

Acts 1 - John Karmelich

1. For those of you who are new to these studies I like to teach the bible at a pace that's usually a chapter-at-a-time. This lesson is the first of many on the Book of Acts.
 - a) It is typically 10 pages of text, which includes the Bible text of the week.
 - i) Sometimes I get carried away and it goes a little longer.
 - ii) I ask that you fire up a quick prayer for spiritual understanding before you read further, and with that said, I hope you enjoy the lesson.
 - b) If you are new, I also e-mail lessons once a week, with breaks at Easter, Thanksgiving the Christmas and I'll do summer reruns. If you're on the list, and don't like it, you can end it at any time as there's cancellation instructions on every broadcast. I promise not to be offended, really!
2. Tonight's lesson is an Introduction to the Book of Acts and Chapter 1.
 - a) The Book of Acts is also referred to, in some Bibles, as "The Acts of the Apostles."
 - b) It is generally thought of as a historical record of what happened to the apostles after the resurrection of Jesus.
 - c) Actually, I'm not that crazy about the title. (Like I have the power to change it! ☺)
 - d) I liked J. Vernon McGee's suggestion for a title for this book:
 - i) "The Lord Jesus Christ at Work by the Holy Spirit through the Apostles."
 - e) Another good quote on the title came from Chuck Missler:
 - i) "It's a book written by one guy, to one guy about another one guy."
 - f) The book pretty much focuses on the ministry of Peter and Paul.
 - i) Other than a few brief mentions, the book ignores the other apostles.
 - ii) The book tells very little/nothing about some of the key churches of that time.
 - a) For example, the church at Jerusalem, the church(es) of Rome, or even Paul's home base, the church of Antioch, are barely mentioned, if it all.
3. For what it's worth my lessons focus on my favorite question, I believe in Jesus now what?
 - a) The focus of this book is on the formation and growth of the early church.
 - i) It is more of a *bridge* between the four gospels and the Epistles.
 - ii) After the Book of Acts, the majority of the remainder of the Bible was written by Paul.
 - a) If it weren't for Acts, we would never know who Paul was and why he was so important to the early church.
 - b) An interesting thing about Acts is that it doesn't really have an ending. It ends with Paul waiting in Rome, waiting for his trial to begin before the high courts of Rome.
 - i) It is written as if it is the first volume of a continuing story and that it is!
 - a) Most commentators love to suggest that the Book of Acts is the first chapter in the work of the church.
 - b) From God's perspective, *we* are the latest chapter in a *continuing* book of the Acts of the Apostles.
 - c) So does this mean that Acts is just a history lesson?
 - i) Well, there is some history, but that's not the main reason to study Acts!
 - ii) The application to you and I is to look at how the apostles lived, worked, prayed, studied, and became witnesses for Jesus Christ.
 - iii) This book is a model for our lives of how we need to live as Christians.
 - iv) Some of the aspects of this book are cultural. We'll deal with those as we read through the book. But the principles of life as a Christian, as they apply to you and I, are found in the Book of Acts.

4. Before I go further, it is important to state that these lessons that I write are not designed to be a complete study of the Book of Acts. No commentary *ever* does full justice to any book of the Bible. What I want to present in these lessons are the highlights, insights, and things that I just find interesting. Plus I love to talk about how it applies to our lives, so watch out for that!
 - a) Each week before I write, I pray, Lord, show me the things you want me to learn, and show me the things you want me to pass on to the readers of these lessons.
 - i) I pray, read the text lots and lots and lots of times, and read a bunch of commentaries. Then off to the keyboard I go.
 - b) With that prayer said, let's dig into the book.
5. Chapter 1, Verse 1: In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach ²until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen. ³After his suffering, he showed himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God.
 - a) First question: What former book is Luke talking about? He wrote the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts. Both were addressed to Theophilus. Not much is said about this guy Theophilus other than the fact the book is addressed to him. There are interesting theories on this guy:
 - i) Theophilus may simply be a person Luke was witnessing to. His name means "Lover of God." Since this book is addressed to him, it is interesting to read it from the perspective of someone who knew little about Jesus other than what is recorded in the Gospel of Luke.
 - ii) Theophilus may have been Luke's slave-owner. Luke was a physician. Many physicians were personal slaves of well-to-do slave-owners. There is a theory that Theophilus was a believer and allowed Luke to travel with Paul. Luke uses the word "we" a lot when we come to the chapters on Paul's travels.
 - iii) There is another theory that the Gospel of Luke and Acts may be the "trial documents" for Paul. At the end of Acts, we have Paul waiting for trial before Caesar (i.e. the supreme court of Rome.) Before any prisoner could speak before the high court, a history of the case has to be presented beforehand.
 - iv) These two books (Luke & Acts) may have been the trial documents! Theophilus may be the person to whom it was directed. In Luke 1:3, Luke calls him "most excellent Theophilus," which is the title of a Roman official.
 - v) All of these are interesting theories, but no one knows for sure.
 - b) It is interesting to see how Luke summarizes his whole gospel in a few sentences.
 - i) There is minimal emphasis on Jesus' miracles.
 - ii) There is no mention of the virgin birth, and no mention of Mary in this chapter.
 - iii) Even the crucifixion is hinted at in Verse 3, but not mentioned.
 - iv) The emphasis is on the resurrection. Arguably, the most important fact associated with Christianity.
 - a) This is important as a witnessing tool. A lot of people can talk about Jesus the philosopher, Jesus the miracle worker, or even the miraculous birth. But non-Christians can't deal with the *resurrected* Jesus.
 - (1) A resurrected Jesus means that Jesus is God. That means they would have to take the Bible seriously.
 - (2) To truly accept means repentance and change of lifestyle.

