

SBCOD Bible Study Notes

12-10-25

Acts 1

Jesus Taken Up Into Heaven – Verses 1-3

¹ In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach ² until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen. ³ After his suffering, he presented himself to them 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.

1:1 In the book of Acts, Luke continues the story he began in his Gospel, covering the 30 years after Jesus was taken up into heaven. During that short time the church was established, and the gospel of salvation was spread throughout the world, even to the capital of the Roman Empire. Those preaching the gospel, though ordinary people with human frailties and limitations, were empowered by the Holy Spirit to take it all over the world. In the book of Acts we learn about the nature of the church and how we, like these early believers, can turn our world upside down (17:6).

1:2 Verses 1-11 are the bridge between the events recorded in the Gospels and the events marking the beginning of the church. Jesus spent 40 days teaching his disciples, and they were dramatically changed. Before his resurrection, they had argued with each other and had deserted their Lord. One of them (Peter) even lied about knowing Jesus. Here, in a series of meetings with the living, resurrected Christ, the disciples had many questions answered. They became convinced of his resurrection, learned about the kingdom of God, and discovered their power source— the Holy Spirit. By reading the Bible, we can sit with the resurrected Christ in his school of discipleship. By believing in him, we can receive his power through the Holy Spirit to be new people. By joining with other Christians, we can take part in doing his work on earth.

1:1-3 Luke says that the disciples were eyewitnesses to all that had happened to Jesus Christ— his life before his crucifixion, and the 40 days after his resurrection as he taught them more about the kingdom of God. Today people still doubt Jesus' resurrection. But Jesus appeared to the disciples on many occasions after his resurrection, proving that he was alive. Consider the change the resurrection made in the disciples' lives. At Jesus' death, they had scattered, were disillusioned, and feared for their lives. After seeing the resurrected Christ, they became fearless and risked everything to spread the good news about him around the world. They faced imprisonment, beatings, rejection, and martyrdom, yet they never compromised their mission. These men would not have risked— and in some cases, given— their lives for something they knew was a fraud. They knew Jesus was alive, and the early church was fired with their enthusiasm to tell others. We need to know this so we can have confidence in their testimony. Twenty centuries later we can still be confident that our faith is based on fact.

1:3 Jesus explained that his coming inaugurated the kingdom of God. When he returned to heaven, God's kingdom would remain in the hearts of all believers through the presence of the Holy Spirit. But the kingdom of God will not be fully realized until Jesus Christ returns to judge all people and remove all evil from the world. Until that time, believers are to work to spread God's kingdom across the world. The book of Acts records how this work was begun. What the early church started, we must continue.

Jesus' Final Instructions To The Disciples – Verses 4-5

⁴On 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. ⁵For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.”

1:4-5 The Trinity is a description of the unique relationship of God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. If Jesus had stayed on earth, his physical presence would have limited the spread of the gospel, because physically he could be in only one place at a time. After Christ was taken up into heaven, he would be spiritually present everywhere through the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit was sent so that God would be with and within his followers after Christ returned to heaven. The Spirit would comfort them, guide them to know his truth, remind them of Jesus' words, give them the right words to say, and fill them with power (see John 14–16).

1:5 At Pentecost (2:1-4) the Holy Spirit was made available to all who believed in Jesus. We receive the Holy Spirit (are baptized with him) when we receive Jesus Christ. The baptism of the Holy Spirit must be understood in the light of his total work in Christians.

(1) The Spirit marks the beginning of the Christian experience. We cannot be Christians (belong to Christ) without his Spirit (Romans 8:9); we cannot be united to Christ without his Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:17); we cannot be adopted as his children without his Spirit (Romans 8:14-17; Galatians 4:6-7); we cannot be in the body of Christ except by baptism in the Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:13).

(2) The Spirit is the power of our new lives. He begins a lifelong process of change making us more like Christ (Galatians 3:3; Philippians 1:6). When we receive Christ by faith, we begin an immediate personal relationship with God. The Holy Spirit works in us to help us become like Christ.

(3) The Spirit unites the Christian community in Christ (Ephesians 2:19-22). The Holy Spirit can be experienced by all, and he works through all (1 Corinthians 12:11; Ephesians 4:4).

Jesus' Final Teaching And Final Promise Before His Ascension – Verses 6-8

⁶Then they gathered around him and asked him, “Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?” ⁷He said to them: “It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. ⁸But 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.”

1:6 During the years of Jesus' ministry on earth, the disciples continually wondered about his kingdom. When would it come? What would be their role? In the traditional view, the Messiah would be an earthly conqueror who would free Israel from Rome. But the kingdom Jesus spoke about was, first of all, a spiritual kingdom established in the hearts and lives of believers (Luke 17:21). God's presence and power dwell in believers in the person of the Holy Spirit.

1:6-7 Like other Jews, the disciples chafed under their Roman rulers. They wanted Jesus to free Israel from Roman power and then become their king. Jesus replied that God the Father sets the timetable for all events— worldwide, national, and personal. If you want changes that God hasn't yet made, don't become impatient. Instead, trust God's timetable.

