

Acts Intro and Chapter I

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[0 : 0 0] Prior to our actually engaging Acts chapter 1, I have some introductory comments regarding the book of Acts in general. And I want to run these by you and offer a time, an opportunity for any questions or comments you may have before we actually engage chapter 1 and verse 1.

So these are some things that I will want you to keep in mind as we move through the Acts of the Apostles. First of all, the book of Acts is a closely attached continuation of the Gospel of Luke, both of which are inspired by God, but written or penned by our physician friend Dr. Luke.

The book of Acts maintains the Jewish emphasis already established in all four of the Gospels.

This is very critical to understanding not only the book of Acts, but all of the New Testament for that matter. And that is, Acts maintains the Jewish emphasis already established in all four of the Gospels.

Consequently, Acts represents the continuing emphasis upon the Mosaic Law as given to Israel.

[1 : 2 6] Acts is the singular book of the New Testament that explains the declining centrality of Israel and the emerging centrality of the body of Christ.

It does so over a period of time encompassing three full decades. This is one of the elements of the book of Acts that often leads to a lot of confusion because as you read the book of Acts, you can read it from chapter 1, verse 1, through chapter 28 in probably 45 minutes, maybe, if you're a slow reader, maybe even faster.

But what you are reading in 45 minutes took 30 years to happen. And that's what really has to be borne in mind. It is a time of a transition involved.

And that's a word that you're going to hear frequently as we move through the Acts because it is very critical. It is the principal transitional book of all of the New Testament.

It is a study of doctrine that is developing, unfolding, changing, if you will.

[2 : 5 5] And it is changing primarily from an emphasis that accompanied the Old Covenant, which was centered in the Mosaic Law and the keeping of the law, transitions from that into the benefits of the New Covenant with an emphasis upon grace.

So the Acts of the Apostles opens very much under a law dispensation and then moves gradually through the years to a grace dispensation.

And, fellas, this is confusing. And this is one of the principal reasons that there is so much confusion and so much disagreement among Christians regarding the nature of the church today and what it's supposed to be.

So many want to take it back to those beginning chapters and say that's supposed to be the pattern for the church. This is what we're supposed to be. Here, like, for instance, in Acts chapter 2.

And nobody does that more sincerely, and I think with good intent, more than our Pentecostal friends. In fact, the denomination of the Pentecostal church is even named after that because they feel very strongly, and I do not doubt their sincerity or their motives at all.

[4 : 16] I just don't agree with them. But they really believe that the church is supposed to be patterned after the church or the organization that surfaces in Acts chapter 2, which, of course, focuses on the day of Pentecost, which is a Jewish feast day.

And they believe that's supposed to be the norm for the church today, and that was the establishing of the norm. And I think we'll be able to see conclusively that that is not the case. They are sincerely mistaken.

Don? Barb, does that indicate in 45 years that it was probably written at least that long after the death of Jesus? Well, it's hard to really establish a date for the composition of the Acts of the Apostles.

All we know is that Luke wrote it, and we know that it incorporates the very early beginnings right after the resurrection. In fact, it even includes the ascension of our Lord there in chapter 1.

And, of course, it incorporates also the conversion of Saul of Tarsus in Acts chapter 9. And this is a chapter that we're going to really spend some time on when we get there because it is so pivotal.

[5 : 30] That's Acts chapter 10. That's the introduction of Cornelius, who is not a Jew, into the community of Israel as it existed at that time, and it caused a big hubbub, particularly among the Jews.

And we'll see that when we get to it. Acts also, and here's a very important point. The book of Acts also reveals the declining influence of Peter, the apostle.

I would even say Peter was the chief apostle. He was the spokesperson for the Twelve. Peter was the key man of the key three that Jesus chose out of his disciples to be his apostles.

This is recorded in Matthew chapter 10. And we would call them the big three, or the inner three. That was Peter, James, and John.

And Peter is so key, so strategic. Peter is the one to whom Christ said, I'll give you the keys to the kingdom. And he did, and Peter used them. And we'll be looking at the significance of that.

[6 : 45] But that's very, very powerful. So, Acts reveals the declining influence of Peter, the apostle, who, with the other eleven that Jesus chose, focused their efforts on Israel, and the emerging influence of Paul, the apostle, chosen by Christ after his ascension to heaven.