- c) Notice the end of Verse 3: "He appeared to them over a period of 40 days."
 - i) The Greek language implies that the apostles saw Jesus "eyeball to eyeball" after he was resurrected. It is important to emphasize that.
 - ii) Some mystics will argue that the resurrected Jesus was a vision, that he lacked flesh and blood. If you study the Gospels, every time Jesus appeared post-resurrection, he ate with them. I believe Jesus did that to prove he was still a physical being.
 - iii) Christian theology of the resurrected Jesus is that He is now 100% man and 100% God.
 - a) Sitting at the right hand of God the Father, is Jesus, still in flesh and blood, but having all the powers of God.
 - b) My personal theory is that our resurrected body will exist in more than 3 dimensions and exist outside of time. The world as we know it was created by God. Jesus *entered* our physical universe, and was resurrected *out of it*. This is how Jesus can be everywhere at once.
6. Verse 4: On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. ⁵ For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."
- a) Verse 4 is a re-cap of Luke 24:49. (The Gospel of Luke ends 4 verses later.)
 - i) "I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high." (Luke 24:49 NIV)
 - b) What we are doing here is building up to the key verse of Acts, which is Verse 8. That is the verse that summarizes all of Acts.
 - c) We can only imagine the questions the disciples had of Jesus during those 40 days. I would have tons of them.
 - a) Just how did you get resurrected?
 - b) Why is there evil in the world?
 - c) What is heaven like anyway?
 - ii) Just how much/how little of these questions Jesus answered, we'll never know. We only know that Jesus spoke of the "kingdom of God" to them during the 40 days. What is the kingdom of God?
 - a) If you study Matthew Chapter 12, you'll get the answer. It is predominately about the Christian life *here on earth*.
 - (1) Although it can refer to heaven, Jesus usually uses that term to refer to the church and believers in their/our lifetime.
 - b) Remember that these 11 disciples (12 minus Judas) were to begin the Church. I suspect Jesus ignored some of the philosophical questions and the timetable questions and focused on the role the disciples would have once the Holy Spirit came.
 - (1) That's important for us. Its fun to discuss what heaven is going to be like, or possible "end-time" scenarios, but our primary focus is to be in the *here and now*. That is what God called us to do. Our focus should be on our present, personal or group ministry. (If you don't know *what* your personal ministry is, ask God to show you. He will!)
 - iii) The next verse (Verse 6) gives us a clue as to how Jesus handled all questions not related to the building up of the church (i.e. the "kingdom of God").