1:8 The “power” believers receive from the Holy Spirit includes courage, boldness, confidence, insight, ability, and authority. The disciples would need all these gifts to fulfill their mission. If you believe in Jesus Christ, you can experience the power of the Holy Spirit in your life.

1:8 Jesus had instructed his disciples to witness to people of all nations about him (Matthew 28:19-20). But they were told to wait first for the Holy Spirit (Luke 24:49). God has important work for you to do for him, but you must do it by the power of the Holy Spirit. We often like to get on with the job, even if it means running ahead of God. But waiting is sometimes part of God’s plan. Are you waiting and listening for God’s complete instructions, or are you running ahead of his plans? We need God’s timing and power to be truly effective.

1:8 This verse describes a series of ever-widening circles. The gospel was to spread, geographically, from Jerusalem, into Judea and Samaria, and finally to the ends of the earth. It would begin with the devout Jews in Jerusalem and Samaria, spread to the mixed race in Samaria, and, finally, be offered to Gentiles all over the world. God’s gospel has not reached its final destination if someone in your family, your workplace, your school, or your community hasn’t heard the good news about Jesus Christ. Make sure that you are contributing in some way to the ever-widening circle of God’s loving message.

Jesus Ascends Into Heaven – Verses 9-11

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. 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.”

1:9-11 After 40 days with his disciples (1:3), Jesus returned to heaven. It was important for the disciples to see Jesus taken up into heaven; they knew without a doubt that he was God and that his home was in heaven. The two men dressed in white were angels who proclaimed to the disciples that one day Jesus would return in the same way he had gone—bodily and visibly. History is not haphazard or cyclical; it is moving toward a specific point—the return of Jesus to judge and rule over the earth. We should be ready for his sudden return (1 Thessalonians 5:2), not by standing around “looking into the sky,” but by working hard to share the gospel so that others will be able to share in God’s great blessings.

The Followers Of Jesus Return To Jerusalem – Verses 12-14

¹² Then the apostles returned to Jerusalem from the hill called the Mount of Olives, a Sabbath day’s walk from the city. 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.

1:12-13 After Christ was taken up into heaven, the disciples immediately returned to Jerusalem and had a prayer meeting. Jesus had said they would be baptized with the Holy Spirit in a few days, so they waited and prayed. When you face a difficult task, an important decision, or a baffling dilemma, don’t rush into the work and just hope it comes out the way it should. Instead, make your first step prayer for the Holy Spirit’s power and guidance.

1:14 At this time, Jesus' brothers were with the disciples. During Jesus' lifetime, they had not believed he was the Messiah (John 7:5), but his resurrection must have convinced them. Jesus' special appearance to James, one of his brothers, may have been an especially significant event in their conversion (see 1 Corinthians 15:7).

Peter Suggests Selecting A Replacement For Judas – Verses 15-20

15 In those days Peter stood up among the believers (a group numbering about a hundred and twenty) ¹⁶ and said, "Brothers and sisters,^[d] the Scripture had to be fulfilled in which the Holy Spirit spoke long ago through David concerning Judas, who served as guide for those who arrested Jesus. ¹⁷ He was one of our number and shared in our ministry." ¹⁸ (With the payment he received 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.) 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, and, "'May another take his place of leadership.

1:15 This was the first church business meeting. The small group of 11 had already grown to more than 120. The main order of business was to appoint a new disciple, or apostle, as the 11 were now called. While the apostles waited, they were doing what they could—praying, seeking God's guidance, and getting organized. Waiting for God to work does not mean sitting around doing nothing. We must do what we can, while we can, as long as we don't run ahead of God.

1:16-17 How could someone who had been with Jesus daily betray him? Judas had received the same calling and teaching as everyone else. But he had chosen to reject Christ. Judas hardened his heart and joined in the plot with Jesus' enemies to put him to death. Judas remained unrepentant to the end, and he finally committed suicide. Although Jesus predicted this would happen, it was Judas's choice. Those privileged to be close to the truth are not necessarily committed to the truth.

1:18 Matthew says that Judas hanged himself (Matthew 27:5); Acts says that he fell. The traditional explanation is that when Judas hanged himself, the rope or branch broke, Judas fell, and his body burst open.

Qualifications Are Stated And Two Men Are Nominated – Verses 21-26

21 Therefore it is necessary to choose one of the men who have been with us the whole time the Lord Jesus was living 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 nominated 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.

1:21-25 The apostles had to choose a replacement for Judas Iscariot. They outlined specific criteria for making the choice. After finalists were chosen, the apostles prayed, asking God to guide the selection process. This gives us a good example of how to proceed when we are making important decisions. Set up criteria consistent with the Bible, examine the alternatives, and pray for wisdom and guidance to reach a wise decision.

1:26 The disciples became apostles. Disciple means "follower or learner," and apostle means "messenger or missionary." These men now had the special assignment of spreading the good news of Jesus' death and resurrection.