Paul's influence and ministry takes center stage in the book of Acts, beginning with his conversion in Acts 9. Well, actually, that's not completely correct, because Peter is still a principal player, up until you get through Acts 10 and his incident with Cornelius, and then 11, and then 12 when Peter is in prison.

But, interestingly enough, fellas, and this is really, really important. After the 12th chapter of the book of Acts, Peter is off the scene.

You hear nothing more about him. And the one who really surfaces and becomes dominant is Paul. And not only following his conversion in chapter 9, and even though it was 15 years after Paul was converted, before he took his first missionary journey, we find that recorded in Acts chapter 13, and then from 13 to 28, it's virtually all focusing upon Paul the apostle.

Well, where's Peter? Well, he's still very much there, but Peter remains very much concerned and involved with the nation of Israel. They are those to whom Christ sent them.

[8 : 28] And that's exactly what he meant in Acts chapter, or in Matthew chapter 10, when he called the 12, he told them, don't go to the Gentiles.

Don't go to the Samaritans. Confine your ministry to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. In other words, go exclusively to Israel. And that's exactly what Peter and the 12 were called to do, and that's what they are going to do.

So, we will see how that follows through. Paul's influence in ministry takes center stage in the book of Acts, shortly after his conversion. And Acts chapter 10 is very critical and pivotal, and it utilizes Peter in the strategic position as being the catalyst who introduces Gentiles in a new way to the person and work of Christ.

And that's what Cornelius is all about in Acts chapter 10, and that is a super important chapter. We will see how that even the Jews then, to whom Peter and the other 11 were called, they didn't understand what was happening.

And Peter didn't understand what was happening. It was very confusing. The sheet let down from heaven, and Peter's reluctance to go to Cornelius because he wasn't a Jew. And Peter says, no, I'm not going there.

[9 : 49] And God did this three times. Let this sheet down from heaven with all manner of these animals in it. And finally, Peter went and he told the household of Cornelius about Jesus and about the crucifixion and about him being the Messiah.

And these people, Cornelius and his household, came to faith in Jesus as the Messiah. And then, when word got out that Peter had done that, Peter's Jewish companions, Peter's Jewish, the establishment in Israel called Peter on the carpet.

And this is all in Acts 10 and 11. And they said, what is this we've been hearing about you? That you went, you went to Gentiles? And Peter said, hey, it's a mystery to me too.

And he told them about this sheet let down from heaven. And God told me to go. And I went. And you know what? When I told them what they were waiting to hear, the Spirit of God came down on them the same way it did on us back in the temple at the beginning.

This is Acts 2 in the day of Pentecost. And Peter said, what was I that I could withstand God? What did you want me to do? Tell God he can't do that?

[11 : 12] God can do whatever he wants to do. He's God. And there's a really, really important verse that follows. We're in Acts 11 now. And it says, and these guys that were haranguing Peter and criticizing him and making him give an explanation for going to Cornelius, the text says, and then when they heard that, they held their peace.

And they said, well then, God has also granted repentance to the Gentiles?

Whoa! Ha! Wow! That's really something! And it was news to them. And I'm sure they had a real difficult time trying to process all that.

That is very, very pivotal. And as you move on through Acts, you see the gospel continuing to be presented to Israel as a nation, and Israel continues to reject it as a nation.

It is true, there were many Jews who did come to faith. And we see 3,000 on the day of Pentecost. And they respond with being baptized by John's baptism.

[12 : 31] And yet, rather than the whole nation coming into line, the nation as a whole continues in a mode of rejection.

And when you move on into Acts, like chapter 5 and 6, you find that the number of 3,000 that became believers on the day of Pentecost increases to about 5,000.

But fellas, that's just a drop in the bucket. Compared to how many there were who needed to embrace the message. And as they continued on there in Jerusalem, they did not meet with a positive response at all.

They met with a negative response. Peter was put in jail. The apostles were called before the Sanhedrin. They were beaten. They were threatened.

They turned him loose again. They warned him not to be preaching or teaching anymore in this man's name. So we see a continual, ongoing mode of rejection on the part of Israel.

