer says that Luke remained unmarried throughout his life and that he died at the age of 74; can’t be sure of that but that’s one of the early claims.

When was the Book of Acts written? Well, it was written somewhere in the years 60 to 62 AD. How do we know that? Well, the events of the book don’t go beyond 62 AD. **There’s** no hint, for example, of Nero’s persecution or of Paul’s death. There’s no mention of the death of James, the brother of our Lord, which Josephus tells us happened in 62 AD. And it would be strange, wouldn’t it, for him to mention the death of other key leaders in his book but not mention the death of James, the leader of the Jerusalem church, which he doesn’t do. He’s also silent about

the other epistles of Paul and about the further ministry of Paul. So, it was written somewhere around 60 to 62 AD.

The events, however, span from 38 AD and **the** resurrection and ascension of our Lord, through 62 AD. I mentioned to whom it was written - Theophilus. We don't know much about this guy. We know that it was a common Jewish and Gentile name; both were named Theophilus. It means "God lover" or "loved of God". It's likely that he was a Gentile living some distance from the land of Israel because, for example in Acts 1:12, Luke explains something to him that anyone familiar with Palestine would have known. He's called "most excellent" in Luke 1:3. That could just be a term of respect. Listen, from this point forward, if you want to show respect for me just call me "most excellent Tom". Okay? No, just kidding. Don't do that, please! Most likely, however, this meant that he held a high government position; the same expression is used several times later in the Book of Acts for those who were governmental officials. So, likely, Theophilus was that. Also, he was likely already a Christian. Why do we know that? Well, Luke tells us he had already thoroughly been taught about Christ. In fact, in Luke 1:4 **the** Greek word that's used is "catechized": "you have been instructed [catechized in the Christian faith]". So, Theophilus was likely already a Christian, had learned much about the Christian life and experience, but Luke felt it was important for him to know more. It is possible that Theophilus was Luke's patron, that is, the one who financed the research, the investigation, and the writing. A lot of that would have been involved in this. And so, it may be addressed to him because he was the one who made this possible. While it's addressed to Theophilus, there's no doubt that he intended this work to be circulated to other Christians, to us, both Luke and Acts.

Now when you look at the Book of Acts, it can be outlined several ways. First of all, it can be outlined by main characters. You have the ministry of Peter, primarily, from Acts 1 through chapter 12. And then you have the ministry of Paul's starting in chapter 13 and running through the end of the book, in chapter 28. That's one way to outline the book. Another way is by Acts 1:8. This is actually my preferred method; this is what we'll follow. You have the ministry in Jerusalem, 1 to 7, then Judea and Samaria, chapters 8 to 12, and then the remotest part of the earth, in chapters 12 through 28.

There's one other way that people do outline it and that is by a series of progress reports. I'm not going to read all of these verses to you; they'll be on the slide; you can look back later. But, just to give you a couple of examples. Scattered throughout the Book of Acts, there are these progress reports like chapter 2:47: "[they were] praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved." Chapter 6:7: "The word of God [the Lord] kept on spreading; and the number of the disciples continued to increase greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were becoming obedient to the faith." And so forth. So, there are these examples. What's interesting about these progress reports, is they fall approximately 5 years apart. And so, this is one way people look at the Book of Acts and understand its development.

Now why do we have the Book of Acts? What is it here to do? Well, to really understand that, we need to go back to Luke. Go back with me to Luke 1, Luke 1:1-4. In these verses, we find four successive stages in the development **of** the church and, specifically, of the record of Christ and His work. Notice chapter 1 of Luke and verse 1: "Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile an account of the things accomplished among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word, it seemed fitting for me as well, having investigated everything carefully from the beginning, to write it out for you in consecutive order, most excellent Theophilus; so that you may know the exact truth about the things you have been taught."

Now in those verses, I want you to see four successive stages. Stage number one is the historical events themselves. Notice verse 1: "the things accomplished among us". That's the first stage. The second stage is when those historical events were passed down by contemporary, oral, eyewitness accounts. I believe primarily from the apostles. Listen to what Luke says in verse 2: "...they were handed down to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word". That's stage two. So, the events themselves, an oral eyewitness account, handed down. The third stage in Luke's gospel is his own research and investigation. So, he has heard the eyewitness reports, he has been told these things but Luke, being the doctor that he is, decides to investigate it and research it for himself. And he says in verse 3, "...having investigated everything carefully from the beginning..." When did Luke do this for the Book of

