

Acts 1-2

Questions

1. In what ways does Luke the writer overlap the end of the gospel with the beginning of Acts? What is common to the commissioning at the end of Luke and the beginning of Acts? What is the effect of this overlap?
2. What are the important or significant points of the story of Matthias replacing Judas? Why has the writer included it here?

Acts 1:1-14

- Prologue
 - Transition from the ministry of the earthly Jesus to the activity of mission carried out by the apostles
 - Reference to Vol 1 (Gospel of Luke), signifying that Acts cannot be separated from the ministry of Jesus

Acts 1:1-14

- Jesus' instructions to wait in Jerusalem for the coming of the Holy Spirit
 - Jerusalem – centre of Jewish life and worship
 - Ref to Joel 2:32 – promise of the Holy Spirit and of salvation on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem
 - From Jerusalem God's reign will spread to all nations
 - Jerusalem – remains the city of salvation for God's people

Acts 1:6

- The final question raised by the disciples to Jesus
 - The expectation of Jesus vs the expectation of the disciples: Israel to be restored to her original condition in the last days
 - Political aspiration

Acts 1:7-8

- Jesus' response turns the attention away from selfish political aspirations to a global missionary movement

Acts 1:8

- Sentence diagram
- What observations can you gather from Acts 1:8?

Acts 1:8

ἀλλὰ

λήμψεσθε δύναμιν
ἐπελθόντος τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος
ἐφ' ὑμᾶς

καὶ

ἔσεσθέ μου μάρτυρες
ἐν τε Ἱερουσαλήμ
καὶ ἐν πάσῃ τῇ Ἰουδαίᾳ καὶ Σαμαρείᾳ
καὶ ἕως ἐσχάτου τῆς γῆς

Acts 1:8

But
you all (plural) will receive power
when the Holy Spirit has come upon you;
and
you all (plural) will be my witnesses
in Jerusalem,
and in all Judea and Samaria,
and to the ends of the earth

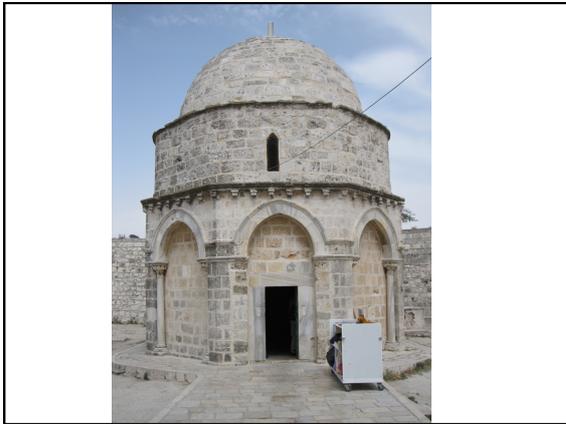
Acts 1:8

- Acts 1:8 – allusion to Isa 49:6 (“It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the survivors of Israel; I will give you as a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.”)
- Acts 1:8 – has also become the “map” for the narrative of Acts where the gospel spread from Jerusalem to Rome, the heart of the Empire, but continues to remain “open ended”

Acts 1:9-11

- The ascension of Jesus
 - Jesus is not absent – but the narrative of Acts must be understood with the heavenly Jesus reigning
 - The announcement of the angels – reminding the mission given to the disciples





Acts 1:13-14

- “upper room”
 - The same upper room where the Last Supper was being held?
 - A room in the house of Mary, the mother of John Mark where the followers met (Acts 12:12)?



According to Christian tradition, this is the upper room in which Jesus and his disciples conducted the Passover meal – the Last Supper – on which the rites for the celebration of Mass are based. The name of the hall – Coenaculum – comes from the Latin word for dining room.

According to the Gospel, at Pentecost, seven weeks after the Resurrection, the disciples reunited. While sitting in the Coenaculum, they were inspired by the Holy Spirit “and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance” (Acts, 2:4), and from there they spread the Christian faith amongst the nations.

The Room of the last Supper was part of the ‘Holy Zion’ Church built in 390 C.E., and the Crusader church constructed on its ruins in the 12th Century. The room in its current shape was formed in the 14th Century and it preserves architectural and sculptural elements from the Crusader period. During the Ottoman rule it was converted into a mosque. A prayer niche (‘Mihrab’), dedicated to King David, was carved in its southern wall.



Reflections

- In what ways do you think Acts 1:8 help us see the mission of God in our church/ministry today?
- Is this power that is mentioned in Acts 1:8 to be received as an individual or as a community?

