

Commentary on Acts, Chapter 1 by Chuck Smith 1.8.23

Pastor John Donovan, cell phone 508-380-0471

Pastor Terry Gerlarneau, cell phone 603-455-4399

Web site todbc.org email us at opendoorbiblechurch@todbc.org

January memory verse Isaiah 55:11 (NKJV)

¹¹ So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, But it shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper *in the thing* for which I sent it.

Commentary on Acts, Chapter 1 by Chuck Smith 1.8.23

With an introduction to Acts by John MacArthur

Shall we turn to the book of Acts, chapter one, as we begin our study of the early church.

Luke, the author of the book of Acts, a companion of Paul the apostle, who was author also of the Gospel According to Luke, wrote these two treatises to a friend, Theophilus. Theophilus is a Greek name. It's a name that has a beautiful meaning. The name means *lover of God*. There are some who believe that it was not a man at all, but that the gospel and the book of Acts were addressed to the lovers of God, whoever you may be. There are other traditions that say that Theophilus was actually Luke's master. That in those days physicians were slaves, usually the slave of a wealthy patron. So that Luke's master was Theophilus, and he released Luke to be with Paul on the missionary journeys. Thus, Luke is writing back to his former master. This is an early tradition of the church, but it is, of course, impossible to prove, like so many of the traditions.

There are also those who believe that when Paul was in Troas and he received a vision of a man calling unto him saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us," that that man in Paul's vision was none other than Luke. For the first one that Paul really met when he came to Macedonia was Luke. And as we are in the book of Acts, you will find that when we get to that portion of the book of Acts, Luke begins to write more in the first person rather than the third person. So it is, evidently, at this particular point in the Acts of the Apostles that Luke became a companion of Paul and began to journey with him. He began to use the pronouns "we" and "us" instead of "they" and "them." This is, no doubt, where Luke became a participant and an eyewitness of those things that were happening from this point on. We will bring this out to you when we get to that point.

He begins the Acts of the Apostles by tying it with the Gospel According to Luke. It is interesting that the very last thing that Luke records in his gospel is the very first thing he records in the Acts of the Apostles. We find the gospel of Luke closing as Jesus is telling His disciples to wait in Jerusalem until they be endued with power from on high. And then Jesus ascended up into heaven, and so he closes the gospel. In opening the Acts of the Apostles, he writes,

Commentary on Acts, Chapter 1 by Chuck Smith 1.8.23

The former treatise [that is, the Gospel According to Luke,] have I written unto you, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach (Act 1:1),

The key word is *began*. The Gospel According to Luke is not the full story of the ministry of Jesus Christ. It is only the beginning of the ministry of Jesus Christ. Jesus continues to minister to the needs of people. Jesus continues to heal the sick. Jesus continues to raise the dead. Jesus continues to minister His love and His gospel to the world, only now He is ministering through those disciples who have been anointed with His Holy Spirit. But the ministry of Christ is continuing; basically, is the premise that Luke takes in the Acts of the Apostles. The former treatise of all that Jesus began, both to do and to teach.

Now because of that, the Acts of the Apostles is an unfinished book: in that the Lord today continues to work through the lives of those who have dedicated themselves to be the instruments of God. To be led and guided and anointed by His Holy Spirit, to continue the ministry of Jesus in the world today. Now God has ordained that His work should be accomplished through human instruments. I do not say that it must be accomplished. God can use angelic beings for His work, and there will come a time, during the book of Revelation when God will use angels to proclaim His gospel to people all over the world. Revelation, chapter 14, "The first angel flying through the midst of heaven having the everlasting gospel" (Revelation 14:6). But at the present time, God has chosen to use human instruments. As imperfect as they may be, yet that's what God has ordained to use. The exciting thing about that is, God will use me and God will use you. So many times, we're begging off, "O Lord, I can't speak. I've never been able to speak before or even now, Lord." As Moses tried to beg off the call of God. Jeremiah said, "Lord, I'm just a kid; no one's going to listen to me." And we all have our excuses why we can't be used. Don't we? We all know the reasons why God couldn't use us.