Luke? Well, remember, he was with Paul when Paul was imprisoned on the coast of Palestine for two years in Caesarea. And so, it makes perfect sense than most scholars believe that during those two years, he went throughout the land of Israel and interviewed, personally, those who participated in the events of our Lord's life. In fact, I believe that's why we have in Luke's gospel, the fullest account of the birth of Christ. Mary would have still been living. And so, Luke goes **from** Caesarea down to where Mary is living, either Nazareth or wherever she was at that point, before she moved, ultimately, with John, probably to Asia minor. And he had a chance to interview her and to receive the exact information, as he says here, of what happened, what transpired. The final stage in these verses is Luke's writing then. Verse 3 says, "it seemed fitting for me as well...to write it out for you in consecutive order." So, there's the successive stages - the events themselves, the oral eyewitness testimony passed down by the apostles. Luke then researches and investigates it and then he writes it down.

So, what is the stated purpose of Luke? Well, look at verse 4: "so that you may know [here's why I'm writing the Book of Luke, that you may know] the exact truth about the things you have been taught." The way this is expressed in the original language could lead us to paraphrase it like this: *"that you may know with complete certainty that what you have been catechized in, what you have been orally taught, has an impregnable historical foundation. I've researched it carefully, I've interviewed the eyewitnesses, and now I'm going to give you what I have discovered."* That's the purpose of Luke.

So, what then, bouncing off of that, is the purpose of Acts? Well, the implied purpose of Acts is that you may know the exact truth about the things you have been taught because...Go to...go now to Acts 1. Notice how he begins by referencing the Book of Luke: "The first account I composed, Theophilus, about all that Jesus began to do and teach..." So, you have here - he's still teaching Theophilus. He's still working through Theophilus so he can know the exact truth about the things he's been taught. Think about it this way. Thirty-two years have passed since the events recorded in Luke's gospel. Christianity has spread all over the world. How can Theophilus know that what he sees in his community, under the name of Christ, is what Christ intended to happen? And who is Paul? And what is the church? And so, it is to explain to Theophilus the ongoing work of Christ. And that's the second point here - the continuing work

of Christ in the person of the Holy Spirit. Read verse 1 of Acts 1 again. “The first account [Luke’s gospel] I composed, Theophilus, about all that Jesus began to do and teach, until the day when He was taken up...Is anything strike you as odd about that statement? It should. Because he says that Luke’s gospel is what Jesus, what? Began to do and began to teach. What’s the implication of that? That the Book of Acts is what Jesus continued to do and continued to teach through His apostles. What does that remind you of? I mean, that reminds me of what Jesus told the apostles in the upper room. And **it always** surprises me when Jesus says to the apostles, “*It’s to your advantage for me to go away.*” You’ve ever thought about that? You imagine sitting there with the disciples and, you know, they’ve been with Jesus for three and a half years, off and on, and most of those years, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. They got to be with Jesus - hear Him teach, see Him work miracles. And Jesus says, “*Listen, it’s going to be better if I leave.*” Now, if I’m one of the apostles, you know, I trust Jesus. But I’m sitting there thinking, how? It’s because Jesus didn’t stop doing what He was doing when He was here. The Book of Acts is what Jesus continued to do and to teach through His apostles. By the way, Jesus has finished teaching through His apostles. He teaches now as faithful shepherds teach the Scripture. He teaches His people and He’s continuing to work even today. Jesus isn’t done with the church. He says, “I will build My church.” That happens here. It happens everywhere. There’s a faithful group of believers.

Now when you look at this book, there are some historical themes obviously in Acts. You have the spread of the gospel. You have the growth of the church - those progress reports we’ve talked about. You have the historical setting in the Book of Acts for Paul and his letters. In fact, the Book of Acts as we’ll see next time, furnishes the background for ten of the epistles. We’ll see how they file into the historical events of the Book of Acts - 1st and 2nd Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Romans, Colossians, Philemon, Ephesians, and Philippians. All fit into the folder that is the Book of Acts.