[13 : 37] And that will be climaxed with the stoning of Stephen in Acts chapter 7. That's another very, very pivotal passage.

And shortly after that, it is as though God is saying to the nation of Israel, Israel, Israel, is this your final answer regarding Jesus, your Messiah?

And Israel as a nation as much as responded by saying, yes, we will still not have this man to rule over us. And it is as if God takes Israel as a whole nation and lifts them up and moves them over here and sits them down and says, you're sidelined.

I'll deal with you again later. And that's Acts 9 or Romans 9, 10, and 11. Israel is set aside in unbelief until the fullness of the Gentiles comes in.

And that's going to involve the church which is the body of Christ. And Israel is sidelined in their unbelief. And God says, I'm going to do a whole new thing.

[14 : 55] I'm not going to exclude Israel entirely because I am going to take a remnant of Israel who are believing Jews, Jews who have trusted Jesus as the Messiah, and these would be the 3,000 on the day of Pentecost and others, and I'm going to mesh them with Gentiles.

Jews and Gentiles in one body? That will never work. And Paul says, yes, it will. And that's exactly what he's going to preach.

And he's going to say, the middle wall of partition is broken down and God has joined twain, two, into one new man.

Who are the two? The Jew and the Gentile. And he's going to put no distinction between them because in Christ there is no Jew nor Gentile, no male nor female, no bond nor free.

You are all children of God by faith in Jesus Christ. Fabulous concept. And it's all here in the book of Acts. And we're going to see how it develops and unfolds.

[16 : 13] So, any questions about so far? Scott? Yeah, I had a question about Acts 1-10. Okay. I mean, if you're starting there in Acts 1-10, and as they were straining their eyes for another glimpse, suddenly two white-robed men were standing there among them.

And white-robed men, is that synonymous with angel? Because angels had appeared to Mary and Joseph and they state they were angels.

You know, they didn't say white-robed men. Right. And is it possible they were just two men and a white robe? And how would that change if they weren't considered angels? Yeah, well, very frequently when angels appear, they do appear to be human beings.

They are not human beings. They are an entirely different order of created being, but they are able to assume human form. And we find this as far back as Genesis 19, where those who are described as three men come to Abraham when he's there in the plains of Mamre at his tent at noontime, and he sees them as three men, three strangers who are coming, and they are not at all.

One of them, one of them is a Christophany. One of them is a pre-incarnate Christ. Christ, and the others are angels. So there are angels involved with Lot, there are angels involved in other places in the New Testament, in the Gospel of Mark, at the resurrection, when the women come to the garden tomb, it will be those described as men, they look like men, but they are in actuality angels.

[18 : 08] angels apparently assume a human form, and I think that's exactly what we have here, but they are called men because that was their appearance. Anything else before we start?

John? I'm going to jump ahead to chapter 5. Okay. When they grew up all their goods and laid them at the apostles' feet, and everyone had all things in common, the form of communism.

Yeah. Why did that happen? Were they being obedient? Yeah, yeah, absolutely they were being obedient. John says, jump ahead to chapter 5, actually this starts in chapter 2, where they had all things common, and later then in chapter 5, those who have houses and lands sell them, and they bring the money, and they lay it at the apostles' feet.

Why did they do that? They did that out of obedience because they were anticipating the arrival of the kingdom of heaven on earth, and they were simply starting to meet the qualifications for that.

And this is exactly what Christ preached when he was here. The rich young ruler, remember? What must I do to inherit eternal life, and all these things I've kept from my youth up, and Jesus says, well, you go and sell everything you have, and give it to the poor, and come and follow me.

[19 : 36] What? Yeah, liquidate all your possessions, turn it into cash, give it to the poor, and come and follow me. Remember this young man asked, what must I do to inherit eternal life?

That was the answer Jesus gave him. What would you tell someone today if they asked you, would you please tell me, what do I have to do to be saved? How can I come into a right relationship with God?

Are you going to tell them, well, sell everything you have, sell your home, sell your car, turn it into cash, and bring the money here, or give it to the poor?

You know, there are actually some today who really do believe that, and it becomes the backbone of some of the cults that have emerged, where people actually do that.

They join some little group that is headed up by some very persuasive, charismatic personality, and these people actually bring in their car titles, and give them to them, and turn them over to them.