One time, as the Lord was calling a prophet to do His work, he said, "Lord, send whoever you want." The Lord said, "Hey, I've called you." "Lord, good idea; send whoever you want." So often we're in that position, "Lord, send by the hand of whomsoever you will, anybody but me Lord." And yet, God has ordained to use us.

Now, each of us can show our own imperfections. Each of us can point out our own inabilities, and all of us can find an excuse why God wouldn't want to use me. But yet, God has chosen to use you. That through your life He might reveal Himself to a needy world. You wonder when God has such instruments to use how He ever got the job done, don't you?

Until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Spirit had given commandments to the apostles whom he had chosen (Act 1:2):

That is what he ended the Gospel of Luke with. The day that Jesus was taken up, after He had told the apostles to wait for the endowment of power.

Commentary on Acts, Chapter 1 by Chuck Smith 1.8.23

To whom he also [that is the apostles he also] showed himself alive to them after his passion [or death] by many infallible proofs (Act 1:3),

It is difficult to deny the fact of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. I was amused, as well as annoyed and irritated, by an article I read in the Santa Ana Register this last Saturday. Of the creation science and evolutionary theories being presented in the county schools. How that, this one professor said that he teaches a science class, and thus, they deal only in facts, and that they don't have any place for theories. Because science is based upon fact and creation is based upon religious superstitions. It takes a lot of faith to believe the religious theories. When you are dealing with facts, you can just accept them. I thought, "Very interesting in that science class, they taught me it was a fact that the world was four billion years old. Now today they are teaching it's a fact that the world is twelve billion years old. And it wasn't that long ago that I went to school."

It's interesting that the Bible has never needed to be revised or updated to meet the current data that men have discovered. And yet, if you would take my high school science textbooks today and try to teach a science class from them, you would find that many of the things that were taught as scientific fact when I was in high school are no longer recognized as scientific fact. The simple cell protoplasm is no longer a simple cell, but extremely complex. If there is any fact that can be attested to in history it is the fact of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

We have a jurisprudence system that is based upon the testimony of witnesses. If a man is accused of a crime and there are people who witnessed that crime while it was being committed, and they are brought to the standard, and they swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help them God. And in their questioning they affirm that, "I saw that man in the bank on May twenty-third. I saw him pull out a gun from his coat. I heard him demand that all of the money be given to him. I saw him as he left the bank. I saw him as the officer apprehended him outside." And if you can get three or four witnesses to point to that man and will keep their testimony under cross-examination, that man is judged to be guilty. He is the one who did it. We have two or three witnesses that are testifying the same story about that man, and it is accepted as fact that he is the one who perpetrated the crime and is guilty. You've got witnesses who have sworn to tell the truth that are verifying.

After the death of Jesus, when He rose again, He appeared unto many different people who gave sworn testimony that they saw Him. That they talked to Him, that He appeared to them in various places under different circumstances. And for a period of forty days was visiting with them. And at one time, up to as many as five hundred people who were gathered at one place, He appeared. It's difficult to just cast aside or deny the witness of these people. To do so is to discredit our whole jurisprudence system. But not only that, these men who testified that they saw the risen Lord, that they talked to Him, that they ate with Him, they, all of them, with the exception of one, met violent deaths at the hands of other people because of their affirming that the story they told was true. You talk about witnesses sworn to tell the truth, the whole truth, nothing but the truth. If a person's life was threatened because of that witness, and it was a lie,

Commentary on Acts, Chapter 1 by Chuck Smith 1.8.23

at least one of them would've broken under the pressure. They would've confessed to the entire hoax. "He showed Himself alive after His passion by many infallible proofs."

being seen of them for forty days, speaking to them of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God ([Act 1:3](#)):

