

Acts Chapter One v. 1-26.

The former account I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, ² until the day in which He was taken up, after He through the Holy Spirit had given commandments to the apostles whom He had chosen, ³ to whom He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.

⁴ And being assembled together with *them*, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, “which,” *He said*, “you have heard from Me; ⁵ for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.” ⁶ Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, “Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” ⁷ And He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority. ⁸ But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

⁹ Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. ¹⁰ And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, ¹¹ who also said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This *same* Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven.”

¹² Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day’s journey. ¹³ And when they had entered, they went up into the upper room where they were staying: Peter, James, John, and Andrew; Philip and Thomas; Bartholomew and Matthew; James *the son* of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot; and Judas *the son* of James. ¹⁴ These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.

¹⁵ And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples (altogether the number of names was about a hundred and twenty), and said, ¹⁶ “Men *and* brethren, this Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke before by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus; ¹⁷ for he was numbered with us and obtained a part in this ministry.”

¹⁸ (Now this man purchased a field with the wages of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst open in the middle and all his entrails gushed out. ¹⁹ And it became known to all those dwelling in Jerusalem; so that field is called in their own language, Akel Dama, that is, Field of Blood.)

²⁰ “For it is written in the Book of Psalms:

‘Let his dwelling place be desolate,

And let no one live in it’;

and,

‘Let another take his office.’

²¹ “Therefore, of these men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, ²² beginning from the baptism of John to that day when He was taken up from us, one of these must become a witness with us of His resurrection.”

²³ And they proposed two: Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias. ²⁴ And they prayed and said, “You, O Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which of these two You have chosen ²⁵ to take part in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place.” ²⁶ And they cast their lots, and the lot fell on Matthias. And he was numbered with the eleven apostles.

Introduction

Last week I gave an introduction to the book of Acts.

However, I would like to add one more thing to this introduction.

This concerns the interpretation and application of the book of Acts.

It is my plan over the series of Acts, not just to teach you the meaning of the text but also to make an **application for today**.

The question we must address here and now is this.

Q. How can we make an application for today, bearing in mind that there is a 2,000 year gap in history, between what happened in Acts and what should happen today in the Church in 2019?

Q. Also how can we apply the text in Acts without manipulating it to suit our own preconceived opinions. We might have the influence of present day culture in our minds.

We might have many years of our Church denominational background.

We might even have been influenced by false teachers over the years without actually realising it?

In other words, there must not be any **private interpretations** because we feel that the teaching of Acts **does not suit our personal views** whatever they might be.

So basically how can we do this?

How will I tackle some of the issues that arise in the book of Acts for our application today?

There are three things we need to understand.

1. The verse from 2 Timothy 3: v. 16 (in N.K.J.)

¹⁶All Scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,

It is clear that the book of Acts is inspired by God.

This means that although human people wrote it down, it was God who told them what to say.

The text goes on to say that the **Bible teaches us what is true** and the teaching from it, **makes us realise what is wrong in our lives**. It **corrects us when we are wrong** and **teaches us to do what is right**. Therefore, when we read and study the book of Acts, **God has something to teach us**, and if needed to **correct our thinking on how to do church at O.I.C. today**.

So this means that if we need to correct something at O.I.C. it is because God wants it corrected or changed and not the Pastor.

2. **There are some things in the book of Acts that are unique and not repeatable.**

The day of Pentecost and all that happened on that day was a one-off experience that will not be repeated. These one-off events will be explained as we go through the book. If you try to apply these one-off events for the Church today, then you are going to get problems. We must understand exactly what is happening concerning these one-off events and how they fit into the whole story of the Bible.

3. **How we interpret narrative passages is very important.** By narrative, I mean the story about what actually happened as recorded by Luke.

Today we will discover in chapter one that there were two choices for choosing a replacement Apostle for Judas. In Acts 1: v. 26 we are told that they cast lots to decide which person to choose.

So should we cast lots to decide the next Pastor of OIC when the time comes?

The answer is clearly NO, because we now have the Holy Spirit to guide us and the word of God also.

Read Acts 2: v. 44-45.

⁴⁴Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, ⁴⁵and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need.

Are we to regard all of our possessions as not ours to use, and just put all of our savings into the OIC bank account and let the Church Council decide whose needs are greater?

The answer is NO!Why?

Turn with me to Acts 5: v. 1-10.

But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession. ²And he kept back *part* of the proceeds, his wife also being aware *of it*, and brought a certain part and laid *it* at the apostles' feet. ³But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back *part* of the price of the land for yourself? ⁴While it remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your own control? Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God."

