

Episode: Acts Series No. 1

Narrator: Luke

Primary Scriptures: Acts 1

Story Summary: Jesus is returning, Pentecost, Choosing Matthias

Location: Roman Empire; Tetrarchy of Judea; Jerusalem

Time: 30 AD Death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. Pentecost.

Suggested Memory Scriptures: Acts 1:1-3, 8-9, 11

Acts is a history of the first three decades of the Church. It is the only existing history of the Church that was written in the first century. Although the Bible does not specify it, Church tradition and many scholars agree that Luke wrote both *Luke* and *Acts*.

In *Luke*, the author said he made a careful investigation of everything before writing. His three primary sources of information were: his own experiences, previously existing written sources, and careful listening to the stories of those who were personally involved. This series of stories illustrates what Luke might have heard from more than a dozen of the characters featured in *Acts*. Any reader of the Bible quickly notices it gives few details about most of its characters or events. These stories are true to the Bible, but personalities and personal details are given to its more illustrative characters.

Acts begins with a quick summary of Jesus' last days on Earth. Three extremely important future events are revealed there. The apostles and followers are not to leave Jerusalem but are to wait for the gift of the Holy Spirit, but they are not told how long to wait. They are also told that they will be empowered by the Holy Spirit to evangelize to the ends of the world. Lastly, Jesus tells them he would come back in the same way he ascended.

The followers of Jesus returned to Jerusalem after the ascension. Who were these followers? The apostles and certain people are specified as being among them, but there is not a comprehensive list given. Peter gave an impassioned speech about the betrayal of Jesus, and insisted that Judas be replaced with somebody else qualified to replace him. They chose two men who seemed to qualify, and then cast lots (like casting dice) to choose Matthias. This is the last record we have of early Christians making decisions by casting lots. After that time, they would rely on the Holy Spirit's leading. It is interesting that Matthias and most of the apostles are never mentioned by name again in the New Testament.

Discussion Questions:

1. Where did Luke get his information to write *Acts*?
 2. How did Christianity and Judaism differ from the other religions of the Roman Empire? Did that make it harder or easier to convince people to become Christians?
 3. At the beginning of *Acts*, Jesus reveals that he will return to earth after his ascension. When do you think the early Christians thought he would return? How do you think it affected them when he didn't return in a few decades?
 4. The Bible does not mention most of the apostles by name again after Acts 1. Why do you think that is the case?
 5. Put yourself in the shoes of early Christians: what might you have thought the Holy Spirit arriving would've been like?
 6. The typical modern concept of heaven isn't mentioned in the Old Testament. What do you make of that? Does that change how you think about the ascension of Jesus?
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1. Luke 1:1-4 Luke was a witness, he interviewed witnesses, and he used written materials that were available. 2. The others were interested in obtaining the favor of gods and did not concern themselves with morality. 3. Rev. 3:11 Soon!

Application Questions:

1. The behavior of the early Christians was very much impacted by the belief that Jesus would return at any moment. Does the fact he has not yet returned affect how and when you think he will return? Do you even think he will return? How do your actions reflect your belief on this subject?
2. Matthias was considered as a replacement for Judas because he had been a follower of Jesus from the beginning. If somebody asked you for your qualifications to be considered a follower of Jesus, what would you tell them?
3. After the choosing of Matthias, the early Christians had a strong reliance on the Holy Spirit to guide them in their decisions. What would that look like in your life? How would you know it is the Holy Spirit guiding you instead of something else?

Application Questions for Teens:

1. Read Acts 1:11. What do you think that verse means? Do you feel wise or foolish believing that Jesus will return even though he hasn't done so for more than 2,000 years?
2. Do you have faith that Jesus will return again? How does your answer impact the way you live your daily life? Will you be ready when he returns?
3. Acts 1 talks about the power of the Holy Spirit. What things have you been taught about the power of the Holy Spirit? Are some of those things conflicting? Does your belief in the power of the Holy Spirit guide your daily behavior?