

# What Do We Do Now?

Acts 1

In Matthew 16:18 Jesus prophesied He would build His church and the gates of hell would not prevail against it. How did Jesus do this? The Book of Acts continues the story of Jesus and how He, through the power of the Holy Spirit began to build His Church through the Apostles and early believers. The Book of Acts *continues* the story of Jesus because Acts is the sequel to the Gospel of Luke written by the physician Dr. Luke.

## THE COMMISSION      ACTS 1:1–11 (ESV)

### Acts 1:1-2 (ESV)

Theophilus is also the recipient of the Gospel of Luke (Luke 1:3). He may have been a government official given that Luke refers to him in the Gospel as “most excellent Theophilus”. This is the way in which Luke refers to other officials in his writings (Acts 24:2, 26:25). Theophilus is most likely a fictitious name.

As Luke points out, the Gospel of Luke covers all that the Holy Spirit did through the life and teachings of Jesus in bringing God’s salvation to the world. The Book of Acts covers all that the Holy Spirit did through the Apostles and early Church in bringing Jesus’ story, the Gospel, to the world.

The Book of Acts picks up the story at the point of Jesus’ resurrection. In verse 3 we discover after His resurrection Jesus spent forty days with His disciples demonstrating to them, He was literally, physically resurrected from the dead and teaching them about the Kingdom of God.

### Acts 1:3 (ESV)

Think about the importance of those forty days for the Apostles – the reality of the literal, physical resurrection of Jesus from the dead was cemented in their experience.

During those forty days, Jesus taught the Apostles about the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God refers to the Messianic Kingdom also known as the Millennial Kingdom. It is a literal, physical kingdom that will be established here on the earth and ruled by Jesus the Messiah. This kingdom is promised by God and prophesied by the Old Testament prophets. Jesus came to His generation of Jews offering to establish the Kingdom in their day if they would believe He was the promised Messiah. But, led by their spiritual leaders, the majority of the Jews rejected Jesus. As a result, that generation forfeited the Kingdom. The establishment of the Messianic Kingdom awaits a future generation of Jews who will believe on Jesus of Nazareth as their Messiah. Jesus revealed that in the interim, the Kingdom would take on a mystery form as we experience it during the Church Age.

Whatever Jesus taught the Apostles about the Kingdom of God, He did not teach them amillennialism, the teaching prevalent today, that there will be no Millennial Kingdom. The Apostles very much believed in the coming of the Messianic Kingdom and hoped Jesus was going to establish it in the near future. Towards the end of those forty days, Jesus and the Apostles traveled to Jerusalem from Galilee. They came to Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of Weeks also known in Latin as the Feast of Pentecost.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Lev. 23:15-22. The fourth of seven annual Feasts of the Lord. Feasts of Weeks derives its name from the fact that it occurs seven weeks after the Feasts of Passover, Unleavened Bread and Firstfruits.

**Acts 1:4-5 (ESV)**

Jesus ordered the Apostles to stay in Jerusalem and wait for the baptism of the Holy Spirit. At the Last Supper, Jesus promised He would send the Holy Spirit to be with them (John 16:5-8). Just as the Holy Spirit empowered Jesus, Jesus sends the Holy Spirit to empower His Apostles and all believers.

**Acts 1:6-8 (ESV)**

This tiny band of eleven nobodies from the backwaters of Galilee are commissioned by Jesus to reach the world with His story. And here we are 2000 years later following Jesus!

**The Book of Acts is the story of how the Holy Spirit began to reach the world with the story of Jesus beginning with the Apostles and the first generation of the Church. These were not perfect people, they made mistakes along the way, but through it all, the Holy Spirit enabled them to spread the story of Jesus throughout the Roman Empire.**

**Acts 1:9-11 (ESV)**

It's not every day you see a man taken up into heaven so it's understandable the Apostles stood there awhile taking it all in. But these two angels essentially say, "Stop gawking. You've got work to do. Plus, you'll see Him again; He's coming back the same way He just left." In the Olivet Discourse, Jesus described His Second Coming (Matthew 24:29-31).

**Acts 1:12-14, 15-26 (ESV)**

After Jesus' ascension, the Apostles obeyed the Lord, returned to Jerusalem and waited for the baptism of the Holy Spirit. While they waited, they prayed and they selected Judas' replacement.

**APPLICATIONS**

The Book of Acts is the historical bridge connecting the Gospels to the rest of the New Testament.

The forty-day presence of Jesus with the Apostles is powerful evidence for His resurrection.

The fact Jesus is coming again is affirmed by the angels.

The coming of the Messianic Kingdom is affirmed by Jesus.

The commission given the Apostles is our commission. We, too, are empowered by the Holy Spirit to accomplish our commission.

Finally, prayer permeated the ministry of the Apostles and early Church. May God work in us to strengthen our prayer life as we strive to do the work of the ministry.