⁵ Then Ananias, hearing these words, fell down and breathed his last. So great fear came upon all those who heard these things. ⁶ And the young men arose and wrapped him up, carried *him* out, and buried *him*.

⁷ Now it was about three hours later when his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. ⁸ And Peter answered her, "Tell me whether you sold the land for so much?" She said, "Yes, for so much."

⁹ Then Peter said to her, "How is it that you have agreed together to test the Spirit of the Lord? Look, the feet of those who have buried your husband *are* at the door, and they will carry you out." ¹⁰ Then immediately she fell down at his feet and breathed her last. And the young men came in and found her dead, and carrying *her* out, buried *her* by her husband.

Look carefully at v. 4. It is clear that there was no obligation for the person to sell his property. He decided to do this himself.

It is up to us to decide how sacrificial we might like to be with our money.

The issue in the text is about the **seriousness of lying to the Apostles about what they did.**

Finally, there is the conversion of Saul of Tarsus in Acts Chapter 9.

Saul saw a bright light from Heaven and Jesus spoke to Him personally.

Does this mean that we should all become Christians in this way?

The answer is NO!

Why? Because everybody is unique and the Holy Spirit speaks to our heart today through God's word as it is preached or taught or read.

There are obviously principles that are useful in the way that Saul was converted.

However, making Saul's conversion a template for all conversions would be wrong.

So we see that there are **ways of understanding the Bible and applying it to our lives that are correct, and there are ways that are not correct.**

So therefore, there is no such thing as your interpretation, and my interpretation.

There is only God's word, and God's application, based upon the true reading and understanding of the text in the context of the situation that is taught by the writer, under the inspiration of God Himself.

We can now enter the text in Acts Chapter One for our study today.

In Chapter one of Acts, Luke highlights four important events for our attention and application.

1. The Commission of Jesus to His disciples – Acts 1: v. 6-8.
2. The Ascension of Jesus into Heaven. – v. 9-12.
3. The perseverance in prayer, waiting for the Holy Spirit to come. v. 13-14.
4. The replacement of Judas with Matthias as the twelfth apostle. V. 21-26.

1. The Commission of Jesus to His disciples. – Acts 1: v. 6-8.

It appears that Jesus's two main topics of conversation between His resurrection and his ascension were the Kingdom of God and the Holy Spirit of God.

It is also likely that Jesus connected these two topics together.

Therefore, the question that the Apostles asked Jesus was not out of place in the situation.

Let us look at the question first. "Lord will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?"

It was a very good question for the Apostles to ask. If the Holy Spirit of God was about to come soon, then for the Apostles it seemed that God's Kingdom was going to come at the same time.

The mistake that the Apostles made at this time was to not understand both the nature of the kingdom of God and the relationship between the kingdom of God and the Holy Spirit of God.

It appears from the grammar in the original language that the Apostles were expecting a political and territorial kingdom.

In other words, the Apostles were connecting the coming of the Holy Spirit with a restoration of the nation of Israel to its former glory without an occupation of the Roman Empire.

In Jesus's reply in v. 7-8 He corrected the thinking of the Disciples.

Jesus said three things to explain His kingdom.

- a) Firstly, Jesus said that His kingdom was spiritual in its character.
 In the English language a “kingdom” is usually a territorial place which you can locate on a map. (Show map of the United Kingdom)
 However, the Kingdom of God is not a territorial concept.
 It can’t be located on a map like other countries.
 When Jesus replied to the question, He reverted to the **topic of the Holy Spirit.**
 Jesus spoke of the Holy Spirit coming upon them and giving them power to be witnesses. – v. 8.
It is important to note that the promise of power, through the Holy Spirit, was part of Jesus’s reply to the question from the Apostles.
 The power in **God’s Kingdom** is different from the **power in human kingdoms.**
 The reference to the Holy Spirit defines the nature of God’s Kingdom.
 So the kingdom of God, is **God’s rule in people’s hearts and lives**, which is accomplished through the Holy Spirit of God.
 The values of God’s Kingdom are different from the values of the human kingdoms on this earth.
God’s Kingdom is operated from Heaven, through the lives of those who are born again by God’s Holy Spirit.
- b) The Kingdom of God is international in its membership.
 In v. 8 Jesus took the eyes of the Apostles away from focusing just upon Israel, to look a little further. Jesus wanted to educate His disciples to think of **God’s Kingdom as international.**
 Yes, the disciples had to start at Jerusalem, and from there go to Samaria and then **all over the world.**
 Jesus had a concern for the whole world, not just for the Jewish people and the nation of Israel.
 As we study the book of Acts we will see how obedience to Jesus’s commission took His disciples to extend God’s Kingdom all over the known world.
- c) The Kingdom of God is gradual in its expansion.
 Notice how the Apostles’ question tried to fix a time frame for the restoration of Israel.
 The reply that Jesus gave needs investigation.
 Jesus confessed that God had his own time frame when events would happen in the future.
Jesus confessed that only God could decide future events concerning Israel.
 In other words, there are things that are kept secret, and only God knows when and how the future will be played out in History, especially the history of Israel.
 Of course we have indications in the book of Revelation, but they are not 100% clear.
 What was clear to Jesus and to the Disciples was that God’s Spiritual Kingdom was going to expand all over the world, and this would be done by God’s Holy Spirit, working through His people, beginning with the Apostles.