- d) Have you ever stopped to realize there is more than one baptism?
 - i) Jesus speaks of John's baptism of water. This is about John the Baptist.
 - a) This is a Jewish ritual traditionally used when non-Jews wanted to convert to Judaism. What was unusual about John's baptism is that Jews themselves were being baptized for the forgiveness of sins.
 - ii) Jesus said the baptism they will receive is of the Holy Spirit.
 - a) This is what Acts Chapter 2 is all about, and we'll cover it there.
 - b) I'm sure, at this point, the disciples were confused and didn't get it.
7. Verse 6: So when they met together, they asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?"
- a) Fair question. God made promises to Israel that one day the Messiah would rule *on earth*. This is the 1,000-year millennial kingdom spoken of in Revelation 20. Jesus will rule forever, but the 1,000-year "thing" is to fulfill a promise that the Messiah will rule from Jerusalem over the world.
 - b) Jesus also made the following promises to the disciples:
 - i) "And I confer on you a kingdom, just as my Father conferred one on me, so that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and *sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel* [emphasis added]." (Luke 22:29-30 NIV)
 - ii) I'm sure the disciples remembered that part! Who wouldn't? If you read the Gospels carefully, the apostles never got the part about the death and resurrection, but they sure battled over *who would be the greatest!*
8. Jesus didn't deny their reward, but simply changed the focus. Verse 7: He (Jesus) said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority."
- a) John's very loose translation: You've got good head knowledge, but your hearts are in the wrong place!
 - i) Do we get rewards for obedience to God? Yes, the Bible is clear on that.
 - ii) God wants our focus on the *here and now*, not on heaven!
 - iii) One of my standard jokes is, if all there is to getting saved is accepting Jesus and that's it, we need to have a guillotine ready. Get saved, die, and go to heaven. Next? That's not what it is about! Becoming a Christian is only the beginning. God wants us to grow, here and now, into maturity. Our focus is on service, not on rewards. This becomes clear in the next verse:
9. Here comes the *key* verse of the Book of Acts (that means pay attention!) Verse 8: But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.
- a) Here's the Book of Acts in a nutshell:
 - i) Chapter 1 is the disciples waiting for the Holy Spirit to come upon them.
 - ii) Chapter 2 is the big moment, the receiving of the Holy Spirit.
 - iii) Chapters 2 through 7 are the apostles' ministry in *Jerusalem*.
 - iv) Chapters 8-12 are the apostles' ministry in *Samaria*.
 - v) Chapters 13-28 are the apostles' ministry to *the ends of the Earth*.
 - a) Exactly like Jesus said it would happen (how did he know? ☺)
 - b) First, the *why* question. Why Jerusalem, Samaria, and uttermost parts of the World?
 - i) Remember that the application to us is not just to learn Church history, but to see how these actions are to affect our lives.
 - a) Why didn't Jesus say, you'll be my witnesses in Galilee, where most of the disciples are from? Why didn't Jesus say you'll be my witnesses in Rome, the capitol of the world at that time? Well, let me explain! ☺

- ii) First, Jerusalem. That's where they were at. It is more than just the capitol of Israel. It is the location of the temple. It is the place where Jesus was crucified, where he rose from the dead, and the same place He'll come back to. (Zechariah 14:4-5 speaks about this, but I'll cover these verses in a little bit.)
- iii) Second, Samaria. The Samaritans were considered "half-breed" enemies. They were a people of some Jewish roots, mixed in with all sorts of religious ideas. The closest comparison we would have is the Mormons or the Jehovah's Witnesses. A people who have some of the doctrines correct, but miss a lot of the key points.
- iv) Finally, "the ends of the earth." Think about this from the disciples' standpoint. They were just 11 guys. They didn't have a TV or internet ministry they could broadcast to the ends of the earth. The printing press was not around, and making copies was slow and tedious. The Jewish leaders were against Christianity. And here's Jesus telling them, that *they* are going to take his message of salvation to the ends of the earth? Get real! ☺
 - a) Obviously, we know that this happened, when we look at the millions of Christian churches around the world. And it all started with these 11 guys! Pretty amazing when you think about it. Especially given the fact that for 200-300 years, Christianity was often a death-sentence in the Roman world!
- c) Okay, John, this is all interesting history. What does it have to do with our lives?
 - i) Lots. The question for you to meditate upon is (my thanks to Jon Courson for this application):
 - a) What is *your* Jerusalem?
 - (1) *Your* Jerusalem is your hometown. The center of worship where you are *right now*. Just as the disciples were witnesses where they were *right then*.
 - (2) A great Christian expression on being a good witness is:
 - (a) "Bloom where you're planted and plant where you bloom."
 - b) What is *your* Samaria?
 - (1) Samaria is where the people lived whom the Jews, and therefore the Apostles, *resented*. They were the "half-breeds," the cultists. For us, it is whomever we can't stand! How are you being a witness, for example, to the cultists in your area? Prayer is a good start. Knowledge of what to say when you are confronted is helpful. There are a lot of great ministries supplying free information on being witnesses to *your* Samaritans or cultists.
 - c) What about our witnessing to the outer most parts of the world?
 - (1) An example would include praying for a persecuted church. There are places in the world where people are being imprisoned or killed simply for preaching the Gospel.
 - (2) Another example would be support, via prayer or financial assistance, for an internet or TV ministry (et al.) that is being beneficial to the Gospel.
 - d) Christianity is not about believing in Jesus and sitting around doing nothing. Christianity has, is, and always will be about "putting your money where your mouth is."

