

CRAWFORD BIBLE COMMENTARY

BIBLE STUDY

Acts Chapter 1 — The Ascension of Jesus and the Choosing of Matthias

A Verse-by-Verse Bible Study from the Crawford Standard Bible

Introduction

Acts Chapter 1 begins where the Gospel of Luke ends.

Jesus has risen from the dead.

For forty days He appears to His disciples, gives them convincing proofs that He is alive, and teaches them about the kingdom of God.

But before the disciples begin their mission, Jesus gives them an important command:

Wait.

They are not to rush immediately into ministry.

They are to remain in Jerusalem until they receive the promised Holy Spirit.

Then Jesus gives them the great outline for the entire book of Acts:

“You will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

That verse becomes the geographical and theological framework of Acts.

The gospel begins in Jerusalem.

It spreads through Judea.

It crosses longstanding barriers into Samaria.

Eventually it moves outward toward the nations.

Acts 1 also records the ascension of Jesus.

The disciples watch as Christ is taken into heaven.

Then two angels give them an extraordinary promise:

This same Jesus will return.

The chapter ends with the disciples praying together and choosing Matthias to replace Judas Iscariot among the Twelve.

Acts 1 therefore stands between two major events:

The resurrection of Christ.

And:

The coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.

The disciples are waiting between promise and fulfillment.

But their waiting is not empty.

They pray.

They remain united.

They study Scripture.

They prepare for what God is about to do.

The central truth of Acts 1 is:

The risen Christ commissions His followers to become Spirit-empowered witnesses while they faithfully wait for His promised return.

I. LUKE CONTINUES THE STORY OF JESUS

Acts 1:1 — “All That Jesus Began to Do and Teach”

“In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and teach.”

Luke begins Acts by referring to his earlier book.

That earlier book is the Gospel of Luke.

Luke and Acts therefore belong together.

The Gospel of Luke records what Jesus:

Began to do and teach.

Acts records how Jesus continued His work through the Holy Spirit and His followers.

Cross References

Luke 1:1

Many people have attempted to write an orderly account of the events that have been fulfilled among us.

Luke 1:3

Therefore, after carefully investigating everything from the beginning, I also decided to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus.

John 20:31

But these things have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life through His name.

Spiritual Principle

Jesus' earthly ministry did not end when He ascended into heaven.

He continued His work through His people by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Key Truth

The church does not invent Christ's mission.

The church continues Christ's mission.

II. JESUS PREPARED HIS APOSTLES

Acts 1:2 — Instructions Through the Holy Spirit

“Until the day He was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles He had chosen.”

Jesus deliberately prepared the apostles.

They were chosen by Him.

They were instructed by Him.

And their ministry would depend upon the Holy Spirit.

Cross References

Luke 24:51

While Jesus was blessing them, He left them and was taken up into heaven.

Mark 16:19

After the Lord Jesus had spoken to them, He was taken up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God.

Luke 6:13

When daylight came, Jesus called His disciples to Him and chose twelve of them, whom He also called apostles.

Spiritual Principle

Those whom Christ sends, Christ first prepares.

The apostles were not sent without instruction.

They had learned directly from Jesus.

Application

Zeal is important.

But zeal without biblical preparation can become dangerous.

Godly ministry should be grounded in:

- Truth.
- Prayer.
- Character.
- Calling.
- Dependence upon the Holy Spirit.

III. JESUS GAVE MANY PROOFS OF HIS RESURRECTION

Acts 1:3 — Forty Days with the Risen Christ

“After His suffering, He presented Himself alive to them with many convincing proofs. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God.”

Christianity rests upon the historical reality of the resurrection.

Luke does not describe the resurrection as a private feeling experienced by the disciples.

He says Jesus:

“Presented Himself alive.”

And He did so:

“With many convincing proofs.”

Cross References

1 Corinthians 15:5

The risen Jesus appeared to Peter, and afterward He appeared to the Twelve.

John 20:27

Then Jesus said to Thomas, “Put your finger here and look at My hands. Reach out your hand and put it into My side. Stop doubting and believe.”

Luke 24:15

While the two disciples were talking and discussing these things together, Jesus Himself came near and began walking with them.

Jesus appeared repeatedly.

He spoke.

He ate.

He taught.

He invited examination of His wounds.

The apostles did not proclaim merely that Jesus' teachings continued.

They proclaimed:

Jesus Himself was alive.

Key Truth

The resurrection is not a minor doctrine of Christianity. It is at the heart of the Christian message.

IV. JESUS TAUGHT ABOUT THE KINGDOM

For forty days Jesus spoke:

“About the kingdom of God.”