[20 : 48] And that's where the Kool-Aid on the menu comes up. Yeah, exactly, that's where the Kool-Aid on the menu comes up. And you know something, fellas? The really sad thing about it is, they get this from the Bible.

That's what it says. And they can take you right there, chapter and verse. This is what it says. They sold their possessions, and everybody had everything in common.

Why aren't you doing that? And the answer for many of these dear people would simply be, well, you would do that if you had enough faith, if you really believed God, because that's what he said we're supposed to do.

How can you say you love God, and you love the poor, and you love the lost, and you won't do that? And the only reason you won't do it is because you're too greedy and selfish, and you don't have enough faith. Well, what are you going to answer these people?

They've got chapter and verse right there. They can point to it. This is what the text says. This is what we're supposed to be doing. Well, is it? And if it isn't what you're supposed to be doing, why isn't it?

[22 : 02] And that's what we're going to find out in the book of Acts. And you will be amazed at what we discover. This is really critical material.

And this is one of the principal reasons why there is so much division among Christians. It all stems back to how you interpret these passages in the book of Acts.

And of course, someone will say, well, I suppose what you're saying, Marv, is the way you interpret it is the right way. Well, that's up to you to decide.

But what we want to try and do, and we all have our biases. If you think you have no bias, you've got a bigger problem. We all have our biases. We all have a natural tendency to make the scriptures say what we want them to say so they agree with our position.

That's just ingrained in us. That's the way we are. But what we are going to try to do, and you'll have to be the judge as to whether or not we succeed, we are going to try and let the Bible interpret itself.

[23 : 07] Because I learned a long time ago, I, personally, am not competent nor qualified to interpret the word of God.

I've come to that conclusion a long time ago. And what do I mean when I say let the Bible interpret itself? You'll see that. I trust you'll see it repeatedly as we go through the book.

Because when we are looking for light on a passage of scripture, the only dependable light you will get on that passage of scripture is that which comes from another passage of scripture.

And not from the Presbyterians, and not from the Baptists, and not from the Methodists, and not even from the non-denominationalists. Scripture interprets scripture, and it is the only reliable one we have.

So we'll be comparing scripture with scripture and allowing the Bible to address itself. Alright, now the former treatise, verse 1. The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, and that former treatise is the gospel according to Luke.

[24 : 21] Acts is in reality a continuation of Luke. In fact, he even goes back and repeats a little bit of the end of Luke to start the Acts of the Apostles.

Because as you will recall, Luke closes with the ascension of Christ. Acts opens with the ascension of Christ.

So we've got a little bit of an overlap there that will remind us of where we are. And he says, and Theophilus, by the way, we have been unable to conclusively identify.

The name simply means a lover of God. And this man has a Roman name. He was probably a Gentile. and Dr.

Luke is telling him that he is giving him an update on what he had written earlier because as you open the Gospel of Luke, you will see that it is addressed to the same guy, Theophilus.

[25 : 28] And here it is just as if he is writing a follow-up letter to Theophilus. The first one was Luke's Gospel. The follow-up letter is the Acts of the Apostles.

It is that which Jesus began both to do and teach. And began is an important word. It does not contain all that Jesus did and taught because what Luke is saying is, I'm going to give you the rest of what Jesus is doing and teaching to be added to the former account, that is in Luke's Gospel.

Of all that Jesus began to do and teach until the day in which he was taken up, that is his ascension, after that he, through the Holy Ghost, had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen.

And he's going to go on and tell us what those commandments are. So let's read on. to whom also he, Jesus, showed himself alive after his passion.

And the passion is simply a word synonymous with his death. And he showed himself alive by many infallible truths, infallible proofs, or many convincing manifestations.

[26 : 57] And what might those have been? Well, he was seen of them 40 days. It wasn't that Jesus appeared to people for a couple of hours after his resurrection.

This went on for almost six weeks after he was resurrected from the dead. It will be 40 days that he will spend with them after the resurrection here on the earth relating to them, interacting with them.

They will see him on numerous occasions. He will be in a glorified body, which is different. A glorified body is different from the one that went in the tomb because the body that went in the tomb was a dead body.