Sometimes we fault the disciples because of their questions of the timing of the kingdom of God. Let it be remembered that the kingdom of God was the favorite subject of Jesus Christ. He was always talking about the kingdom of God, and it is a great hope that He was planting into the hearts of all men. Things are not always going to continue corrupted as they are. The world is not going to go forever under the power of darkness, under the bondage of evil. God is going to one day establish His kingdom upon the earth. A kingdom of righteous joy and peace. "Jesus shall reign, where ere the sun doth her successive journeys run. And His kingdom will extend from shore to shore." And that day will be the most glorious day the world has ever seen, as sickness and suffering and pain will be abolished in His kingdom. As sin and greed and these things that have made the world such an intolerable place will be abolished in His kingdom. The godless commercialism, the exploitation of man, all of these things abolished in His glorious kingdom when He reigns. No wonder the disciples were anxious to get it on. I'm anxious to get it on; I'm anxious for His kingdom to come. And Jesus told us when we pray, the first petition is, "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven" ([Matthew 6:10](#)). This is the right kind of a desire that we should all have. I desire the kingdom of God. And so He was talking to them, during this forty-day period, of the kingdom.

And, being assembled together with them, he commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, you have heard of me ([Act 1:4](#)).

He said, "Now look, wait here in Jerusalem until you receive the promise of the Father." This promise that He is referring to is, no doubt, the promise in Joel where the Lord promised, "And it shall come to pass in the later days, saith the Lord, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and daughters will prophesy, and your young men shall dream dreams, your old men shall see visions: and upon my servants and my handmaidens shall I pour out my Spirit, saith the Lord" ([Joel 2:28-29](#)). The promise of the Father: the day is going to come when God is going to pour out His Spirit upon all flesh, all of the believers. They will, each one, receive that dynamic from God.

For John [He said,] truly baptized with water; but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now ([Act 1:5](#)).

The idea of baptism was that of emersion, the *bapteedzo*. John baptized with water, submerged the people in water, "you're going to be submerged in the Holy Spirit in not many days."

Commentary on Acts, Chapter 1 by Chuck Smith 1.8.23

Now when they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel? (Act 1:6)

"When is it going to be, Lord? When's the time for this restoration?" And Jesus is talking to them now, not about the kingdom, but about the power that they're going to receive for service. And so He brushes aside their question.

Saying unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father has put in his own power (Act 1:7).

"It's not for you to know." They lived constantly in the anticipation of the immediate setting up of the kingdom. During the entire lifetime of Jesus, they were expecting Him at any moment to go into the phone booth and come out as the savior of the world. Shazzam! Showing His power and overthrowing the governments of the world, establishing God's kingdom upon the earth. And they were waiting daily for this change to transpire. And whenever Jesus would talk about going to Jerusalem, being turned over into the hands of sinful man, and then being crucified, "Oh, oh no, Lord. No, no you don't understand the kingdom, Lord. Be that far from Thee." When Jesus died on the cross, they were all greatly disappointed.

The two disciples on the road to Emmaus, so sad. "Hey, fellows. How come you're so sad as your walking along?" "What do you mean? You must be a stranger around here if you don't know the things that have been happening lately in Jerusalem." "What things?" "Oh, a fellow by the name of Jesus of Nazareth...oh man, it was mighty and powerful. The anointing of God was upon His life. We had hoped that in Him was the deliverance of Israel, but they crucified Him. We had hoped... now it's dead." Now He's risen, and He's saying, "In a few days, fellows, you're going to receive the promise of the Father." "Oh, what promise? The promise of the establishing of the kingdom?" You see, it was legitimate that they should ask. "Is this it Lord? Alright! Is this the time? Are you going to set up your kingdom now?" "No. It's not for you to know those times that the Father's appointed or that the Father has in His own power. But, you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you."

Now here, the Greek preposition *epi* is used to signify a new relationship that they were to have with the Holy Spirit. In the Gospel According to John, chapter 14, as Jesus is there promising to send the Holy Spirit, He said, "I will not leave you comfortless. I will come to you, and I will pray the Father, and He will send to you another comforter, even the Spirit of Truth whom the world cannot receive because it seeth Him not neither knows Him, but you know Him for He dwells with you, and He shall be in you" (John 14:17-18). Same Greek preposition as ours, only they spell it "en" instead of "in." Two-fold relationship there in John: He is with you, but He's going to be dwelling in you. But now Jesus said you're going to receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. The Greek preposition *epi*, which is translated in different texts throughout the New Testament as "upon" or "over" or I like it, "overflows."