2. The Ascension of Jesus into Heaven. – v. 9-12.

It must have been an amazing sight for the Disciples to watch Jesus ascend into Heaven. This is the second time that Luke records the ascension, but he records it here in more detail. (first record in Luke 24: v. 50-53)
 The added information is where it took place, the Mount of Olives, and that two Angels explained something about it.
 This event marked the end of Jesus’s resurrection appearances.
 He was coming and going in various places, so it was important to mark His final departure from this earth, and where He was going.
What is important is what the two men in white clothing said about this event.
 These two men are obviously Angels. Luke has previously recorded events where Angels have appeared in his gospel. (Lk.1:26,2:9-10, 13-15, 22: v.43)
 When Luke records events involving Angels, these are crucial moments in his story. The Angels announced and attended the birth of Jesus.
 An Angel strengthened Jesus in his trial in the garden of Gethsemane.
 Two Angels proclaimed the resurrection to the women in Luke 24: v.4-7.

The Angels now appear at the Ascension of Jesus to teach us something.

The key issues are what the Angels tell us.

First the Angels told the disciples Not to gaze up into Heaven.

They asked the question "Why do you stand gazing up into Heaven?"

In other words, the Angels were telling the disciples not to dwell on the amazing miracle of the ascension of Jesus into Heaven.

The focus now for the disciples should be to get on with the commission that Jesus gave them.

Jesus told the disciples to wait in Jerusalem until they were Baptized with the Holy Spirit, and then they were to go out and preach about Jesus to the ends of the earth.

The second thing that the Angels said to the Disciples was that this same Jesus would return from Heaven in the same way that He went up to Heaven.

Jesus was taken up in a cloud to Heaven and Jesus would one day return to this earth in a cloud.

Although the ascension of Jesus was a private affair with the Disciples, the return of Jesus to this earth will not be a private affair.

Revelation Chapter 1: v. 7.

⁷ Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen.

3. The Perseverance in prayer, waiting for the Holy Spirit to come – v. 12-14.

We are told that after Jesus ascended into Heaven, the disciples left the Mount of Olives and returned to Jerusalem.

It is only about a 1 kilometre walk from the Mount of Olives to the old city of Jerusalem. I have only done this walk once, but it is a lovely downhill walk, with a small uphill walk into the city gates.

When the disciples returned to Jerusalem they spent the next 10 days praising God in the Temple, and then in the evening they had a prayer meeting in their rented guest house.

Luke 24: v. 50-53.

⁵⁰ And He led them out as far as Bethany, and He lifted up His hands and blessed them. ⁵¹ Now it came to pass, while He blessed them, that He was parted from them and carried up into heaven. ⁵² And they worshiped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, ⁵³ and were continually in the temple praising and blessing God. Amen.

It was a very healthy combination for the disciples to have continuous praise all day and continuous prayer at night.

Luke tells us that the prayers of the disciples had two characteristics.

These two characteristics are united prayer and persevering prayer.

What were the disciples united about in prayer?

The answer is that they were united about believing the words of Jesus.

Jesus told them to wait in Jerusalem for the Holy Spirit to come and empower them for world evangelism.

The disciples and the women, and the rest of the crowd were totally united about the fact that eventually the words of Jesus would come true.

As believers in Jesus, the one thing that should unite us is God's word, especially the words of Jesus. Secondly we notice that their prayers were persevering.

The Greek word that describes this prayer meeting means to be busy or persistent in our activity.

Luke uses the same Greek word later both of the new converts who devoted themselves to the apostles teaching, (Acts. 2: v. 42) and also of the apostles who were determined to give priority to prayer and preaching. (Acts. 6: v.4)

We learn here the necessity of perseverance in prayer, even though Jesus has promised something.

Ephesians 6: v. 10-20.

¹⁰ Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. ¹¹ Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. ¹² For we do not wrestle against

flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual *hosts* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*.¹³ Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.¹⁴ Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness,¹⁵ and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace;¹⁶ above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one.¹⁷ And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God;¹⁸ praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints—¹⁹ and for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel,²⁰ for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.