But there are also some secondary purposes to the Book of Acts - two of them. One of them is apologetic; it’s a defense. Think of the Book of Acts as a kind of defense on several fronts. First of all, it’s a defense against pagan religion. Christianity is true and paganism is false. And you see this in the ministry of Paul in Acts 14, in Acts 17, as he’s on Mars Hill and he says, “*Listen,*

these are not the true gods. There's one true God." So, the Book of Acts becomes an apologetic for Christianity against pagan religion. Secondly, a defense against Judaism. Christianity is the fulfillment, the Book of Acts tells us, of true Judaism. You see this in chapter 7, in Steven's sermon. You remember, you got that long sermon when he's preaching, and afterwards he's stoned. But what's that sermon do? It says, *"Listen, Christ and what He's brought is the fulfillment of all the Old Testament Scriptures."* You see the same thing in Paul's speeches in chapters 21 and following. It's also a defense against political accusations. The Book of Acts makes it clear that Christianity is innocent of any offense against Roman law because, again and again, you see Roman officials saying, *"I didn't find any problem. There's no issue. I don't understand why they brought an accusation against him."* That's an apologetic **in a** culture where Romans are...where Christians are being attacked, it serves as an apologetic to say, *"No, they're not doing anything to unseat the government, to foment rebellion."* And then, finally, it's the defense of Gentile evangelism. You find, in particularly chapters 10 and 11, Christianity is for Gentiles as well as for Jews. You see that with Cornelius **and** Peter's report in chapter 11 in the Book of Acts. And then there's a missionary purpose as well. Not only an apologetic purpose, but a missionary purpose that the gospel would spread across the world.

Now, with all of that background, let's go then to the Book of Acts itself and let's begin to work our way through it. You begin in chapter 1 with essentially an introduction. Think of chapter 1 as a kind of introduction to the book, as preparation for what's going to unfold. You have, first of all, the post resurrection ministry of Jesus Himself in verses 1 to 8. And He begins to build the foundation of the church, which is the apostles, in verses 2-5. Notice verse 2. He says, **I** composed an account "about all that Jesus began to do and teach, [verse 2] until the day when he was taken up to heaven [now watch this], after He had by the Holy Spirit given orders to the apostles whom He had chosen. To these also He presented Himself alive after His suffering, by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a period of forty days and speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God. Gathering them together, He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father promised, 'Which,' He said, **'you [have] heard of from Me;** for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.'" You see in those verses, Jesus is laying the foundation for the church, in the life and ministry of the apostles. That's why Paul calls them, in Ephesians 2, the foundation

of the church, Jesus Himself being the cornerstone. Jesus...look at those verses. Jesus chose them. He proved His resurrection to them. He commissioned them. He taught them. And He promised them the Spirit. He's laying the foundation for the church that you and I now enjoy.

But then He set forth the mission of the church and, specifically, it's the mission of the apostles but it's also our mission, and that is to be witnesses. Notice, first of all, **in** verses 6-8. Notice in verse 6, the disciples' misunderstanding: "So when they had come together, they were asking Him, saying, 'Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?'" Notice their misunderstanding. They thought it was going to be a political kingdom - restore. They thought it was going to be a national kingdom to Israel. They thought it was going to be an immediate reality at this time. But Jesus corrects them and notice His correction. First of all, in verse 7, He acknowledges that there will be a future kingdom for Israel: "He said to them, 'It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority...'" - don't worry when the kingdom is going to be restored to Israel. Jesus is essentially certainly implying, and I believe directly teaching, a future literal kingdom. But He says that's not now. And so, he explains in verse 8 the current manifestation of the kingdom. Verse 8: "but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth." Notice He says the current manifestation of my kingdom is not political and national, it is spiritual. The Holy Spirit is going to come. And it's going to be international - the remotest part of the earth. And it's going to be gradual. It's going to start with 120 in Jerusalem, 500 in the whole land of Israel, and it's going to spread. Like the parable of the leaven in Matthew 13, the kingdom explodes violently into the next cell, and the next cell, and the next cell. And it just spreads. Jesus says that's going to happen.

But notice the mission of the apostles. He says in verse 8, when you have received power and the Holy Spirit is coming up on you, you shall be what? My witnesses, my witnesses. They were to be witnesses of Him in their preaching. You know, a witness is simply someone who has personally seen, heard, and experienced something and tells others. That's what they were called to do. They had seen everything. They had heard everything. And now, they were to be witnesses of Him. And if I had time, I'd take you through a series of references I have in my