Commentary on Acts, Chapter 1 by Chuck Smith 1.8.23

In the seventh chapter of the gospel of John: "On the last day, the great day of the feast when Jesus stood there on the Temple Mount and cried to the people, 'If any man thirst let him come unto Me and drink: and he who drinks of the water that I give, out of his innermost being there will gush torrents of living water.'" John said, "This spake He of the Spirit, which was not yet given which they who believe on Him should receive" (John 7:37-39). What did He speak of the Spirit? That it would be like a torrent of living water flowing out. I like, "When the Spirit overflows you," upon you, or over you, or overflows from you. So the three-fold relationship: He is with you prior to your conversion, He is the one who causes you to realize that you are a sinner, He is the one who points to Jesus Christ as the answer as He convinces the world of sin, of righteous, and of judgment. The moment you open your life and heart to Jesus Christ and invite Him to come in, the Holy Spirit comes and begins to indwell you. He shall be in you. "Know ye not that you are not your own, you have been bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your body and your spirit which are His. And know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you? Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess, but be filled, or be ye being filled with the Spirit" (I Corinthians 6:19-20, Ephesians 5:18). But now here's a third relationship. This is an empowering experience.

You will receive [the *dunamus*] the dynamics, when the Holy Spirit has come [*epi*] upon you [or over you, or when there is that overflow from you]: and ye shall be witnesses unto me (Act 1:8)

And so the dynamic, to be a witness for Jesus Christ. It is interesting that the word *witness* in Greek is the word *martus* from where we get our word *martyr*. And in Greek it does mean martyr. A witness is one who not only proclaims what he believes, he lives what he believes, he is what he believes, and he believes it so strongly, that if necessary, he'll die for what he believes. That's how strong is his belief. He's a *martus*. You can't stop him. He's not afraid to die for what he believes.

You remember when Paul was on his way back to Jerusalem and Agabus came down from Caesarea and he took Paul's girdle and tied himself up and he said, "So is the man who owns this girdle to be bound when he gets to Jerusalem." And Paul's friends began to weep, saying, "Oh, Paul, don't go, don't go." And he said, "What do you mean by these tears? Do you think you're going to dissuade me? Do you think I'm worried about being bound? I'm ready to die." He was a *martus*. "I'm ready to die." Being put to death for your faith did not make you a martyr; because you were a martyr, you were put to death. Because you were a witness, because you believed it so strong. So, it did not make you a witness, it only proved what you were. You were a witness all along. If you hadn't been a *martus*, you would've never gone to your death. You would've recanted; you would've said, "Whoa, whoa, wait, wait. Hold on, let's change course here. I think that I may have made a mistake." Then you say, "Well, he wasn't a *martus*. Stealing a horse doesn't make you a horse thief; it only proves that you were. No one steals a horse unless he's a horse thief. So, stealing it doesn't make you a horse thief, it only proves that you were all along. Being martyred only proves what you were a witness, a *martus*. "And you will be witnesses." And isn't it interesting that most of them were martyred? "Witnesses unto Me."

Commentary on Acts, Chapter 1 by Chuck Smith 1.8.23

The witness was to be both in Jerusalem, and in all of Judea (Act 1:8),

The witness began right at home. The hardest place, isn't it? It's to start right at home in Jerusalem, and then the area around Jerusalem, the area of Judea. And then it was to spread up into Samaria. And then it was to go out into the uttermost parts of the world. And as we study the book of Acts, we will see this very progression. How the witness began in Jerusalem. We'll get that in the next chapter. And then we'll see how it began to spread through out Judea. And then Phillip went up into Samaria, and then finally Paul and Barnabas are called to go into the uttermost parts of the world. And so the witness spread through the anointing and the empowering of the Holy Spirit.

Now when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight (Act 1:9).