The kingdom had been central throughout His ministry.

Even after the resurrection, Jesus continued teaching about God's sovereign rule and redemptive purposes.

Spiritual Principle

The resurrection did not change Jesus' message—it confirmed it.

The King had defeated death.

His kingdom could not be stopped.

V. WAIT FOR THE FATHER'S PROMISE

Acts 1:4 — “Do Not Leave Jerusalem”

“On one occasion, while He was eating with them, He gave this command: ‘Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift My Father promised, which you have heard Me speak about.’”

The disciples had a mission.

But they were not yet to begin it.

Jesus said:

“Wait.”

This is important.

The disciples had:

- Seen the risen Christ.
- Heard His teaching.
- Received His commission.
- Experienced His miracles.

Yet Jesus still said:

Wait for the Holy Spirit.

Cross References

Luke 24:49

Jesus said, “I am sending upon you what My Father promised. Stay in the city until you are clothed with power from heaven.”

John 14:16

Jesus said, “I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper who will remain with you forever.”

John 15:26

“When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father—the Spirit of truth who comes from the Father—He will testify about Me.”

Spiritual Principle

God's work must be done through God's power.

Human enthusiasm could not substitute for the Holy Spirit.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Never run ahead of God's power simply because you understand God's assignment.

VI. BAPTIZED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT

Acts 1:5 — The Promise of Spiritual Power

“For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.”

John's baptism prepared people through repentance.

But something greater was coming.

The disciples would experience the promised ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Cross References

Matthew 3:11

John said, “I baptize you with water as a sign of repentance, but the One coming after me is more powerful than I am. I am not worthy even to carry His sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.”

Mark 1:8

John said, “I have baptized you with water, but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”

John 1:33

John said, “I did not know who He was at first, but the One who sent me to baptize with water told me, ‘The One upon whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is the One who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.’”

The promise points forward directly to Pentecost in Acts 2.

VII. THE DISCIPLES ASK ABOUT ISRAEL'S KINGDOM

Acts 1:6 — “Will You Restore the Kingdom?”

“Then they gathered around Him and asked, ‘Lord, are You going to restore the kingdom to Israel at this time?’”

The disciples still expected the restoration of Israel.

Their question was not merely about personal salvation.

They were thinking about God's kingdom promises.

Cross References

Luke 24:21

The disciples said, “We had hoped that Jesus was the One who was going to redeem Israel. Besides all this, it is now the third day since these things happened.”

Matthew 24:3

As Jesus sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately and asked, “Tell us, when will these things happen? What will be the sign of Your coming and of the completion of the age?”

Isaiah 1:26

I will restore your judges as they were before and your counselors as at the beginning.
Afterward you will be called the City of Righteousness and the Faithful City.

Jesus does not rebuke them for believing that God has a kingdom purpose.

He redirects their attention away from the timetable.

VIII. GOD CONTROLS THE TIMES AND SEASONS

Acts 1:7 — “It Is Not for You to Know”

“He replied, ‘It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by His own authority.’”

The disciples wanted a calendar.

Jesus gave them a commission.

They wanted to know:

When?

Jesus told them what they needed to do:

Witness.

Cross References

Matthew 24:36

But no one knows the exact day or hour—not the angels in heaven, nor the Son in His earthly ministry—but only the Father.

Mark 13:32

No one knows that day or hour—not the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.

1 Thessalonians 5:1

Brothers and sisters, you do not need me to write to you about the times and seasons.

Spiritual Principle

God has not called believers to calculate what He has chosen not to reveal.

Prophecy should produce faithfulness, not endless speculation.

Application

The better question is not:

“Can I determine the date?”

But:

“Am I faithfully serving Christ today?”

IX. THE GREAT COMMISSION OF ACTS

Acts 1:8 — “You Will Be My Witnesses”

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

Acts 1:8 is one of the key verses in the entire book.

It contains:

The Power

The Holy Spirit.

The Purpose

Witnessing for Christ.

The Place

The entire world.

Cross References

Isaiah 49:6

God says, “It is too small a thing for you merely to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back the preserved people of Israel. I will also make you a light to the nations so that My salvation may reach to the ends of the earth.”

Luke 24:48

Jesus said, “You are witnesses of these things.”

Matthew 28:19

Jesus said, “Therefore go and make disciples among all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”

Jerusalem

Their immediate city.

Judea

The surrounding region.

Samaria

A place marked by religious and ethnic tension with the Jews.

Ends of the Earth

The mission would extend to all nations.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

The Holy Spirit gives power not merely for spiritual experience but for spiritual mission.

X. WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A WITNESS?

A witness tells what he knows to be true.

The apostles had seen:

- Jesus' ministry.
- His miracles.
- His crucifixion.
- His resurrection.
- His ascension.

Their message was centered upon Christ.

Spiritual Principle

Christian witnessing is not fundamentally about promoting ourselves. It is about pointing people toward Jesus Christ.

A witness says:

This is who Jesus is.

This is what Jesus has done.

This is why you should believe in Him.

XI. JESUS ASCENDS INTO HEAVEN

Acts 1:9 — Taken Up Before Their Eyes

“After He said this, He was taken up before their eyes, and a cloud hid Him from their sight.”

The ascension was visible.

The disciples watched Jesus leave.

Cross References

Luke 24:51

While Jesus was blessing them, He left them and was taken up into heaven.

2 Kings 2:11

As Elijah and Elisha continued walking and talking, suddenly a chariot of fire with horses of fire appeared and separated them, and Elijah went up into heaven in a whirlwind.

Mark 16:19

After the Lord Jesus had spoken to them, He was taken up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God.

The ascension marked an important transition.

Jesus' earthly ministry had reached its conclusion.

His heavenly ministry continued.

Key Truth

The ascended Christ is not absent in the sense of being inactive.

He reigns.

He intercedes.

He sends the Spirit.

He directs His church.

XII. TWO ANGELS APPEAR

Acts 1:10 — Looking Toward Heaven

“As they were looking intently into the sky as He was going, suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them.”

The disciples remained looking toward heaven.

Then two heavenly messengers appeared.

Cross References

Luke 24:4

While the women stood there puzzled, suddenly two men in bright clothing appeared beside them.

John 20:12

Mary saw two angels dressed in white sitting where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the feet.

Mark 16:5

When the women entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed.

The angels now redirect the disciples' attention.

XIII. THIS SAME JESUS WILL RETURN

Acts 1:11 — The Promise of Christ's Return

“They said, ‘Men of Galilee, why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen Him go into heaven.’”

This is one of the clearest promises concerning the return of Jesus Christ.

Notice the words:

“This same Jesus.”

The Jesus who ascended is the Jesus who will return.

Cross References

Matthew 24:30

Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and the peoples of the earth will mourn when they see the Son of Man coming upon the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

Revelation 1:7

Look! He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, including those who pierced Him. All peoples of the earth will mourn because of Him. Yes, it will certainly happen.

1 Thessalonians 4:16

The Lord Himself will come down from heaven with a commanding shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet call of God. The dead who belong to Christ will rise first.

Spiritual Principle

The ascension guarantees the return.

Jesus went visibly.

Jesus will return visibly.

Jesus went bodily.

Jesus will return personally.

Application

The doctrine of Christ's return should produce:

- Hope.
- Holiness.
- Faithfulness.
- Urgency.
- Expectation.

XIV. THE DISCIPLES RETURN TO JERUSALEM

Acts 1:12 — Obedience After the Ascension

“Then the apostles returned to Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives, a Sabbath day's walk from the city.”

Jesus told them to wait in Jerusalem.

They obeyed.

Cross References

Luke 24:52

The disciples worshiped Jesus and returned to Jerusalem with great joy.

Zechariah 14:4

On that day His feet will stand upon the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem. The mountain will split in two from east to west, forming a great valley.

Luke 19:29

As Jesus approached Bethphage and Bethany near the hill called the Mount of Olives, He sent two of His disciples ahead.

Spiritual Principle

Faith often begins by obeying what Christ has already made clear.

They did not yet know everything that would happen.

But they knew what they were supposed to do next.

XV. THE ELEVEN APOSTLES GATHER

Acts 1:13 — The Upper Room

“When they arrived, they went upstairs to the room where they were staying. Those present were Peter, John, James, Andrew, Philip, Thomas, Bartholomew, Matthew, James son of Alphaeus, Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James.”

The eleven remaining apostles gathered together.

Judas Iscariot was absent.

The list reminds us that the group had suffered loss and betrayal.

Yet the mission continued.

Cross References

Matthew 10:2

These are the names of the twelve apostles: first Simon, who was called Peter, and his brother Andrew; then James son of Zebedee and his brother John.

Luke 22:12

The man will show you a large upstairs room already furnished. Prepare the meal there.

Mark 3:16

These are the twelve Jesus appointed: Simon, whom He named Peter—

Spiritual Principle

God's work can continue even after disappointment, betrayal, and loss.

Judas' failure did not destroy Christ's mission.