notes to show you that that's exactly what they do. In fact, I have to show you a couple. Go over to chapter 2:32. In the sermon on the Day of Pentecost Peter says, "This Jesus God raised up again, to which [what?] we are all witnesses." We saw it! We're witnesses and we're here to witness to that reality. Chapter 3:15. Verse 14 says, "But you disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, but put to death the Prince of life, the one whom God raised from the dead, a fact to which we are [what?] witnesses." We saw it! That's what the apostles were doing. They were with Jesus. They heard everything. They saw the miracles. They saw the crucifixion, from a distance. They saw the resurrection. And they were witnesses. "*Let me tell you what I have seen and heard.*" This was their calling and to do this through their preaching. One more, look at chapter 4:33. It says, "And with great power the apostles were giving testimony [there's their witness] to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and abundant grace was upon them all." This is what Jesus commissioned them to do. We are witnesses in a different sense. We are witnesses of what we have come to know through the Scripture, and of the power of God, **and the** redemption that's in Christ that we have experienced. But they were witnesses at a whole 'nother level. They were witnesses because they really saw, and they really heard. And everywhere they went, they witnessed what they had observed and what they'd heard.

They were also witnesses to Him, not only through their preaching, but through their writings. They're still witnessing. They're still bearing witness. Every time you pick up the New Testament, you are seeing their testimony. And they were eyewitnesses and they're saying, "*Let me tell you what I saw. Let me tell you what we experienced. Let me tell you what Jesus said, what He did, what He accomplished.*" This was their mission. And it has...their witness has blanketed the globe. We're on the other side of the planet, 2000 years removed and they're still witnessing. They're still witnessing.

Now that brings us, then, after **the** establishing the mission of the church, we come to the ascension **in** chapter 1:9-11, the ascension. Now let me ask you a question. You're familiar, of course, with the ascension. Why? Why did Jesus ascend into the sky? What was the point of that? Well, there were a couple of points. Think about it this way. For 40 days after the resurrection, Jesus had come and gone. He had appeared and disappeared. And so, the

ascension made the point that this time He was gone for good. They watched Him ascend into heaven. He wasn't coming back, immediately. The ascension made that point. It also had several related theological messages. Think about this. The fact that Jesus ascended directly into heaven was a testimony to the reality of all that He said about Himself and all that He accomplished. Right? God received Him into heaven. That means you can believe Him. What He said was true. His testimony was valid. His sacrifice was accepted. It was also motivation. **Look at** these verses. Verse 9: "And after He had said these things, He was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud received Him out of their sight." Hard to know for sure, but most scholars believe that was the *shekinah* glory cloud, a manifestation of the glory of God receiving Christ into the presence of the Father. And He went out of their sight. "And as they were gazing intently into the sky while He was going, behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them. They also said, 'Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky?'" I've always thought that was a pretty silly question. Say, well, there went Jesus - that's why I'm looking. But they're making a point. "This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven."

Folks, there's our hope. He was a real human being - is a real human being. God - very God of very God, very man of very man. And He was received into heaven and the angel said, "*He's coming just like that again. Get ready.*" The ascension. They were sent, then, back to wait in the upper room. They were to return the three-quarter miles from the Mount of Olives into the city, into the upper room, and wait. Now those who were waiting in the upper room, those present, were told the 11 apostles were there. We're told certain women were there. We're told that Jesus' mother, Mary, was there. And this is, I love this, Jesus' brothers were there. They're named in Mark 6 - James, Joses, Judas (also known as Jude), and Simon. They were there, four brothers. We know He also had, as I mentioned to you before, we know He had sisters (plural). We're not told how many, but at least two. So, it's a large family, and they're there. What I love about this is John 7:5 tells us that less **than** eight months before this, they were still rejecting Him. But 40 days **after the resurrection**, they're there. What does it say? Just think about this in practical terms. You know my, I've told you before, my father-in-law, who is a theology professor for 50 years, he used to say, "Read the Bible with the sanctified imagination." Think about what it says that Jesus' younger siblings - like siblings, you have siblings, you maybe have

kids that are siblings. His younger siblings accepted His claims to be God and Messiah. What a powerful testimony to the reality of who He was. His younger siblings follow Him as Lord. James, in his epistle, calls Him “Lord”, “Master”.