This is the final promise made by Jesus to His disciples. This is it, the final words prior to His ascension. Of course, later He came and talked to Paul and others, but prior to His ascension, this is His final word. And upon this, when He had spoken these things, while they were watching Him, He was taken up and a cloud received Him out of their sight.

And while they were looking steadfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, there were two men who stood by them in white apparel (Act 1:10);

We assume they were angels.

Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as you have seen him go into heaven (Act 1:11).

They saw Him as He ascended up into heaven and they will behold Him when He comes again. "Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgement upon the earth" (Jude 14-15). And then, "Unto Him who loved us and gave Himself for us and who has made us unto our God, kings and priests who shall reign with Him upon the earth, behold the Lord cometh, and every eye shall see Him, and they also who pierced Him shall mourn" (Revelation 1:5-7). So the Lord's coming. Every eye shall see Him. The Jehovah Witnesses say that He is already come, but it was a secret coming. As it was only the disciples that saw Him go, it was only the disciples, of the Jehovah Witnesses, who saw Him return. But Jesus said, "If they say unto you, 'He has come in secret and has gone into a secret chamber don't believe it'" (Matthew 24:26). So you have to choose, to believe Jesus or them.

"This same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as you've seen Him go into heaven."

Now there's a very interesting verse in II John, verse 7, "For many deceivers are entered into the world who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh." That,

Commentary on Acts, Chapter 1 by Chuck Smith 1.8.23

unfortunately, is a poor translation of the Greek. For this participle is in the present tense and should be translated "is coming in the flesh." Those who would deny that Jesus Christ is coming in the flesh. What does John say of them? "They are a deceiver and an antichrist. Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward. For whosoever transgresses and abides not in the doctrine of Christ, has not God. He that abides in the doctrine of Christ, he has both the Father and the Son. And if there come any unto your door (on Saturday morning) and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, and neither bid him good-bye. For he that bids him good-bye is a partaker of his evil deeds" (II John 7-11). Ask them one question, "Is Jesus coming in the flesh?" Just ask them that question. And if they say no, just remember what John warned you and what John told you. "If any confess not that Jesus Christ is coming in the flesh." Do you remember when He was with the disciples and He said, "Give me something to eat"? He said, "You know, spirits don't eat; touch me. See? It's me." So, this same Jesus is coming again in the same manner in which they saw Him go into heaven. And I, for one, believe that that coming is very soon.

Then returned they unto Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a Sabbath's day journey [about two-thirds of a mile]. And when they were come in, they went up into an upper room, where there abode both Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, and Phillip, and Thomas, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon Zelotes, and Judas the brother of James. And these all continued in one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers (Act 1:12-14).

This is the last mention of Mary the mother of Jesus. At this point and from this point on, there is no further mention of her in the Acts of the Apostles or in the epistles. Nothing is mentioned in the scripture. It is silent.

His brethren would be a reference probably to James and to Jude and to those other brothers who were sons of Joseph and Mary.

The upper room--there are some who say that it is the same upper room in which Jesus had the Last Supper with His disciples. And yet, there are others who hold to this upper room being a room in the temple precincts where the early church met. Take your choice.

And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples, and said, (the number of their names together were about one hundred and twenty,) men and brethren, this Scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas, which was a guide to those who took Jesus (Act 1:15-16).

Here again, Peter still his same impetuous self. They're waiting in prayer and supplication, and Peter stands up and says, "Fellows, there's a scripture that's gotta be fulfilled." And you know he's going to move ahead, "Let's get the program going; let's

Commentary on Acts, Chapter 1 by Chuck Smith 1.8.23

cast lots and find out who's going to take Judas' place." I do feel that Peter was again in the flesh, manifesting that impetuous nature that was his. And I think that the future history of the church in the book of Acts points this out. I am interested in Peter's understanding of the scriptures, how that he is quoting from so many places in the Old Testament. Peter does manifest a very great understanding of the Old Testament scriptures which is a point in his favor.