- e) I read an interesting commentary by a Jewish Christian who stated that one of the things Christians have done a poor job of, historically, is being witnesses "in Jerusalem"; that is, to the Jews. Christian history is a poor example of how to be good witnesses to these people. For many religious Jews, "Christianity" is a cuss word. Praise God for the Jews, for the Jesus movement, and for all they do and did under a lot of verbal and physical abuse.
- d) There's one point about this verse that I am indebted to Ray Stedman for pointing out.
 - i) The mistake we make as Christians is to try to evangelize on *our own resources*.
 - ii) If you study Acts, *God leads, the disciples follow*. It is never the other way around.
 - a) "It was never the intention of the Lord that the whole job of planning the strategy of reaching out to the ends of the earth and of mobilizing the resources should fall upon the Christian." Ray Stedman.
 - b) "We can never accomplish this. Then he (God) quietly reminds us that His program was for the Holy Spirit to accomplish this task through the church, that he is perfectly capable of doing it, and that the book of Acts is the complete testimony to his ability and adequacy to carry out the program he had in mind. 'He who calls you is faithful, and he will do it (1 Thessalonians 5:24 RSV).'" Ray Stedman.
- e) Okay, 2 pages on one verse. Back to the text or we'll never make it! ☺
- 10. Verse 9: After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight. ¹⁰ They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them.
 - a) This is a great visual scene. Picture 11 guys standing around. All of a sudden Jesus is being physically taken up in the sky. Did he just levitate? Did angels with wings carry him? We simply don't know. It was a strange enough sight of 11 guys just standing there, gazing up.
 - i) There was, naturally, a feeling of helplessness that had to occur at this moment.
 - a) They watched Jesus be crucified. For sure, they thought he was dead. On and off, for 40 days, they saw him alive again. Now they thought, okay, it's reward time. Jesus said "not yet" and something about a Holy Spirit. And now here was Jesus being taken away. The combination of the strange sight of seeing him being taken up and the wonderment of *what do we do now*, had to get to them.
 - b) Luckily, an angel was there to assist them!
 - (1) Verse 10 says, "... two men dressed in white." The natural assumption is they are angels (angel means messenger of God.)
 - c) Notice not much is said about the angels. The focus is on their message.
- 11. Verse 11: "Men of Galilee," they said, "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."
 - a) John's very, very loose translation: Hey guys, staring at the sky isn't going to make Jesus come back any faster. Jesus told you to be his witnesses. Get going!

- b) The next verse tells us that Jesus was taken up on the Mount of Olives.
 - i) In the Old Testament, Zechariah told of the day of Jesus return:
 - ii) "On that day his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem, and the Mount of Olives will be split in two from east to west, forming a great valley, with half of the mountain moving north and half moving south.... Then the LORD my God will come, and all the holy ones with him." (Zechariah 14:4 and 5b, NIV)
 - a) What is interesting is that there is an earthquake fault line under the Mount of Olives. To set it off, all it needs is the pressure of one-certain-Lord Jesus to set his feet upon it!
 - c) The Bible is quite literal when Jesus says he is coming back the same way in the Book of Revelation. Even the clouds that hid Jesus in Verse 10 are mentioned.
 - i) "Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of him." (Revelation 1:7a NIV)
12. Luckily, the group obeyed the angels: Verse 12: Then they returned to Jerusalem from the hill called the Mount of Olives, a Sabbath day's walk from the city.
- a) Luke makes a point to mention it was "a Sabbath day's walk." One of the Jewish rules was how far they were allowed to walk on the Sabbath. This was an ancient determination by the Rabbis and enforced during this time period.
 - i) Luke himself was Greek. So why mention it?
 - ii) I think it is to remind the reader that these men were still observant Jews. They still obeyed the Jewish laws as they knew them. Later in Acts, were going to talk about "the law" and Christians, but the point is being made here that believing in Jesus didn't immediately change their viewpoint on Judaism.
13. Verse 13: When they arrived, they went upstairs to the room where they were staying. Those present were Peter, John, James and Andrew; Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew; James son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James. ¹⁴ They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers.
- a) Here are the 11; along with 2) "the women" (probably all the women who were at the cross, possibly some of the wives of the believers); 3) Mary, mother of Jesus; and 4) Jesus' brothers. Let's talk about the groups.
 - b) First the disciples themselves.
 - i) This was a real "rag-tag" group. They pretty much had little in common other than a belief in Jesus. There were businessman-fisherman, tax collectors (how do *you* view tax collectors?), doubting Thomas, Simon the Zealot (think of a radical rabble-rouser), probably ex-harlots, and others you would never mix together let alone hang out with or invite to join your church!
 - a) Without Jesus as their leader, the realities of their differences might sink in. As Christians, we associate and have a kinship relationship with people we would probably never even *have* a relationship with, or even think much of. *That* is the power of the Holy Spirit, showing love to all.
 - b) The women. These were the ones who first saw Jesus. One may have been a harlot prior to conversion. Again, without Jesus there, their previous lifestyles may have been one of scandal, to contend with.
 - c) Then there is Mary, the mother of Jesus. This is the last direct mention of her. Imagine the emotional roller coaster *she's* been through. Now, the only source of strength and contact was this bunch.