Now what were they doing in the upper room? Well, verses 14-26 say they were doing two things. They were praying continually. Verse 14 says, “These all with one mind were continually devoting themselves to prayer, along with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.” And they were replacing Judas, verses 15 to 26. Now this is interesting. I mean, you remember the story of Judas, of course. **He** went out and hanged himself, Matthew 27 says. And, apparently, either the rope broke or whatever it was tied to broke, and he fell, perhaps from a distance, it sounds like, onto a steak or a jagged rock or onto something and his body ruptured, according to Acts 1:18. And the priests took Judas’ money and made **the** transaction to buy a field in Judas’ name, for the...they called the Potter’s Field, a place to bury people like this. In light of his death, those gathered in the upper room said we need to replace Judas. There are 11. We need 12. And this was necessary, by the way. The Psalms make it clear that he was to be replaced. So, they are not out of line in doing this (Psalm 69:25, Psalm 109:8). And there were two requirements for his replacement. He had to be a witness of Jesus from His baptism until His ascension, and he had to be a witness of His resurrection. Why? Because they’re witnesses. You can’t have somebody who’s not a witness. So, they had to truly be a witness. And there were two men qualified - Joseph and Mathias. And so, they allowed Christ to choose by lot. They were both qualified. They allowed Christ to choose by casting lots.

That’s really just the preparation for the story of the Book of Acts. Because the Book of Acts, I think, is best outlined around chapter 1:8. Look at it again. “...but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses [watch this] both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea [that’s the area around, that’s the region in which Jerusalem is located] and Samaria [**the** neighboring region], and even to the remotest part of the earth.” That provides an outline for this book. You have Jerusalem, in chapters 2 through 7, and then persecution pushes them out of Jerusalem. And you have in chapters 8 through 12, Judea and

Samaria. And then, beginning with the ministry of Paul in chapter 13 through the end of the book, you have the remotest part of the earth.

Let's just look briefly at the first part: witnesses in Jerusalem. This is chapters 2 through chapter 7. This section covers a period of about two to three years, roughly from the ascension in May of the year 30 AD to the conversion of Saul somewhere in the 32/33 AD timeframe. Pentecost. After the waiting, the praying, waiting for the Spirit to come, Pentecost occurs. Now you understand that Pentecost was simply one of the four feasts that Old Testament Israelites were required to travel annually to Jerusalem to celebrate. And that's what's happening here - Pentecost. And you have the descent of the Spirit. And the descent of the Spirit is accompanied by three phenomena. A noise, like a rushing wind, filled the house. In fact, look at chapter 2: "When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent rushing wind [that's phenomenon number one], and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. And [phenomena...phenomenon number two] there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they [d]rested on each one of them." What's this? Well, notice, it says, "as of fire". It doesn't say they are...they were fire. We're not sure exactly how to understand this, but we know that fire often symbolizes God's presence. Our God is a consuming fire. He appears in fire in the burning bush. There are other examples as well. And tongues is symbolic of speech and communication. You can see how that fits with what's about to happen at Pentecost. And then, there was a third phenomena and that was...phenomenon rather...it was speaking in tongues, speaking in tongues. They spoke in other languages. I'm going to come back to that one in a moment.

But understand that in conjunction with what happened at Pentecost, two events related to the Holy Spirit happened to this group of people at one time, **at this** very moment. Number one: chapter 1:5 says they were baptized with the Spirit. They were baptized with the Spirit. That's what Jesus said would happen - "you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now." And chapter 2:4 says, "And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit..." It happened to them at the same time. But the fact that both happened to them at the same time, to those who are already Christians, that's an anomaly because the New Testament makes it clear that the pattern for us is different. This was unique because the Spirit was coming. The spirit was

manifesting Himself in a special way. But the Spirit is now here. And here's what it looks like for us. The baptism of the Spirit is something that is initiatory, that is, it happens at the moment of salvation. 1 Corinthians 12:13 says, "For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body..." - every believer. It's already happened. And again, like I said this morning, if it's happened to every believer, regardless of how old they are in Christ, it had to happen when? At salvation. It happens once as Peter says in Acts 11:16-17. And it's connected normally, as I said, to salvation. In our case it's connected to salvation. It wasn't in their case because that was a special circumstance but in ours it is. The filling of the Spirit happens after conversion. In fact, Ephesians 5:18 says what? "...be [being] filled with the Spirit [by the Spirit]". I don't have time to really explain all of that but let me just say this. I don't think what Ephesians 5 is teaching is that I need more of the Spirit. If you compare it with the parallel passage in Colossians 3 which says, "Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you", they're absolutely parallel in everything that happens after those verses. But that's the two different...One says be [being] filled with the Spirit the other says let the word of Christ dwell in you richly. So, those are synonymous. So, what Paul is really saying is allow the Spirit to fill you with His word. That's what it means to be filled with the Spirit. It's not some existential mystical experience. It's a life permeated by, dominated by, controlled by the word, of which, the Spirit is the author and illuminator. This is ongoing and it's connected to our sanctification. So, those are two different things. And for us, they happen at different times.