Notice that Peter ascribes to the Holy Spirit those things that David wrote. So that, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God" (II Timothy 3:16). Not part of the scriptures. Because, if you tell me that part of the scriptures are given by inspiration of God, then I must ask you, "What parts are by inspiration and what parts are not by inspiration?" And then you are then the authority who tells me what part I can believe and what part I can't believe. And the minute that God is no longer the authority but you're the authority, I'm in trouble. Beware of those who say, "Well, you can't believe all of the scriptures." The scriptures themselves say, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God." And here, Luke in writing of what Peter was saying, declares that David was actually the spokesman for the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit, by the mouth of David, spake concerning Judas.

For he was numbered with us, [he was one of the twelve] he had obtained a part of this ministry. But now this man purchased a field with the reward of iniquity; and falling headlong (Act 1:17-18),

He purchased the field, the potter's field as Zachariah the eleventh chapter declares.

and falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all of his bowels gushed out (Act 1:18).

There are those who find a discrepancy in the scriptures, because in one of the gospels we are told that when Judas came back and tried to return the money, and they said, "Hey, it's your problem. We can't take it." And put it back in the temple treasury. "It's blood money." Then he threw it there on the floor of the temple and he went out and hung himself. Here Peter tells us that he fell headlong and just popped. And there are those who imagine a discrepancy. Very simple, he went up into the tree to hang himself, tied the rope around his neck and tied it to the limb and jumped. And the force of the fall either snapped the rope or his head, and he fell on down into the canyon and just as he said it here.

It was known to all of the dwellers at Jerusalem; insomuch that the field is called in their tongue, Aceldama, that is to say, The field of blood. For it is written in the book of Psalms, Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein: and, His bishoprick let another take (Act 1:19-20).

Now in reality he's quoting from two different Psalms here. From Psalm 69:25, he puts it together with Psalm 109:8. And putting the two together he finds these prophecies concerning Judas.

Commentary on Acts, Chapter 1 by Chuck Smith 1.8.23

Wherefore of these men (Act 1:21)

Now here is where they are looking for someone to take Judas' place to be an apostle. Here are the qualifications they looked for in that time.

Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus when in and out among us (Act 1:21),

Now you remember there were many disciples, many disciples of which Jesus chose His apostles. And the word apostle means "one who is sent out," so He sent out the twelve. The number of human government. "We only have eleven. We need one to take Judas' place, but we need one who has been with us all the while from the beginning with Jesus."

From the time he was baptized by John, until the day he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness [of what?] of His resurrection (Act 1:22).

So these were the requirements they were looking for. Someone who had been around the whole while. From the time of John's baptism to the ascension. And one who saw the risen Lord, and thus could bear fact of the resurrection, their testimony to the fact.

Now Paul the apostle, later in asserting the fact that he was an apostle said, "Have I not seen the risen Christ?" Evidently that was one of the requirements of apostleship. Someone asked me, "Are there apostles today?" Well, I don't know. I don't think that there are in the same sense that they were in the New Testament. Surely there is none today who can bear witness to the resurrection as they did.

They appointed two, Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias. And they prayed, and said, Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, show whether of these two that you have chosen (Act 1:23-24),

I think that we often make this mistake of giving the Lord two choices, both wrong. Limiting God, you see. We're so prone to do this. Obviously, Paul was God's choice. Peter was impetuous, and jumping the gun said, "Hey, we've got to do something, you know, gotta help God out. You know, one's missing and we've got to fill him in." And yet, "God, which one of these two do you want?" And giving God the two choices.

That he may take part of this ministry and this apostleship, from which Judas by the transgression fell, that he might go to his own place. And so they gave forth their lots (Act 1:25-26);

An interesting way by which they sought to determine the will of God. Let's throw dice, find out what God's will is here. It's interesting to me, the various ways that people have devised to discern the will of God. Now, in the Old Testament times they had an interesting way of coming to the priest, who would inquire of the Lord for them through the Urim and the Thummim, the "lights and perfections." Just what these Urim and

Commentary on Acts, Chapter 1 by Chuck Smith 1.8.23

Thummim were, we don't know. I'm sure they were not the colored glasses that Joseph Smith found with the Golden Tablets; the magic glasses, that when you put them on, you could suddenly read the hieroglyphic writing.