- d) Last, there is the mention of Jesus' brothers. My apologies to my Catholic readers, but the text is pretty obvious here, and other places, that Jesus had siblings. Mary went on to have a "normal" family after the virgin birth. (See also Matthew 12:46, Matthew 13:55, et al.)
 - (1) This is a reason why Protestants respect Mary for the role God gave her, but don't pray to her as if she has some special power.
 - (2) Imagine the guilt Jesus' brothers felt. The Gospel of John teaches that they did not believe Jesus was the Messiah when he was alive (John 7:5). I can assume they saw Jesus alive after the resurrection, and this changed their mind. Imagine the guilt and fear of punishment *they* had to be feeling!
 - c) So given all these worries, doubts, fears, reputations of the individuals, *and* the fact that the Jewish leaders still wanted to make an outcast of anybody who believed in Jesus, what do you do? Back to verse 14 again: "They all joined together constantly in prayer."
 - i) That's the solution, folks. That's how we can get along with people we may not normally be able to get along with. That's how we keep churches united. That is how we deal with our fears. That is how we handle our enemies. That is how we ask forgiveness for non-belief. We turn to God for prayer.
14. Verse 15: In those days Peter stood up among the believers (a group numbering about a hundred and twenty) ¹⁶ and said, "Brothers, the Scripture had to be fulfilled which the Holy Spirit spoke long ago through the mouth of David concerning Judas, who served as guide for those who arrested Jesus. ¹⁷ He was one of our number and shared in this ministry."
- a) Okay, here are the disciples and other followers of Jesus. About 120 in number, at this point. Peter assumes leadership. If you studied Peter from the Gospels, this shouldn't surprise you. He did the same thing among the apostles.
 - b) What is Peter up to? Well, for days, the group has been praying, praising God, and studying the scriptures. One can logically assume, from the next set of verses, that the group was reading or singing from the Psalms. This is the Jewish book of praise.
 - c) The next section has to do with the disciples' desire to replace Judas.
 - i) I would suspect there was still a lot of anger over Judas. Nobody likes a traitor. Here was a trusted member of the group. Even though Jesus knew Judas would betray Him, it had to come as a shock to the rest. After 40 days, this was still sinking in. You can almost sense the anger, or the awesomeness of God looking at the results of what happened to Judas, as mentioned in the next set of verses.
15. Verse 18: (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. ¹⁹ Everyone in Jerusalem heard about this, so they called that field in their language Akeldama, that is, Field of Blood.)
- a) This is Luke adding a footnote as to what happened to Judas.
 - b) Many critics of the Bible love to point out the (seemingly) contradiction between this verse and Matthew 27:5, where it says Judas hung himself.
 - i) St. Augustine is actually credited with the solution. Judas did hang himself. But because it was a Sabbath, and Jews were not allowed to touch a dead body on the Sabbath, the body probably hung there for 1-2 days; the branch gave way, and Judas fell. End of controversy. ☺