Now let's go back to speaking in tongues, this third phenomenon, speaking in tongues. What is this? Well, first of all, and this is really important to understand, this is the first occurrence of this phenomenon and it sets the pattern for what this is. The rest of the times you see this happening in the New Testament, it's explained by what happens in Acts 2. Now, what are...what is this event? What happened? Well, notice in verse 4, it says, "And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance." "Other tongues" - the Greek word is *glossa*. It's always used of one of two things in the New Testament. It's either that fleshly fleshy instrument in your mouth that's used in the articulation of speech, the physical organ that is the tongue, or it is used of a language that is spoken by ordinary people. That's how this word is used. In fact, it's how it's used here. Look at chapter 2:5. You know, they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, began to speak with other

tongues, with other languages. “Now there were Jews [verse 5] living in Jerusalem, devout men from every nation under heaven. And when this sound occurred, the crowd came together, and were bewildered [watch this] because each one of them was hearing them [the apostles] speak [notice this] in his own language.” Literally, his own dialect. This isn’t **some** heavenly language. This isn’t some language of angels. This is the language they grew up speaking. The miracle was that the Holy Spirit enabled these men (fishermen and other men from Galilee) to speak languages that they didn’t know and had never studied. That’s what the text says. “They were amazed and astonished, saying, ‘Why, are not all these who are speaking Galileans?’” Like these guys, you know, how can they be doing this? They only speak one language up there and they don’t speak that one very well. Verse 9: “Parthians and Medes and Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the districts of Libya around Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes...” Verse 11: “Cretans and Arabs [now watch again] - we hear them in our own tongues speaking of the mighty deeds of God.” This is what was going on at Pentecost. God enabled these people to speak in languages that they had never studied. Why? What was the purpose of this? Well, one of them is simply the fact that these people were from everywhere. They were gathered there, **the** Spirit descended upon **these** 120 people, and God enables them to speak in all of these languages because that’s what they needed to do to be witnesses. That’s how they needed to witness because they didn’t know those languages and those people couldn’t understand them if they didn’t speak their languages. So, it was out of necessity, but it was also, secondly, miraculous confirmation of the apostles’ message. **This is** I think 2 Corinthians 12:12 is so foundational in understanding this. “The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with all perseverance, by signs and wonders and miracles” - confirming the apostle’s message. In fact, this is interesting. In the Book of Acts whenever languages are spoken, whenever they’re speaking in tongues or speaking in languages, two things are true. One, an apostle was always present and, secondly, the Holy Spirit is introduced to a group of people for the first time.

So, why not tongues today? Well, let me just say that, **I** think, I’m not going to put God in a box. Okay? People ask me, “Well, you know, **can** people speak in tongues today?” And my response to that...or speak in languages they’ve never studied, that’s what we’re talking about. Can they do that? Well, if...He’s God! If God wants to give someone the capacity to do that, He can do

it. That's not the question. The question is, is it the norm? Is it what God has prescribed for today in the church? If it happens today, it has to follow the norm. It has to...Act 2 is the pattern. That's what speaking in tongues is. It's what was happening and must have been what was happening in Corinth as well. Now, it was not...it's not the norm. **Why** isn't it the norm? Well, because it was confirmation for the apostolic period; I've already mentioned 2 Corinthians 12. But I want you to turn to Hebrews. Look at Hebrews 2, Hebrews 2. This is a fascinating passage. Because in Hebrews 2, we read this. Verse 2: "For if the word spoken through angels proved unalterable, and every transgression and disobedience received a just penalty, how will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?" Then he describes how we came to learn about this salvation. "After it was at the first spoken through the Lord [okay there's the first link in this chain - it was first spoken through the Lord], it was confirmed to us by those who heard [that's the apostles, those who heard were the apostles], God also testifying with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will." Now what I want you to see here is what the author of Hebrews says about himself. When was Hebrews written? Well, there's almost universal agreement that it had to be written before 70 AD because Hebrews talks about the end of the ceremonial sacrificial system, but it nowhere alludes to the destruction of the temple. And if you were writing a book about the end the sacrificial system and the temple had already been destroyed, you would refer to that. So, it happens before 70 AD. So, before 70 AD, the author of Hebrews says this: The Lord first gave the message of salvation. That message was confirmed to us; he's talking about himself and his readers. That message was confirmed to us by the apostles and the apostles, notice what he says, the apostles had God testify with them by "signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit." What's the implication? He's not doing those things. He's not doing those things. The message was confirmed to him by the apostles doing those things. So, by 70 AD, already, you see that the writer of Hebrews is saying, "*I'm not doing that. That was something the apostles did.*" In addition, you see a decline in this even during the apostolic period. And I don't want to spend a lot of time, here, but it is interesting to me. **In** Acts 2:4, you have tongues within 10 days of the ascension. In Acts 10:46, before the year 44 AD, in Acts 19:6, in the early 50s AD, in 1 Corinthians in the mid 50s AD. Now, if you align...that's the only book - 1 Corinthians is the only book, outside of Acts, that mentions tongues. And it was written in the mid 50s. It was only the fourth inspired letter following Galatians and 1st and 2nd