There are those who say that the Urim and Thummim were actually a black and a white stone that was worn in a pouch on the chest of the priest. They would pray and ask the Lord a particular question. You remember that David was asking the Lord definite questions: "Lord, shall we go out against the Philistines?" The answer was, "No." So again, the next day, "Lord, shall we go out against the Philistines?" The answer was, "Yes." "When shall we go?" They would ask specific questions, and the Lord would direct them through the Urim and the Thummim. They say that the priest would pray, seek God, and then reach in and pull out one of the two stones. If it was the white stone, it was a yes answer. If it was a no, then it would be the black stone that he would pull out. Some even say we get the term *blackballed* from this Urim and Thummim. Actually, back in the original it is a no vote against a particular project or idea. Just what the Urim and Thummim were, we don't know. But during the Old Testament period, they did use a method of casting lots to determine the will of God.

So here the disciples are picking up on the same thing as they are throwing the dice to see which of the two fellows that God had chosen to replace Judas Iscariot.

the lot fell on Matthias; he was numbered with the eleven ([Act 1:26](#)).

Now who in the world is Matthias? No one ever heard of him before or since. It'll be interesting to meet Matthias and find out who he is and what he did. I think from the subsequent history, it's obvious to assume that God chose Paul as an apostle. Paul declares it himself. Now this is the last time we ever read of them seeking to discern the will of God by the casting of lots or by a chance kind of a thing.

Yet, we don't find any pattern for this after the Holy Spirit was given. Once the Holy Spirit came upon the church, then the Holy Spirit began to speak to them and direct them. And the Holy Spirit said, "Separate unto me Paul and Barnabas for the ministry where I have called them" ([Acts 13:2](#)). And the Holy Spirit sent them forth. So we find the church more directly guided by the Holy Spirit. Once the Holy Spirit came, this throwing dice to find out the will of God was set aside.

John MacArthur :: Bible Introductions - Acts

As the second book Luke addressed to Theophilus (see [Luke 1:3](#)), Acts may originally have had no title. The Greek manuscripts title it "Acts," and many add "of the Apostles." The Greek word translated "Acts" (*praxeis*) was often used to describe the achievements of great men. Acts does feature the notable figures in the early years of the church, especially Peter ([chaps. 1–12](#)) and Paul ([chaps. 13–28](#)). But the book could more properly be called "The Acts of the Holy Spirit through the Apostles," since His sovereign, superintending work was far more significant than that of any man. It was the

Commentary on Acts, Chapter 1 by Chuck Smith 1.8.23

Spirit's directing, controlling, and empowering ministry that strengthened the church and caused it to grow in numbers, spiritual power, and influence.

Author and Date

Since Luke's gospel was the first book addressed to Theophilus (Luke 1:3), it is logical to conclude that Luke is also the author of Acts, although he is not named in either book. The writings of the early church Fathers such as Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Origen, Eusebius, and Jerome affirm Luke's authorship, and so does the Muratorian Canon (ca. A.D. 170). Because he is a relatively obscure figure, mentioned only 3 times in the NT (Col. 4:14; 2 Tim. 4:11, Philem. 24), it is unlikely that anyone would have forged a work to make it appear to be Luke's. A forger surely would have attributed his work to a more prominent person.

Luke was Paul's close friend, traveling companion, and personal physician (Col. 4:14). He was a careful researcher (Luke 1:1–4) and an accurate historian, displaying an intimate knowledge of Roman laws and customs, as well as the geography of Palestine, Asia Minor, and Italy. In writing Acts, Luke drew on written sources (15:23–29; 23:26–30), and also no doubt interviewed key figures, such as Peter, John, and others in the Jerusalem church. Paul's two-year imprisonment at Caesarea (24:27) gave Luke ample opportunity to interview Philip and his daughters (who were considered important sources of information on the early days of the church). Finally, Luke's frequent use of the first person plural pronouns "we" and "us" (16:10–17; 20:5–21:18; 27:1–28:16) reveals that he was an eyewitness to many of the events recorded in Acts.