XVI. THE CHURCH WAITS IN PRAYER

Acts 1:14 — United and Constant in Prayer

“They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and His brothers.”

This is one of the great pictures of the early church.

Before Pentecost:

They prayed.

Before preaching to thousands:

They prayed.

Before the church spread across the world:

They prayed.

Cross References

John 7:5

At that time even Jesus' own brothers did not believe in Him.

Acts 2:42

The believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, fellowship, breaking bread together, and prayer.

John 19:25

Standing near the cross of Jesus were His mother, His mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene.

A significant transformation had occurred.

Jesus' brothers had once been unbelieving.

Now they were gathered with the disciples in prayer.

Key Truth

The resurrection changed skeptics into worshipers.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Great movements of God are often preceded by ordinary believers gathering faithfully in prayer.

XVII. PETER STANDS AMONG THE BELIEVERS

Acts 1:15 — About 120 Believers

“In those days Peter stood up among the believers—a group numbering about a hundred and twenty—and said,”

Peter now begins functioning publicly among the disciples.

This is significant.

Peter had denied Jesus three times.

Yet Christ had restored him.

Failure had not become the end of Peter's story.

Cross References

Acts 2:14

Then Peter stood up with the eleven apostles, raised his voice, and addressed the crowd.

1 Corinthians 15:6

After that, Jesus appeared to more than five hundred brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom were still alive when Paul wrote, though some had died.

Luke 24:33

The two disciples got up immediately and returned to Jerusalem. There they found the eleven apostles and the others gathered together.

Spiritual Principle

A past failure does not automatically disqualify a repentant and restored servant from future usefulness.

XVIII. SCRIPTURE HAD TO BE FULFILLED

Acts 1:16 — Judas and Prophecy

“Brothers, the Scripture had to be fulfilled which the Holy Spirit spoke long ago through David about Judas, who served as guide for those who arrested Jesus.”

Peter interprets Judas' betrayal in light of Scripture.

Notice his view of the Bible.

He says the Holy Spirit spoke:

“Through David.”

This reflects both divine inspiration and human authorship.

Cross References

Psalms 41:9

Even my close friend whom I trusted, the one who shared my bread, has turned against me.

John 13:18

Jesus said, “I am not speaking about all of you. I know those I have chosen. But this happened so that Scripture would be fulfilled: ‘The one who ate My bread has turned against Me.’”

Luke 22:47

While Jesus was still speaking, a crowd arrived. Judas, one of the Twelve, was leading them. He approached Jesus to kiss Him.

Spiritual Principle

Human evil cannot overthrow God's sovereign purposes.

Judas was responsible for his betrayal.

Yet God was not surprised by it.

XIX. JUDAS HAD SHARED IN THE MINISTRY

Acts 1:17 — One of the Twelve

“He was one of our number and shared in this ministry.”

Judas had been close to Jesus outwardly.

He had traveled with the apostles.

He had heard Christ teach.

He had witnessed miracles.

He had participated in ministry.

Yet outward association did not equal inward faithfulness.

Cross References

Matthew 10:4

Among the twelve was Judas Iscariot, who later betrayed Jesus.

Luke 6:16

The apostles included Judas son of James and Judas Iscariot, who became the betrayer.

John 6:70

Jesus answered them, “Did I not choose you twelve? Yet one of you is a devil.”

Spiritual Warning

Proximity to spiritual things does not guarantee a transformed heart.

A person can attend church.

Know Scripture.

Participate in ministry.

Have religious friends.

And still need genuine saving faith.

XX. THE TRAGIC END OF JUDAS

Acts 1:18 — The Field Connected with His Betrayal

“With the reward he got for his wickedness, Judas bought a field; there he fell headlong, his body burst open, and all his intestines spilled out.”

Luke describes the terrible aftermath of Judas' betrayal.

Matthew records that Judas returned the silver and hanged himself.

Acts describes what happened in connection with the field purchased with the betrayal money.

Cross References

Matthew 27:3

When Judas, who had betrayed Jesus, saw that Jesus had been condemned, he was filled with remorse and returned the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders.

Matthew 27:5

Judas threw the silver coins into the temple, left, and went away and hanged himself.

Matthew 27:7

After discussing the matter, the priests used the money to buy the potter's field as a burial place for foreigners.

Spiritual Warning

Sin often promises reward but eventually produces destruction.

Judas received money.

But he lost far more than he gained.

XXI. THE FIELD OF BLOOD

Acts 1:19 — Akeldama

“Everyone in Jerusalem heard about this, so they called that field in their language Akeldama, that is, Field of Blood.”

