

Acts of the Apostles  
Week 1 Summary  
Acts 1:1–2:47

Acts of the Apostles is volume 2 of Luke's account to Theophilus, carrying on the narrative from his Gospel. This narrates the ongoing ministry of Jesus, now through his church, to bring the same good news to the entire world. As in Luke, it is important to note that God continues to be the central actor in this unfolding drama. This is most clearly seen through the activity of God's Spirit (or the Spirit of Christ) at work in his church. Scholars have noted that this book could also be appropriately named the Acts of the Holy Spirit.

Luke begins this new work by bridging to his earlier work, while also filling in a few details. Namely, he lets us know that Jesus met with his disciples over a period of forty days for a final course on the Kingdom of God. He then pictures the final day in which Jesus gives his disciples final directions. They are to wait for the promised baptism of the Spirit. The disciples continue to focus on the Kingdom and Israel's role (not the wrong question, necessarily). This is not to be their focus however. Rather, they are to focus on being empowered witnesses to Jesus in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

Following these instructions Jesus is taken up into a cloud, leading to the disciples staring intently. This is likely due to the event of the transfiguration when the cloud lifted and Jesus remained with them. This time however, angels appear to give them the necessary information that Jesus has gone but will return in the same manner.

Luke lets us know the setting of these events now by telling us how the disciples return from the Mount of Olivet to Jerusalem. Specifically to the upper room which seems to be the same upper room Jesus celebrated the passover with his disciples. We see Peter has been restored as he once again takes up a leadership position within the twelve (eleven since Judas has died, which Peter recounts). Peter recognizes that the number twelve is important since it represents the twelve tribes of Israel, so Judas would need to be replaced. He also notes that not just anyone can replace him. Only someone who had been present at Jesus baptism by John to the present time when Jesus ascended. It is significant to note that the emphasis was on the resurrection (see Scot McKnight's King Jesus Gospel). Two men are put forward and ultimately it is Matthias who is selected.

Luke fasts forward to the day of Pentecost. The disciples are together, obediently waiting. While the temple can be called a house and the disciples, at some point, are there. It seems more likely they are in a private home when the Spirit falls. The house is filled with the noise of the wind and there are tongues like fire over each of them. This symbolically shows the same Spirit distributed to each of them. Being filled with the Spirit they begin to speak in other languages.

Luke then shifts the perspective. Many Jewish people from the *diaspora* (scattering of Jewish people in other lands) hear the Galilean disciples proclaiming the mighty deeds of God (about Jesus) in each of their home languages. Some are amazed, others mock.

However, Peter stands up to explain what is happening. This isn't inebriation, but the fulfillment of Israel's hope. We are in the last days, the day of the Lord when everyone who calls on the name of the Lord (now Jesus) shall be saved. This pouring out of the Spirit and the accompanying signs point to this reality.

Peter continues to unpack this by preaching the gospel: Jesus lived and did wonders by God's power, he was handed over and crucified (Peter puts this on Israel rather than the Romans),

and has raised him from the dead. Jesus they know, that he did wonders they know, that he was crucified they know. What they do not know is that Jesus was raised by God, so this is what Peter drills down on. This is the role of the disciples (especially the twelve), to bear witness to the resurrection. Peter unpacks a Psalm of David and shows that David is not talking about himself, but about the Messiah. He then attaches the pouring out of the Spirit to the resurrection and ascension. It is this resurrection which establishes him both as Lord and Christ.

Peter's sermon moves the people and they ask how they can align themselves with God. Peter responds that they should repent and be baptized in Jesus Christ's name for the forgiveness of sins. Once this is done they will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. About three thousand respond by receiving baptism that day. Luke then summarizes the activity of the growing discipleship community: they focused on the apostles' teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread, and prayer.

Luke also gives us a picture of the Jesus community which shows they have been incorporated into the 'upside-down' Kingdom of God. They had all things in common, selling property and possessions to meet the needs within the community. They worshiped together and had respect of all people. This led to the growing community.

### *Faithful Presence*

#### "Introduction"

1. Have you felt what Fitch describes: a disconnect between church on Sunday and the rest of life? Have you ever wondered: why bother? Please, describe that experience.
2. Fitch asks a series of questions then lets us know his response to them will be *faithful presence*. He goes on to let us know that there are certain disciplines that will shape us for it. How do you feel about the use of disciplines?
3. How do you respond to the idea of McDonalds and other places/events being the arena of God's presence? How does that mesh with Christendom's claim that the church (building) is God's house? Where are the arena's of God's presence in Regina?
4. He describes grand revolutions starting with a group of Christians entering into God's presence. In light of that and my challenge in week one, where might God be calling you (as a group) to be present?
5. What do you think of James Davison Hunter's proposal?