Acts 1:15-26: Replacement of Judas

- The need for Matthias to replace Judas
 - Jesus originally called the Twelve
 - Twelve signals the reorganisation and restoration of Israel (see Luke 22:29-30) “and I confer on you, just as my Father has conferred on me, a kingdom, ³⁰ so that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and you will sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”)

Acts 1:15-26: Replacement of Judas

- The need for Matthias to replace Judas
 - Does the election of Matthias to replace Judas signify the disciples’ preoccupation of the question they raised to Jesus in Acts 1:6?
 - Do you think Peter, who acted as leader of the group in Acts, took things into his own hands?
 - How about the suggestion that Paul should have been the replacement for Judas?

Acts 1:16-19

- The death of Judas – Luke’s use of literary device in describing the death of Judas.
- See handout – deaths in Acts
- What do you think Luke is trying to convey about the person, character, and the life of Judas?

Acts 1:20-26

- Nomination of the two candidates
- Selection of the candidates
- 1:26: “καὶ ἔδωκαν κλήρους αὐτοῖς” – they GIVE lots for them”, meaning, “they gave their votes for them”
- Interestingly, Luke uses a loose language, and not the precise word for casting lots (βάλλω) where names were written on tones and placed in container, and one stone was allowed to fall out.

Acts 1:20-26

- The emphasis is on divine appointment together with using proper method or selection process in choosing the candidates, although the precise method used is omitted by Luke

Reflection

- How do we select leaders today?
- Does the selection of Matthias to replace the place of Judas legitimise the democratic process by majority vote?

Discussion: Peter in Acts

1. Using bible software, search for “Peter” in Acts.
2. List down all the events related to Peter in Acts
3. What do you discover about Peter?
4. What significant roles do you see Peter played in the expansion of the early Christ movement to the gentiles?
5. In what ways are the Peter in Acts different/ similar to the Peter we encountered in the Gospels?

Questions: Acts 2

1. What is the significance of the long list of geographical names in 2:5-11a? What references in Luke 24 and Acts 1 prepared us for this? Comment from the progression from 2:1-4 to 2:5-11a? Can you think of any connection between this event and the Tower of Babel (Genesis 11)?
2. What is the central purpose of Peter’s speech/ sermon in Acts 2? What does the coming of the Spirit, as described in Acts 2:1-11, have to do with this central purpose?

Acts 2:1-47: Pentecost

- Focus:
 - The coming of the Holy Spirit (2:1-4)
 - Reaction of the crowd (2:5-13)
 - Peter's speech (2:14-40)
 - Response (2:41)
 - Summary statement (2:42-47)

Acts 2:1-4: Coming of the Holy Spirit

- 2:1 - When the day of Pentecost arrived ...
 - Specifies the fulfillment of Jesus' promises in 1:5, 8.
 - Pentecost – the Feast of Weeks denotes the Festival of New Grain celebrated over 7 weeks or 50 days after Passover. (Ex 23:16; 34:22; Lev 23:15-16; Deut 16:9-16)
 - Harvest festival where the people give thanks to God for the gift of grain harvest

Acts 2:1-4: Coming of the Holy Spirit

- 2:1 - When the day of Pentecost arrived ...
 - Traditionally, Pentecost has been connected with the celebration of the giving of the covenant and the gift of the law at Sinai. (This is because Israel arrived Sinai in the 3rd month after leaving Egypt. See Ex 19:1 - On the third new moon after the Israelites had gone out of the land of Egypt, on that very day, they came into the wilderness of Sinai.)
 - This connection is reflected in Jewish literature

Acts 2:1-4: Coming of the Holy Spirit

- 2:1 - When the day of Pentecost arrived ...
 - Jub 1:1: And it came to pass in the first year of the exodus of the children of Israel out of Egypt, in the third month, on the sixteenth day of the month, that God spake to Moses, saying: 'Come up to Me on the Mount, and I will give thee two tables of stone of the law and of the commandment, which I have written, that thou mayst teach them.'

Acts 2:1-4: Coming of the Holy Spirit

- 2:1 - When the day of Pentecost arrived ...
 - Jub 6:17-19: For this reason it is ordained and written on the heavenly tablets, that they should celebrate the feast of weeks in this month once a year, to renew the covenant every year. And this whole festival was celebrated in heaven from the day of creation till the days of Noah— twenty-six jubilees and five weeks of years: and Noah and his sons observed it for seven jubilees and one week of years, till the day of Noah's death, and from the day of Noah's death his sons did away with (it) until the days of Abraham, and they eat blood. But Abraham observed it, and Isaac and Jacob and his children observed it up to thy days, and in thy days the children of Israel forgot it until ye celebrated it anew on this mountain.