The place became associated permanently with Judas' betrayal and death.

Cross References

Matthew 27:8

That is why the field has been called the Field of Blood to this day.

Matthew 27:10

They used the money to buy the potter's field, just as the Lord had commanded through the prophet.

Zechariah 11:13

Then the Lord said to me, “Throw it to the potter—the magnificent price at which they valued me.” So I took the thirty pieces of silver and threw them into the house of the Lord for the potter.

Spiritual Principle

Choices leave consequences.

Judas' decision affected far more than one moment.

XXII. PETER APPEALS TO THE PSALMS

Acts 1:20 — “Let Another Take His Office”

“For,” said Peter, “it is written in the book of Psalms: ‘May his place be deserted; let there be no one to dwell in it,’ and, ‘May another take his place of leadership.’”

Peter draws upon two Psalms.

He believed Judas' vacancy should be filled.

Cross References

Psalms 69:25

May their place become deserted, and may no one remain living in their tents.

Psalms 109:8

May his days be few, and may another person take his position.

John 17:12

Jesus prayed, “While I was with them, I protected them by the power of Your name. None of them was lost except the son of destruction, so that Scripture would be fulfilled.”

Spiritual Principle

The early church made decisions by looking to Scripture.

Prayer mattered.

Circumstances mattered.

But Scripture provided the framework.

XXIII. QUALIFICATIONS FOR JUDAS' REPLACEMENT

Acts 1:21 — Someone Who Had Been with Jesus

“Therefore it is necessary to choose one of the men who have been with us the whole time the Lord Jesus went in and out among us.”

The replacement needed firsthand experience of Jesus' ministry.

Cross References

John 15:27

Jesus said, “You also must testify about Me because you have been with Me from the beginning.”

Acts 10:41

Jesus was not seen by everyone after His resurrection, but by witnesses God had already chosen—by us who ate and drank with Him after He rose from the dead.

Luke 8:1

After this, Jesus traveled from town to town and village to village, preaching and announcing the good news of the kingdom of God. The Twelve were with Him.

The apostolic role involved unique eyewitness testimony.

XXIV. A WITNESS OF THE RESURRECTION

Acts 1:22 — From John's Baptism to the Ascension

“Beginning from John’s baptism to the time when Jesus was taken up from us. For one of these must become a witness with us of His resurrection.”

The central qualification was clear.

The person must be able to testify concerning the resurrection.

Cross References

Acts 10:37

You know what happened throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism John preached.

Acts 10:41

God did not allow the risen Jesus to appear to everyone, but to witnesses He had chosen beforehand—to us who ate and drank with Him after He rose from the dead.

Luke 24:48

Jesus said, “You are witnesses of these things.”

Key Truth

The resurrection stands at the center of apostolic preaching.

The apostles were not primarily witnesses of a philosophy.

They were witnesses of a Person:

The risen Jesus Christ.

XXV. TWO MEN ARE NOMINATED

Acts 1:23 — Joseph and Matthias

“So they nominated two men: Joseph called Barsabbas, also known as Justus, and Matthias.”

Two qualified men were identified.

Both apparently met the requirements Peter described.

Cross References

Proverbs 16:33

People may cast the lot into the lap, but its final decision belongs to the Lord.

1 Chronicles 24:5

The priestly divisions were assigned by lot because leaders from the descendants of Eleazar and Ithamar both served as officials in God's sanctuary.

Acts 6:5

The proposal pleased the whole group, so they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, along with Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas from Antioch.

Spiritual Principle

God often works through responsible human evaluation combined with dependence upon His direction.

XXVI. GOD KNOWS THE HEART

Acts 1:24 — “Show Us Whom You Have Chosen”

“Then they prayed, ‘Lord, You know everyone's heart. Show us which of these two You have chosen.’”

Before making the final decision, they prayed.

Notice what they confessed about God:

“You know everyone's heart.”

Human beings see outward appearance.

God sees motives, desires, character, and inner reality.

Cross References

1 Samuel 16:7

The Lord told Samuel, “Do not judge by his appearance or his height, because I have rejected him. The Lord does not see things the way people see them. People look at outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.”

1 Kings 8:39

Then hear from heaven, Your dwelling place. Forgive and act. Treat each person according to his ways, because You alone know every human heart.

John 2:24

But Jesus did not entrust Himself to them because He knew what was in every person.

Spiritual Principle

Leadership should never be selected merely by appearance, charisma, popularity, or human impression.

Character matters.

God sees what people cannot.