Some believe Luke wrote Acts after the fall of Jerusalem (A.D. 70; his death was probably in the mid-eighties). It is more likely, however, that he wrote much earlier, before the end of Paul's first Roman imprisonment (ca. A.D. 60–62). That date is the most natural explanation for the abrupt ending of Acts—which leaves Paul awaiting trial before Caesar. Surely Luke, who devoted more than half of Acts to Paul's ministry, would have given the outcome of that trial, and described Paul's subsequent ministry, second imprisonment (cf. 2 Tim. 4:11), and death, if those events had happened before he wrote Acts. Luke's silence about such notable events as the martyrdom of James, head of the Jerusalem church (A.D. 62 according to the Jewish historian Josephus), the persecution under Nero (A.D. 64), and the fall of Jerusalem (A.D. 70) also suggests he wrote Acts before those events transpired.

Background and Setting

As Luke makes clear in the prologue to his gospel, he wrote to give Theophilus (and the others who would read his work) a "narrative of those things" (Luke 1:1) which Jesus had accomplished during His earthly ministry. Accordingly, Luke wrote in his gospel "an orderly account" (Luke 1:3) of those momentous events. Acts continues that record, noting what Jesus accomplished through the early church. Beginning with Jesus' ascension, through the birth of the church on the Day of Pentecost, to Paul's preaching

Commentary on Acts, Chapter 1 by Chuck Smith 1.8.23

at Rome, Acts chronicles the spread of the gospel and the growth of the church, it also records the mounting opposition to the gospel.

Theophilus, whose name means “lover of God,” is unknown to history apart from his mention in Luke and Acts. Whether he was a believer whom Luke was instructing, or a pagan whom Luke sought to convert is not known. Luke’s address of him as “most excellent Theophilus” (Luke 1:3) suggests he was a Roman official of some importance (cf. 24:3; 26:25).

Historical and Theological Themes

As the first work of church history ever penned, Acts records the initial response to the Great Commission. It provides information on the first 3 decades of the church’s existence—material found nowhere else in the NT. Though not primarily a doctrinal work, Acts nonetheless emphasizes that Jesus of Nazareth was Israel’s long-awaited Messiah, shows that the gospel is offered to all men (not merely the Jewish people), and stresses the work of the Holy Spirit (mentioned more than 50 times). Acts also makes frequent use of the OT references.

Acts abounds with transitions: from the ministry of Jesus to that of the apostles; from the Old Covenant to the New Covenant; from Israel as God’s witness nation to the church (composed of both Jews and Gentiles) as God’s witness people. The book of Hebrews sets forth the theology of the transition from the Old Covenant to the New; Acts depicts the New Covenant’s practical outworking in the life of the church.

Outline

- **Prologue (1:1–8)**
 1. The Witness to Jerusalem (1:9–8:3)
 1. The Anticipation of the Church (1:9–26)
 2. The Founding of the Church (2:1–47)
 3. The Growth of the Church (3:1–8:3)
 1. Apostles: Preaching, healing, and enduring persecution (3:1–5:42)
 2. Deacons: Praying, teaching, and enduring persecution (6:1–8:3)
 2. The Witness to Judea and Samaria (8:4–12:25)
 1. The Gospel to the Samaritans (8:4–25)
 2. The Conversion of a Gentile (8:26–40)
 3. The Conversion of Saul (9:1–31)
 4. The Gospel to Judea (9:32–43)
 5. The Gospel to the Gentiles (10:1–11:30)
 6. The Persecution by Herod (12:1–25)
 3. The Witness to the Ends of the Earth (13:1–28:31)
 1. Paul’s First Missionary Journey (13:1–14:28)
 2. The Jerusalem Council (15:1–35)
 3. Paul’s Second Missionary Journey (15:36–18:22)

Commentary on Acts, Chapter 1 by Chuck Smith 1.8.23

4. Paul's Third Missionary Journey (18:23–21:16)
5. Paul's Jerusalem and Caesarean Trials (21:17–26:32)
6. Paul's Journey to Rome (27:1–28:31)