Acts 2:1-4: Coming of the Holy Spirit

- 2:1 - When the day of Pentecost arrived ...
 - Peter's speech – suggests a connection with Jewish traditions about Moses at Sinai
 - Holy Spirit is the Spirit of the New Covenant, the Spirit that gives life (see 2 Cor 3)?

Acts 2:1-4: Coming of the Holy Spirit

- The audible (sound like rushing wind) and visible (light that looks like tongues of fire) manifestations of the Holy Spirit (2:2-3)
- Note the word “wind” (πνοή) – it is not identical with πνεῦμα – which could mean wind or spirit.

Acts 2:1-4: Coming of the Holy Spirit

- The manifestation of tongues of fire – comparable to the theophany in the OT. See Ex 19:16 when God appeared on Mt Sinai
- Wind and fire – symbols of the presence of God - see Ex 3:2; 13:21-22; 14:20; 1 Kgs 19:11-12.
- God often reveals himself in manner known and recognised by the people

Acts 2:1-4: Coming of the Holy Spirit

- Jewish expectation in Isa 11:1-4 and Mal 3:2-3 – purging and restoring Israel
 - Does Luke regard the manifestations of Pentecost as fulfillment of the prophecy he mentioned in Luke 3:16 (John answered all of them by saying, “I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.”)

Acts 2:1-4: Coming of the Holy Spirit

- Speaking in tongues (2:4)
 - “other languages” (ἑτέρας γλώσσας) – languages not learned and other than their own.
 - Most likely known languages of the nations as reflected in 2:9-11

Acts 2:5-13: Reaction of the Crowd

- 2:5 – devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem
 - Reference to diaspora Jews who returned to live in Jerusalem or Jewish pilgrims who stay in Jerusalem is uncertain.
 - In light of 2:10, it seems Jewish pilgrims most likely in view

Acts 2:5-13: Reaction of the Crowd

- 2:6-13, Luke uses 5 verbs denoting strong mental and verbal reactions:
 - 2:6 – amazed/bewildered (συγχέω) – BDAG: “to be amazed, surprised, excited, agitated” – same word used in the story of the confusion of language at Babel in the LXX Gen 11:7
 - 2:7 and 12 – amazed (ἐξίστημι) – BDAG: “to be out of one’s normal state of mind, be amazed, astonished”

Acts 2:5-13: Reaction of the Crowd

- 2:6-13, Luke uses 5 verbs denoting strong mental and verbal reactions:
 - 2:7 – astonished (θαυμάζω) - BDAG: “to be extraordinarily impressed or disturbed by something, wonder, marvel, be astonished”
 - 2:12 – perplexed (διαπορέω) – BDAG: “to be greatly perplexed, be at a loss”
 - 2:13 – sneered (διαχλευάζω) – BDAG: “to laugh at someone in scorn, jeer”

Acts 2:5-13: Reaction of the Crowd

- 2:7 – the crowd identified the disciples as Galileans
 - Hint of snobbery of the diaspora Jews or stereotyping of Galileans?
 - See Mark 14:70; Acts 4:13

Acts 2:5-13: Reaction of the Crowd

- List of nations in 2:9-11 – covering almost all the nations in the then world.
 - Most significantly, Rome is mentioned
 - The phrase: (both Jews and proselytes) - Ἰουδαῖοί τε καὶ προσήλυτοι – apposition to “visitors from Rome”

Acts 2:5-13: Reaction of the Crowd

- Acts 2:12-13: ἐξίσταντο δὲ πάντες καὶ ἄδηπύρου, - amazed and perplexed, the crowd responded with two opposite reactions
 - “what does this mean?” – denotes question looking for an answer. Note that both ἐξίστημι and διαπορέω suggest they do not understand the significance of what they were hearing, and were at a loss → leading to Peter’s speech
 - “they are filled with new wine” – hostile reaction
- Similar pattern today?

Acts 2:14-40: Peter’s Speech

- First of the speeches in Acts
 - Peter explains the manifestations of the Spirit and the mighty acts of God as fulfillment of Scripture.