XXVII. THE VACANT APOSTOLIC MINISTRY

Acts 1:25 — Judas Left His Place

“To take over this apostolic ministry, which Judas left to go where he belongs.”

Judas abandoned his calling through betrayal.

The church sought someone to fill the vacant position.

Cross References

John 17:12

Jesus prayed, “While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by Your name. None was lost except the son of destruction, so that Scripture would be fulfilled.”

Matthew 27:5

Judas threw the silver into the temple, went away, and hanged himself.

Psalms 109:8

May his days be few, and may another take his position.

Spiritual Warning

Privilege does not eliminate personal responsibility.

Judas had enormous opportunity.

But opportunity without faithfulness becomes wasted privilege.

XXVIII. MATTHIAS IS CHOSEN

Acts 1:26 — Added to the Eleven

“Then they cast lots, and the lot fell to Matthias; so he was added to the eleven apostles.”

The final lot fell to Matthias.

Casting lots had Old Testament precedent as a means of seeking a decision under God's providence.

Cross References

Proverbs 16:33

The lot may be cast into the lap, but every decision ultimately comes under the Lord's sovereign direction.

Leviticus 16:8

Aaron must cast lots for the two goats, one lot for the Lord and the other for the scapegoat.

Jonah 1:7

The sailors said to one another, “Come, let us cast lots to discover who is responsible for this trouble.” They cast lots, and the lot identified Jonah.

Important Observation

After the coming of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2, casting lots does not become the normal pattern for church decision-making.

The New Testament increasingly emphasizes:

- Prayer.
- Scripture.
- Wisdom.
- Spiritual qualification.
- Guidance by the Holy Spirit.

Key Truth

The church must seek God's direction rather than merely trusting human preference.

XXIX. SEVEN GREAT LESSONS FROM ACTS 1

1. The Resurrection Is Foundational

Jesus gave:

“Many convincing proofs.”

Christian faith rests upon the risen Christ.

Principle:

Without the resurrection, there is no Christian gospel.

2. God's Work Requires God's Power

The disciples were told to wait for the Holy Spirit.

Principle:

Ministry attempted without dependence upon God becomes human activity rather than spiritual power.

3. Christians Are Called to Be Witnesses

Jesus said:

“You will be My witnesses.”

Principle:

Every believer has a responsibility to point others toward Christ.

4. The Mission Is Global

Jerusalem was only the beginning.

The gospel was destined for:

The ends of the earth.

Principle:

The church cannot become satisfied with reaching only people who are familiar, nearby, or culturally similar.

5. Jesus Will Return

The angels said:

“This same Jesus... will come back.”

Principle:

Christian hope is centered upon the personal return of Jesus Christ.

6. Prayer Prepares God's People

Before Pentecost, the disciples prayed together.

Principle:

Waiting upon God should produce prayer, not passivity.

7. God Uses Faithful People to Continue His Mission

Judas failed.

Matthias was chosen.

The mission continued.

Principle:

Individual servants may fail, but Christ's mission will not fail.

XXX. THE GREAT OUTLINE OF ACTS

Acts 1:8 provides a natural outline for the entire book.

Jerusalem

Acts 1–7 largely focuses upon the witness in Jerusalem.

Judea and Samaria

Acts 8–12 shows the gospel spreading beyond Jerusalem.

The Ends of the Earth

Acts 13–28 records the expanding mission, especially through Paul's missionary work.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

The gospel is always moving outward.

It crosses:

- Geographic boundaries.
- Ethnic boundaries.
- Cultural boundaries.
- Social boundaries.

Because Jesus Christ is Lord of all.

XXXI. WAITING DOES NOT MEAN DOING NOTHING

The disciples were told:

“Wait.”

But notice what they did while waiting.

They obeyed.

They gathered.

They prayed.

They studied Scripture.

They addressed leadership needs.

They prepared.

Spiritual Principle

Biblical waiting is active dependence upon God.

Waiting does not mean:

“God is doing nothing, so I will do nothing.”

It means:

“I will remain faithful while God prepares what comes next.”

XXXII. THE EARLY CHURCH WAS UNITED IN PRAYER

Acts 1:14 says:

“They all joined together constantly in prayer.”

Unity preceded Pentecost.

Prayer preceded Pentecost.

Dependence preceded Pentecost.

Application

Churches often search for:

- Better programs.
- Better marketing.
- Better technology.
- Better methods.
- Better organization.

Those things can have value.

But Acts begins somewhere deeper:

Prayer.

Principle:

A praying church recognizes that spiritual results ultimately require spiritual power.