- c) I love the notation that "everybody heard about this." Jesus was well known in Jerusalem. The Jews *wanted* a Messiah. They were interested in someone to lead them in an overthrow of Rome. Jesus was rejected because He refused to take on *that* role of Messiah, at that time. But with the combination of the sky darkening during the crucifixion and the veil of the temple being torn (Luke 23:45), there must have been rumors going around the city about Jesus appearing alive again. Now word was getting around about the fate of Judas, the man who betrayed him, killing himself. All supporting evidence to believe that Jesus was the Messiah.
16. Meanwhile, Peter was quoting Psalms to show the fall of Judas was predicted, and that another was needed to take his place. Verse 20: "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," (quoting Psalm 69:25) and,
 "May another take his place of leadership." (Quoting Psalm 109:8)
- a) "These psalms speak of false companions and wicked men who have become enemies of God's servant." Bible Commentary Encyclopedia.
17. Peter continues, Verse 21: "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, ²² 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." ²³ So they proposed two men: Joseph called Barsabbas (also known as Justus) and Matthias. ²⁴ Then they prayed, "Lord, you know everyone's heart. Show us which of these two you have chosen ²⁵ to take over this apostolic ministry, which Judas left to go where he belongs." ²⁶ Then they cast lots, and the lot fell to Matthias; so he was added to the eleven apostles.
- a) Here's a re-cap of what was happening. Peter and the gang decided they needed someone to replace Judas. Therefore it is opened for discussion among the group. The qualifications required that the "new #12" must be someone who's been with them from the time of John's baptism to the time of the resurrection. Apparently, there were a few others that followed Jesus regularly, but not as close as, say, the original 12 apostles. Once two men were chosen, dice were cast to pick the winner.
- b) This is a very "Jewish thing." In forming leadership groups, 12 is a key number. Just as the whole Jewish nation came from the 12 tribes of Israel. I am sure, fresh in the minds of the disciples was Jesus' quote of saying they "will sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Matthew 19:28; Luke 22:30). There is also evidence from that time era among some Jewish sects of picking 12 leaders to form the foundation of any group.
- i) An interesting side note is that later, one of the 12, James, the brother of John, is killed by Herod (Acts 12:2). Yet there is no recording of *another* meeting to replace James. Why? Because in the minds of the Peter and the rest, a set 12 is needed. Once they are chosen that's, that.
- a) Paul talks about all Christians as being a "building" (Eph. 2:21, et.al.). The 12 are the foundations of that building. Since a Christian never dies, *new* Christians are *added* to the foundation as formed by the 12; thus, no need to replace James (brother of John) once he was killed.

- c) Which leads, of course, to one of the great debates in biblical history. Did God want this Matthias character to be one of the 12? Or did God want Paul to be #12? This is a classical Christian debate, with no set right or wrong answer.
- i) First of all, did God himself want 12 as the foundation? In the Book of Revelation, there is a physical description of the "New City of Jerusalem" coming down out of heaven. Notice this verse about the foundation.
- a) "The wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb." (Rev 21:14 NIV)
- (1) This city is a gift from God during the 1000-year millennium.
- (2) It is also symbolic for the building up of the church, as the "foundations" are the 12 disciples.
- ii) Now that we've established that, what's the case for Paul being #12?
- a) Paul himself said he was an apostle, appointed by God.
- (1) "Paul, an apostle--sent not from men nor by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father...." (Galatians 1:1 NIV & elsewhere)
- (2) There is no further mention of Matthias.
- (a) If it was the will of God, why wasn't anything else said about him?
- b) Paul went on to do great and marvelous things for the Church. His record is unparalleled in human history (among men) in terms of the impact he has had on civilization.
- iii) On the flip side, what's the case for Matthias being #12?
- a) Paul himself never commented specifically on this issue in his writings.
- b) Luke, who wrote Acts, was a traveling companion of Paul. If Luke was "pro-Paul, anti-Matthias," don't you think he might have added a commentary about this being a waste of time?
- c) The argument that nothing else is said about Matthias may not hold up. Nothing much is said about *most* of the other apostles, either. Matthias may have been part of the "12 Apostles" that Paul consulted with from time to time in the Book of Acts.
- d) The Holy Spirit did not come down on the apostles until Acts 2. The act of throwing the dice to determine God's will (common in the Old Testament), may be more the apostles' doing, and not God.
- iv) After a lot of thought on this and reading both sides, I don't have a great conclusion to give you. I lean toward the "pro-Matthias" side, but don't have any overwhelming proof. It's one of those things that can be fun to talk about, but I don't see having the correct answer as being beneficial to our spiritual growth. It's just something we'll have to find out when we get to Heaven.
18. Next week, one of the most important events in the history of the human race - the "Pentecost." Details to come next week.
19. Let's pray. Father, we thank you for these lessons on the Acts of the early apostle leaders. With these 12 men, you have laid the foundation of the work you want *us* to continue. Help us, through the coming weeks, to pick out the ideas, the lessons, and the patterns that would help us to grow in our faith, to become better servants, and to become better ministers for your kingdom. For we ask this in Jesus' name, Amen.