We notice in Ephesians 6: v.18 that persevering prayer is part of our spiritual armour.

4. **The Replacement of Judas with Matthias as the twelfth disciple. v..15-26.**

Luke allocates quite a lot of space in his writing to the replacement of Judas.

This was the last event before the day of Pentecost.

There are three things to consider here.

We need to consider the need for such an appointment, how the choice was made, and who was chosen.

Peter stood up before 120 people. This included all the disciples. Luke makes a point of telling us the exact number. This is probably because the Jewish Law required a minimum number of 120 people in order to establish a new Jewish Community. It was clear that a new Jewish Community was being established among people who had experienced an appearance of the resurrection of Jesus.

Peter challenged the newly formed Jewish Community to focus upon the scriptures. He referred to **Psalms 69: v.25, and Psalm 109: v. 8** to remind the community about the sin of Judas and the fact that Judas needed to be replaced by somebody else.

Peter laid down the conditions of who could replace Judas.

The man had to be a disciple of Jesus who had been with Jesus all of the time, from the Baptism of Jesus, by John the Baptist right up to the ascension of Jesus.

So the qualification of an Apostle was established by Peter.

Two people were proposed who met the criteria. These were Joseph who was called Barsabas, whose surname was Justus and Matthias.

They all prayed and cried to God for His choice in the replacement.

They cast their lots and the lot fell on Matthias.

Matthias was then appointed as the twelfth disciple.

So here we have the three things that decided the appointment of a new Apostle to replace Judas.

These were: the scriptures, common sense from the group, and prayer to let Jesus decide who it should be.

The place left vacant by Judas had now been filled by Matthias, but the place left vacant by Jesus had not yet been filled.

It would be soon filled by the Holy Spirit.

So we leave Chapter one with 120 people praying at night and worshipping in the Temple by day, waiting for the arrival of the Holy Spirit. So in conclusion, what are the main applications from our study today in Acts Chapter One?

Conclusion and Applications

1. **The ministry of Jesus continuous today through His Church.**

Jesus is the head of Osaka International Church.

(Ephesians 5: v.23.)

²³ For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body.

Jesus will continue to work through O.I.C. if we will acknowledge Him as our leader and those people who He appoints as His under-shepherds.

1 Peter 5: v. 1-4.

The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: ² Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; ³ nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; ⁴ and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.

Whenever Paul planted Churches he always appointed more than one Elder for each Church. Biblically speaking I am the only appointed Elder at O.I.C. Therefore, we do need to be thinking and praying about the possible formation of a new leadership at O.I.C. to include more than one Elder.

As most people don't read books these days, can I ask you to go on to You Tube and type in "**What is Biblical Eldership by Alexander Strauch**".

You will get a 12 minute explanation in English.

This will help you at least get an introduction to the subject of Elders.

I have also sent away for a number of booklets which give a quick overview of Biblical Eldership.

These will be available to purchase from the book cart at a very low price.

2. **The Holy Spirit of God is the person who operates through the Church to accomplish the continuing ministry of Jesus.**

Unless the Holy Spirit is working through us at O.I.C. then the work of Jesus does not continue. It is possible to run a Church, and even get crowds of people, without the Holy Spirit. However, that Church will NOT accomplish God's purposes, which is the saving of precious souls, who are born again through God's Holy Spirit.

Therefore, at O.I.C. we need to be Holy Spirit dependent.

There are two important things we must understand about the Holy Spirit.

Firstly, the Holy Spirit is 100% Holy. Therefore, if we are expecting Him to work through us, then our lives must be controlled by the Holy Spirit.

Repentance for sin and cleansing from sin must feature in our lives.

When we do wrong by God's word, then repentance must follow.

Secondly, the Holy Spirit is never contrary to the Bible, God's word.

The Holy Spirit will never go against what the Bible teaches.

If you are saying something or doing something that the Bible does not support, then this is NOT the work of the Holy Spirit.

Peter in our text based his thinking upon the scriptures to appoint a twelfth Apostle.

We must base our thinking and doing upon the Bible.

This is our only guide.

3. **United and Persevering prayer is essential for us here at O.I.C.**

At O.I.C. we do lots of praising and that is good, and I appreciate all of the gifted musicians. However, we need to get the balance right between Prayer and Praise.

As from Sunday 2nd June, I will be introducing a new "Congregational Prayer Time" into our Sunday worship service.

I hope that will encourage us to be united in prayer, and persevering in prayer, to see God's will fulfilled here at O.I.C.