XXXIII. WHAT ACTS 1 TEACHES ABOUT THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Holy Spirit is not presented merely as a spiritual influence.

He is central to the mission Christ gives His church.

The Spirit Was Promised by the Father

Jesus called Him:

“The gift My Father promised.”

The Spirit Gives Power

“You will receive power.”

The Spirit Empowers Witness

The purpose of that power is connected directly with proclaiming Christ.

The Spirit Continues Christ's Work

Acts demonstrates Christ working through Spirit-empowered believers.

Key Truth

The book of Acts cannot be properly understood apart from the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

XXXIV. WHAT ACTS 1 TEACHES ABOUT JESUS

Acts 1 presents Jesus as:

The Risen Lord

He proved Himself alive.

The Teacher

He taught about God's kingdom.

The Promise-Giver

He promised the Holy Spirit.

The Commissioner

He sent His followers into the world.

The Ascended Lord

He returned to heaven.

The Coming King

He will return.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

The Jesus who died is alive, the Jesus who rose reigns, and the Jesus who ascended will return.

XXXV. QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FOR PERSONAL STUDY

Question 1

What does Luke mean when he says Jesus “began to do and teach” in his former book?

Luke is referring to the Gospel of Luke.

The word “**began**” suggests that Jesus' earthly ministry recorded in the Gospel was only the beginning of His continuing work.

Acts records how Christ continued His mission through the Holy Spirit working in His followers.

Question 2

What evidence did Jesus give that He had truly risen from the dead?

Acts 1:3 says Jesus appeared alive with many convincing proofs over forty days.

The Gospel accounts describe Him:

- Appearing repeatedly.
- Speaking with disciples.
- Eating with them.
- Showing His wounds.
- Allowing Thomas to examine the evidence.
- Teaching them.

The resurrection was presented as an objective event, not merely a spiritual feeling.

Question 3

Why did Jesus command the disciples to wait in Jerusalem?

Because they needed the promised Holy Spirit.

Knowledge alone was not enough.

Experience alone was not enough.

Human courage alone was not enough.

They needed God's power for God's mission.

Question 4

What does Acts 1:8 teach about the purpose of the Holy Spirit's power?

The Spirit empowers believers to witness about Jesus Christ.

Spiritual power is therefore not given merely for personal experience.

It is connected to mission.

Key Phrase:

“You will be My witnesses.”

Question 5

What do Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the ends of the earth represent?

They describe the expanding geographical movement of the gospel.

Jerusalem was the immediate location.

Judea represented the surrounding Jewish region.

Samaria represented a culturally and religiously divided neighboring region.

The ends of the earth represented the nations.

This becomes the basic outline of Acts.

Question 6

What does the ascension teach us about Jesus?

The ascension shows that Jesus' earthly ministry reached a new stage.

He returned to heaven and was exalted.

The New Testament teaches that He reigns at God's right hand and continues His work as Lord.

The ascension also prepares for the sending of the Holy Spirit.

Question 7

Will Jesus literally return?

Acts 1:11 presents His return as a real future event.

The angels said:

“This same Jesus... will come back in the same way you have seen Him go.”

The disciples saw Him ascend.

Scripture teaches that He will return personally and visibly.

Question 8

What did the disciples do while waiting for Pentecost?

They:

- Obeyed Jesus.
- Returned to Jerusalem.
- Gathered together.
- Continued in prayer.
- Studied Scripture.
- Addressed the vacancy left by Judas.
- Prepared themselves for what God would do.

This demonstrates active waiting.

Question 9

What does Judas teach us about outward association with Christianity?

Judas lived close to Jesus outwardly but betrayed Him.

This warns us that external association with spiritual things does not automatically equal genuine faith.

A person can participate in religious activity without possessing a transformed heart.

Question 10

Why was the resurrection so important in selecting Judas' replacement?

The replacement needed to become:

“A witness with us of His resurrection.”

The apostles' central message was that Jesus Christ had risen from the dead.

Their authority as foundational witnesses was tied closely to firsthand testimony concerning Christ.

Question 11

What does Acts 1:24 teach about leadership selection?

The disciples prayed:

“Lord, You know everyone's heart.”

This teaches that spiritual leadership should not be chosen merely by outward qualities.

Character matters.

God sees what human beings cannot see.

Question 12

What should Acts 1 change about the way Christians live today?

Acts 1 should cause believers to live:

- Dependent upon the Holy Spirit.
- Committed to prayer.
- Focused upon witnessing.
- Confident in Christ's resurrection.
- Expectant concerning Christ's return.
- Faithful while waiting.
- Concerned about taking the gospel outward.