Thessalonians, that is, inspired letter by Paul. Paul wrote nine other inspired letters after 1 Corinthians - nine more letters to six different churches and he never mentions tongues again. So, even in the inspired documents those miracles, intended to confirm and accompany the apostles and their message, had already begun to die out. And the testimony of church history only confirms that. The bulk of the testimony of the church fathers up through about 300 AD when there was a new rash **of** these experiential things and people began to talk about them, argues that speaking in tongues and other miraculous gifts passed with the apostles.

So, go back to chapter 2 and let's finish up. You have, back in Acts 2, Peter's explanation of what happened, in verses 14-21, his sermon basically. He quotes from Joel 2:28-32 and he talks about the last days. The last days started with the first advent of Christ and will end with the second advent of Christ. He then quotes, in verses 17 and 18, those things that were fulfilled at Pentecost. Notice what he says: "'And it shall be in the last days,' God says, 'That I will pour forth of My Spirit on all mankind...'" And he talks about **the** spirit and **the** miraculous gifts; those things were at the beginning of the last days. And then, in verses 19 and 20, "And I will grant wonders in the sky above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke. The sun will be turned into darkness and the moon into blood, before the great and glorious day of the Lord shall come." This is fulfilled at the Day of the Lord. It is at the end of the last days. So, he says these things are happening just as was prophesied. But then you come to his testimony. And this is really the heart of his message, to his testimony regarding Christ, verses 22-36. He talks about Jesus' life. He says, in verse 22, that God performed miracles and wonders and signs through Him. He talks about Jesus' death in verse 23: **God** delivered Him to death. He talks about Jesus' resurrection in verses 24-32. That's a huge portion of his message. God raised Him up from the dead. And then Jesus' exaltation, in verses 33-36. Verse 33 says, "Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which you both see and hear." What's his conclusion? Verse 36: "Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ - this Jesus whom you crucified." Their response in verse 37 is conviction: "Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, 'Brethren, what shall we do?'" And then Peter gives them the invitation in verse 38. It's a call to repentance: "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus

Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” By the way, this call to repentance is common throughout the Book of Acts. It’s in chapter 3:19, chapter 5:31, chapter 17:30 when Paul at Mars Hill says, “Repent”. It’s a call to repent. This is the Great Commission’s invitation. Luke 24:47: “...repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem.” Of course, verse 40 says Peter had a lot of other things to say. So, this wasn’t all of Peter’s sermon. I take great heart in that; there was more. This is just a short summary of what he said. And then you in chapter 2 with the first Christian church, verses 41 to 47, the first Christian church. In verse 41: “So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls.” The first Christian church began with a redeemed identifiable membership.

Can I just preach a little bit here and say that the concept of officially attaching to a church is a New Testament concept? The process of membership that we have is not an inspired one, but the concept of officially attaching to a church and being part of an identifiable membership is clearly a New Testament concept. In this first Christian church, you also see clear priorities. This is what you should see in any church. First of all, there was instruction. Notice the priorities. It says, “They were continually devoting themselves”, verse 42, to what? To these four things. These were their priorities: instruction (to the apostles’ teaching), to fellowship (*koinonia*, it means partnership, **it means** sharing), to worship at the Lord’s table (the breaking of bread), and prayer (both individually and corporately). This is what the church is to be. This is what your involvement in the church is to be. And then, you end with the first progress report in verse 47: “praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved. The Book of Acts - the rest of the New Testament is the rest of the story. It’s what Jesus continued to do and to teach. And we are part of that story as He continues to build His church even today.

Let’s pray together.