And the body that came forth from that tomb is a glorified body no longer capable of dying. The corruptible had put on incorruption the mortal had put on immortality.

And he was seen of them for 40 days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God. That was his message when he came.

[28 : 14] That was John the Baptist's message. John came on the scene and announced to Israel, repent. Why? Why should they repent? Because the kingdom of God is at hand.

it's really near. It's right around the corner. And what you need to do as a nation is get ready. Get ready to receive this king because he is going to bring the kingdom of God from heaven to earth with him.

So after the resurrection, Christ continues speaking of the same things that he was speaking of prior to his death. And in verse 4, and being assembled together with them, he commanded them, Jesus commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father.

And that is really, really, really important. What will the promise of the Father be? the promise of the Father will be the fulfillment of what was predicted by the prophet Joel in Acts chapter 2.

That is the explanation of what happens on the day of Pentecost, as we will see when it gets here. Spirit of God came, there was a manifestation, they were speaking in multiple languages that they had not learned.

[29 : 44] What was that all about? That was a fulfillment of the promise that God gave through the prophet Joel that in the last days your old men shall dream dreams, the young men shall see visions, the Spirit of the Lord will be poured out in a dramatic way.

It is, Pentecost is the fulfillment of a promise that God gave to the Jewish nation. It isn't the beginning of a whole new thing as we think of it, usually, the beginning of the church, it is the culmination of something, it is the end of something, it is a promise that God gave to the nation of Israel.

And they are to wait there for that to take place, to wait for the promise of the Father, which, said he, you have heard of me. And remember when the Spirit of God comes and they're speaking in multiple languages, and they had language barriers among them, because these Jews are from all over the Mediterranean world, and the only thing they had in common was their religion.

That's why they were there, because they were Jews, and this was a Jewish speech. But they couldn't communicate with each other, because they couldn't speak the language. And they couldn't figure out what was going on. And somebody said, I know what it is, I know what it is.

These guys are drunk. They're speaking this gibberish. And Peter stood up and said, hey, these men are not drunken, as you suppose, Jews, seeing it is only the third hour of the day.

[31 : 19] It's nine o'clock in the morning, guys. They're not drunk. This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel. Could anything be clear?

Peter says, you want an explanation for this speaking in all of these languages? This is that which was spoken of by the prophet Joel. This is the fulfillment. This is what Joel was talking about.

Now, it would be amazing how much unity could be brought about if people would just recognize that and take it at face value that Peter was right on.

Dead accuracy. That is exactly what was taking place. And yet, so many just do not see that. And then, in verse 5, John truly baptized with water.

And who did he baptize? He baptized Jews. And only Jews. No one else was involved. No one else was intended.

[32 : 21] These were all Jews. Richard, do you have a comment or a question? No. I have a question. Okay. We got two Richards at one table. Hey, how's one table able to handle two Richards at anyone?

Okay, go ahead. Paul. Now, there's verse 3, and there appeared to them tongues as of fire. What are the tongues?

I mean, I tried to visualize what this whole experience is like. You see tongues floating around in the air. I mean, what are the tongues?

What is in there? Well, I hate to put you off, but we'll get there, and we'll give ample explanation of it, but it's on down the road a little bit. Okay? If I go there now, the rest of this study is over.

But it's a very good question, a very legitimate question, and we'll do our best to resolve the difficulty there. So he's establishing a contrast here.

[33 : 20] John truly baptized with water, and everybody recognized that. But, and this is the introduction of a contrast. This but means something is really going to change, and it's going to be a drastic change.

John baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost. I would prefer to render that with the Holy Spirit not many days hence.

And how many days will it be? It will be ten days. Ten days. They are to wait in Jerusalem, until this time comes. And we are told then, when they therefore were come together, they ask of him, that is the apostles ask of Jesus, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?

Notice the word again. Israel had been without a kingdom for a long time. time. How long? How long? About 500 years.

586 B.C. When Nebuchadnezzar came in, destroyed Jerusalem, sacked Israel, carried them off into captivity, and eventually 70 years later they came back, but they never had the reestablishment of the Jewish kingdom, because they were always ruled over somebody else.

[34 : 54] And now, here in Acts, the ones that were ruling over them, the same ones that were ruling over them when Jesus was here for his earthly ministry, it was Rome. Rome.