Acts 2:14-40: Peter’s Speech

- Content based on the 3 citations of OT
 - The Holy Spirit has arrived, and this is the fulfillment of the prophecy in Joel 2:28-32
 - The life, death and resurrection of Jesus is also the fulfillment of Scripture in Psalm 16:8-11
 - Jesus is the exalted Lord who reigns and pours out the Spirit, as testified by Psalm 110:1

Acts 2:14-40: Peter's Speech

- Joel 2:28-32 (LXX 3:1-5)
 - Fulfillment of the prophecy
 - Last days – linked to the coming of the Holy Spirit

Acts 2:14-40: Peter's Speech

- Context of Joel:
 - Summons of the prophet who challenges the people of Israel who suffered an invasion of locusts to repentance, with the promise of the Lord to restore the land.
 - Follows by the pouring of Spirit on "all flesh" – reference to Judah; but now on all people in Acts 2, and later to include the gentiles
 - Those who call upon the Lord would be saved

Acts 2:14-40: Peter's Speech

- Joel's prophecy is now applied to Jesus' life, death, and resurrection

Acts 2:14-40: Peter's Speech

- Psalm 16:8-11 (LXX 15:8-11)
 - 2nd OT citation
 - Peter uses Psalm 16:8-11 to explain why death did not have the power to keep Jesus in the realm of the dead

Acts 2:14-40: Peter's Speech

- Psalm 16:8-11 (LXX 15:8-11)
 - Context: David expresses his commitment to God and his confidence in God.
 - David is constantly aware of God's presence is not afraid of what could happen to him
 - God will not abandon David to the realm of the dead, and will lead him on the path of life
 - Peter applies this Psalm to Jesus

Acts 2:14-40: Peter's Speech

- Psalm 16:8-11 (LXX 15:8-11)
 - Peter applies this Psalm to Jesus
 - 2 reasons to do so:
 1. The psalm explain why it was impossible for Jesus to remain in the realm of the dead
 2. Since what happened to Jesus fits what David prophesied in the psalm, Jesus must be the Messiah

Acts 2:14-40: Peter's Speech

- Psalm 110:1 (LXX 109:1)
 - Royal psalm, perhaps composed to celebrate David's conquest of Jerusalem and his enthronement as king
 - The new king is promised the subjugation of his enemies

Acts 2:14-40: Peter's Speech

- Psalm 110:1 (LXX 109:1)
 - Applied to Jesus as the king that is now enthroned

Acts 2:14-40: Peter's Speech

- 3 OT citations: Joel 2:28-32; Ps 16:8-11 and Ps 100:1
 - All fulfilled in Jesus, asserting and affirming:
 1. Jesus is Lord exalted at God's right's hand
 2. Jesus is the Messiah, the king who saves the people
 3. Jesus is God

Acts 2:14-40: Peter's Speech

- The crowd: "what must we do?"

Acts 2:14-40: Peter's Speech

Peter's offer: 2 imperatives and 2 promises

- 2 imperatives:
 - Repent
 - Be baptised

Acts 2:14-40: Peter's Speech

Peter's offer: 2 imperatives and 2 promises

- 2 promises:
 - Forgiveness of sins
 - Receiving the gift, that is the Holy Spirit (τὴν δωρεάν τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος) – genitive, functioning as epeexegetical. Cf Joel 2
 - Note also the gift (δωρεά) is different from the gifts (χάρισμα) of the Holy Spirit in 1 Cor 12

Acts 2:41: Response

- 3000 added.
 - How do we deal with numbers in Acts? Literal? Figurative?
- Ritual of baptism
 - Baptism follows immediately.
 - Could be in any of the 6 large pools in Jerusalem
 - Pool of Siloam (discovered in 2004)
 - Pool of Bethesda (John 5)

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Acts 2:42-47: Summary Statement

- Purpose of “summary statement”
 - Historical
 - Literary
 - Theological
 - Ecclesiological
 - Missiological

Acts 2:42-47: Summary Statement

- Characteristics of “summary statement” that reflect the early Christ movement
 - Devotion to teaching of the apostles
 - Fellowship
 - Breaking of bread
 - Prayers

Acts 2:42-47: Summary Statement

- The effects (2:43):
 - Fearful awe among the people in Jerusalem

Acts 2:42-47: Summary Statement

- Identity of the Early Christ Movement (2:44)47:
 - Unity
 - Sharing of possessions
 - Sharing of Meals
- Result: greater numbers being added

Acts 2: Reflections

- Public commitment to Jesus is emphasised in Acts 2. What about some of our current practice of “private” baptism in certain segments of the church?
- Acts often records that water baptism follows immediately after conversion. What do you think of our practice today where we often delay baptism after a person becomes a Christian? Why is it that we do not often baptise someone immediately after conversion?

Acts 2: Reflections

- From the summary statement in Acts 2:42-47, what characterised the early Christ movement? What was the identity of this movement?
- How much of this is seen in the life of our church today?