Father we thank You for the church. We thank You for our Lord Jesus Christ who continues to be the Lord of the church, who continues to build His church, who continues, through the witness of His apostles contained on the pages of the New Testament, to teach His people - the

apostles teaching, and prayer, the Lord's table, fellowship together. Father help us individually, if we're in Christ, help us to be committed to the same priorities. Help us to be committed to the church as our Lord Jesus Christ is committed to the church. And Father I pray that You would continue to add to our number, day by day, those whom You are bringing to faith. Father may we be committed to these things. May You be pleased with us individually and corporately. And most of all, may the Son, Your Son, be glorified in and through His church, through this church. We pray in Jesus' name, Amen!

Well, it is our joy, before we sing our closing song tonight, to welcome some new members with us. And so, I'm going to ask them to come down and just kind of stand in front of the stage over here, just down **on** the main floor, just so we can see you. You can face out so people can see who you are. So, let me call your name. As I call you, if you'd come.

Ruben and Julie Cabrera. Ruben and Julie are from Fort Worth. Reuben is Creative Director with Steadfast Creative and Julie is a Registered Nurse at Baylor (Grapevine). They have three children - Jude, Jonah, and Asher. They've been coming about six months. Welcome, you guys!

Matthew Carrington. Matthew is from Fort Worth. He's a 10th grade English teacher with Keller ISD - been coming about 11 months. Welcome!

Daniel Diaz from Farmers Branch. He's a Mechanical Engineer with Lenox - been coming for about nine months. Welcome, Daniel!

Lori Fossick. Lori is from Highland Village, English tutor with the Tutoring Center in Flower Mound and coming for eight months.

John and Rebecca Hacker. John and Rebecca are from Irving. John is an Engineer for Clean Air Consultants and a Missionary with Pioneers. Rebecca is a Mom and Homemaker. They have two children, Sadie and Lucy, and coming for about four months.

Derek and Ashley Hopper. Or I think Ashley is in Cubbies, isn't she, working down there. They're from Keller. Derek is an Army Officer in the Army Acquisition Core and Ashley is a Mom and Homemaker. They have three children - Gloria, Adeline, and Gordon. And coming for a little over a year. Welcome!

Steven and Vicki Kellogg. They're from Prosper. Stephen's a retired Geophysicist and Vicki is a Homemaker and coming for two months. Welcome!

Rachael Montie (**spelling**). Welcome Rachael! Been coming...she's from Fort Worth, a graduate student at TCU, been coming for about four months. And **I** have a connection to the Montie family. I actually went to school with...it's your Grandfather, right? You sure? Okay 'cause **I**'m not sure, but maybe. Alright! But anyway. Welcome!

Kimn and Terri Nierman. They're from Fort Worth. And Kim is in Sales. Terry is a Homemaker and coming for seven months. Welcome!

Tom and Jill Prohaska from Dallas. Did I do okay with that pronunciation by the way? Okay. They're from Dallas. Tom is a General Contractor with Resurrection Roofing and Restoration. Jill is a graduate student at Dallas Theological Seminary and coming for four months. Welcome!

David and Bethany Rinn. David and Bethany are from Fort Worth. David is self-employed as a Residential Remodeler. Bethany is a Homemaker. They have three children - Isaac, Emma, and Josiah. They've been coming for 10 months.

Katelyn Rhodes. Katelyn is from Haltom City. She is a Professional Ballet Dancer with the Texas Ballet. My family actually got to see her in The Nutcracker, down at Bass Hall. Beautifully done! Welcome! Been coming for 18 years with her family.

Let's welcome these folks together, shall we? Well, we do welcome you and thank you so much for going through the process to do exactly what we're talking about, to officially connect with us. Our prayer is that we would be a blessing to you, and we know that the Lord will use you in

our lives as well. So, we welcome you. Here's what we're going to do. I'm going to pray. And then as soon as I pray, if you'd go grab your belongings and head out this door (the left door there) and there will be someone out there to guide and direct you from there. We're go down to the Fellowship Hall. We'll all join you as soon as the closing song is done. But as soon as I'm done praying, go ahead and grab your things and head on out that door if you would, alright?

So, let's pray together.

Father thank You for this evening. Thank You for these who have joined with us. Lord **it's** You who add to the church both through salvation and by joining those of like mind with us. And we thank You. And we pray that **You would** use this church as You've used it in our lives, the people who make up this church, that You would use them in the lives of these who are joining with us. And, in turn, You would use them, and the gifts You've given them, and what You've taught them **to** sharpen us, to build us up in the faith. Father we thank You that we can serve You together as Christ continues to build His church. We're so grateful. We pray this in Jesus' name, Amen!