Israel had not had their own king and kingdom for hundreds of years. But the promise was that would be restored. And the king, the throne of David would be reestablished.

And every Jew was excited about that, because they were the only monotheists, the Romans and all these other pagans around them were polytheists, worshipped many gods, they wanted the throne of David reestablished, they wanted Israel to be the prominent nation it was supposed to be, they wanted all of their enemies to be put away, and they asked a very legitimate question, are you going to do that now?

They thought he was going to do it, before he died. They thought that was what was going to happen when Jesus made his last trip to Jerusalem, they thought he was going to go into the temple and establish the kingdom then, but he didn't.

He went into the temple, and he cleansed it, again, drove out money changers, and those who sold the animals there, but he didn't establish that kingdom, then he was arrested, put on trial, and crucified.

[36 : 19] That's not the way to start a new kingdom. So now they are thinking, now that that is all done, and behind you, are you going to establish the kingdom now?

And I want you to notice, Jesus didn't say, fellas, you completely misunderstand this thing. There isn't going to be any earthly kingdom, it's just a spiritual kingdom.

kingdom. And that's the way many interpret that. But that is not what the scriptures teach. It is going to be a literal, earthly, physical kingdom.

But it has never yet been established. It is a postponed kingdom. The time is coming when it will be.

They thought, maybe this is it now. Are you going to establish that kingdom? Because what that meant was, you take the throne in Israel, you kick Herod off, you send all of the Roman soldiers packing, you cleanse the land of Israel, you reestablish Judaism, and worship of the one true God.

[37 : 30] All of that was involved. That's what they wanted, and that's what they expected. That's what they thought he was going to do. Instead, he answered and said, it is not for you to know the time or the seasons.

And he did not say, there isn't going to be any such kingdom, you've got it all wrong. He didn't say that. He didn't even imply that. He said, it is not for you to know the times or the seasons which the Father hath put in his own power.

But here is the game plan for the immediate. Here's what you are to do. You, you twelve, you shall receive power.

power. And by the way, the word for power there is different for the word power in the phrase that is right before it, which the Father hath put in his own power.

The first power is the Greek word *exousia*. It's the word from which we get the word executive. And it means authority. The authority of Jesus.

[38 : 36] But then he said, but you shall receive power. And the word in the Greek for that power is *dunamis*. *Dunamis*. It's the word from which we get the English word dynamite.

You shall receive a different kind of power. It will be a supernatural power and ability. And this will involve the working of miracles that they will engage in in Pentecost and immediately thereafter.

You shall receive power. After that, the Holy Spirit is come upon you. And you shall be witnesses unto me in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, unto the uttermost part of the earth.

And we'll have to conclude with that and we'll take up the actual ascension in our next session together. Any question or comment as we close?

Yeah. I'm getting confused here over who's doing the speaking. Okay. Is this Paul repeating what he's been taught by Jesus or is this Jesus?

[39 : 49] You mean Luke? Luke. Is Luke repeating? Right. Yes. What he's been taught by. We do not know for sure. Most scholars are of the opinion that Luke the physician who obviously was not on hand at this time.

We, the general consensus is that Luke's chief source of information was the apostle Peter.

I think that's probably a pretty valid assumption. Probably no one was in on so much as what was happening back then as Peter.

Peter. And some feel that Peter was also Mark's source of information and I think that is probably true. We cannot conclusively prove that but I think that's probably the case.

Yes. Joe? In the last verse 8 where it says unto the uttermost parts of the earth. Is that because Jews were still scattered all over and therefore in order to reach them they had to go to the Jews that were still scattered?

[40 : 57] I think that is definitely involved. Definitely involved. And to give you an idea of how scattered the Jews were just read Acts chapter 2 and note all of the geographical locations from which the Jews came when they were there for the feast of Pentecost.

It doesn't mean then go to the Gentiles when we think of that utter bucket. That is generally what is interpreted to mean. But we'll see that when we get to it.

And I think there's a very important distinction to be made there. Really. Okay. Thank you all. I appreciate your presence. And we have got some really good enlightening stuff ahead of us.

You're going to really enjoy this. Enjoy your breakfast too. Thank you.