XXXVI. PERSONAL APPLICATION

Acts 1 asks several important questions.

Do I Really Believe Jesus Is Alive?

The early church was built upon that conviction.

Am I Trying to Serve God in My Own Strength?

Jesus told the disciples to wait for divine power.

Am I Being a Witness?

Who in my life hears about Christ because I am there?

What Is My Jerusalem?

Who is immediately around me?

What Is My Judea?

Where can my witness expand?

What Is My Samaria?

Who do I find difficult, unfamiliar, or culturally different?

Am I Living as Though Jesus Could Return?

Christ's return should influence present faithfulness.

Is Prayer Central to My Life?

The early church waited prayerfully.

Am I Faithful While Waiting?

Waiting seasons are preparation seasons.

XXXVII. A CRAWFORD BIBLE STUDY PRINCIPLE

“Do Not Stare at Heaven When Christ Has Given You a Mission on Earth”

The disciples watched Jesus ascend.

They continued staring toward heaven.

Then the angels asked:

“Why do you stand here looking into the sky?”

Jesus had already told them what to do.

Wait for the Holy Spirit.

Then become witnesses.

This creates a powerful principle.

Christians should look forward to Christ's return.

But expectation must never become inactivity.

We are not called merely to watch the sky.

We are called to work until He returns.

Principle:

The proper response to the promise of Christ's return is faithful mission, not passive speculation.

XXXVIII. FINAL APPLICATION

Acts Chapter 1 stands at the doorway of one of the greatest movements in history.

Jesus is risen.

The disciples know He is alive.

They have received their mission.

But before the church explodes outward across the Roman world, there is a quiet room in Jerusalem.

A relatively small group of believers is praying.

They do not yet know everything that is about to happen.

Peter has not yet preached his Pentecost sermon.

Three thousand people have not yet believed.

Stephen has not yet given his testimony.

Philip has not yet preached in Samaria.

Saul has not yet become Paul.

The missionary journeys have not yet begun.

The gospel has not yet reached Rome.

But everything is ready.

Jesus has given the promise.

The mission has been defined.

The disciples are praying.

And the Holy Spirit is coming.

Acts 1 therefore reminds us:

Never despise the preparation stage of God's work.

Before public power came private prayer.

Before worldwide mission came faithful waiting.

Before thousands believed, a small group obeyed.

The church did not begin with impressive buildings.

It began with:

A risen Savior.

A promised Spirit.

A praying people.

And a worldwide mission.

The same mission still stands:

Be witnesses of Jesus Christ.

Tell people that He died.

Tell people that He rose.

Tell people that forgiveness is available through Him.

Tell people that He reigns.

Tell people that He is coming again.

And until He returns:

Keep witnessing.

Keep praying.

Keep obeying.

Keep going.

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father,

Thank You for raising Jesus Christ from the dead.

Thank You that our faith rests upon a living Savior.

Thank You for the convincing testimony of those who saw Him alive after His resurrection.

Teach us to depend completely upon Your Holy Spirit.

Keep us from attempting spiritual work through human strength alone.

Give us power to become faithful witnesses of Jesus Christ.

Help us begin where You have placed us.

Give us courage to witness in our Jerusalem.

Lead us beyond what is familiar into our Judea and Samaria.

Give us a heart for people throughout the world.

Thank You that Jesus ascended into heaven and reigns as Lord.

Thank You for the promise that this same Jesus will return.

Help us live every day in expectation of His coming.

Keep us from becoming obsessed with dates and speculation while neglecting the mission You have already given us.

Make us a praying people.

Teach churches to depend upon You rather than merely depending upon programs, personalities, methods, or human ability.

When we experience seasons of waiting, help us remain faithful.

Teach us to pray.

Teach us to obey.

Teach us to prepare.

And when You open the door, give us courage to move.

Protect spiritual leaders from the tragedy of Judas.

Give us hearts that are genuine, faithful, humble, and obedient.

Raise up men and women who will carry the gospel faithfully into the world.

May everything we do point people toward Jesus Christ.

Until the day He returns, let us faithfully fulfill His command:

“You will be My witnesses.”

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Key Verse

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” — Acts 1:8

Central Truth

The risen and ascended Jesus Christ gives His followers the Holy Spirit's power to become His witnesses throughout the world while they faithfully await His promised return.

Acts 1 in One Sentence

The risen Jesus prepares His disciples for worldwide mission by promising the Holy Spirit, commissioning them as His witnesses, ascending into heaven with the promise of His return, and leading the praying church to prepare for the work ahead.

