

## The Ascension of Christ (Acts 1:1-26)

### I. Introduction

#### A. *This Week in Clear Living*

1. What does Acts 1:8 tell us about sharing our faith with others?
2. What was the attitude of the disciples just before and just after Jesus Ascension?
3. What is the Great Commission, and how many times did Jesus say something to the disciples?
4. Why did the disciples choose Matthias to be with them?
5. According to Scriptures, what came of Matthias after he was chosen?
6. How was the Holy Spirit building Jesus' church in this lesson?
7. How was the Holy Spirit showing His deity in this lesson?

**Question:** What does Acts 1:8 tell us about sharing our faith with others? How can we see God's sovereignty and election in this verse?

#### B. In Acts 1:1-7, Luke introduced his work to a Greek person named Theophilus.

1. Because Luke 1:3 also mentioned Theophilus and because Acts 1:1 mentioned a former treatise written by the author, we know that Luke is the author.
2. He brought Theophilus up to date with those things that had happened after the crucifixion.
  - a. Verse 3 stated that Jesus had provided many infallible proofs of His resurrection.
  - b. Verse 4 said that Jesus told the disciples to remain in Jerusalem until after they had received the Promise. ***What was the Promise?***
  - c. In verse 5, Jesus told them that they would soon be baptized by the Holy Spirit.
  - d. As in Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21, Jesus told His disciples in verse 7 that they were not to know when He would return to set up His millennial kingdom.
3. In verse 8, Jesus told them three things about their future.
  - a. The Holy Spirit shall come upon them.
  - b. They will receive power.
  - c. They will be witnesses.

#### C. The sovereignty of God and the doctrine of Election are shown by Acts 1:8.

1. The sovereignty of God says that God can do whatever He wants, which is true, and the doctrine of election implies that He might decide who will be saved and who will be lost.
2. ***Difficult spiritual truths such as these can be better understood axiomatically when taking into consideration less difficult truths.***
  - a. Every word of the Bible is true. Therefore, when two passages seem to contradict each other, then we are interpreting at least one of them incorrectly. Our challenge is to always rightly divide the Word of God.

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- b. God can do whatever He wants (*His sovereignty*). So the real question is, what does He want to do?
- 1) He could condemn everyone to Hell, but He WANTS people to be saved from His wrath.
    - a) II Peter 3:9 says, "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, *not willing that any should perish*, but that all should come to repentance."
    - b) Jonah 3:6-7 says, "For word came unto the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, and he laid his robe from him, and covered him with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. And he caused it to be proclaimed and published through Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste any thing: let them not feed, nor drink water:"
    - c) God had every right to destroy Nineveh, but He showed them mercy.
    - d) God could have destroyed Rahab, but He did not (Joshua 6:17).
    - e) So that everyone can have the chance to be saved, He reveals Himself to people in two clear ways. They are general revelation (source outside the Bible) and special revelation (the Bible).
    - f) Titus 2:11 says, "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men,"
  - 2) The Lord could leave us alone, but He WANTS to enter into a personal relationship with us so that we can enjoy fellowship with Him (Romans 5:10).
  - 3) The Lord could leave us without a spiritual Guide, but He WANTS to indwell us with the Holy Spirit so that we can have a Comforter in our daily walk (John 16:7).
  - 4) Everything that God WANTS is ultimately good for human beings. Can any saved person really point a finger at God and call Him unjust or unfair? I think not. Therefore, we do not need to be worried or concerned about God exercising His sovereignty.
  - 5) Matthew 16:16-18 says that Jesus will build His church, and Acts 1:8 says that He wants to use us to do it.
- c. The *doctrine of election* suggests that the Lord is making different choices (electing to do some things) for or against certain individuals. So the real question is, what is He electing to do?
- 1) He could choose who to send to Hell and who not to send, but He does not. Instead, He offers an escape from the penalty of sin.
  - 2) John 3:16-17 says, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but

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have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved."

- 3) Romans 8:29-30 says, "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified."
- 4) God does not choose who to save and who not to save. Individuals make the choice to receive Him or reject Him.
  - a) According to John 3:16-17, God CHOSE to offer His son on the cross for our benefit.
  - b) According to Romans 8:29, God CHOOSES to conform those that come to Him to the image of His Son, and again, this is to our benefit.
  - c) According to Romans 8:30, those that choose the Lord become the elect. God does not choose who will be the elect and who will not. But He is omniscient and He knows beforehand the decision that people will make.
  - d) Acts 1:8 shows the result of God's choosing to conform us to the image of Christ. We will become witnesses for Him. Our witnessing for Him will be natural, not forced.
- d. **CONCLUSION: A good and loving God CHOOSES or ELECTS to do good things for everyone that will come to Him by faith, and He CHOOSES or ELECTS to turn those that come to Him into better people.**

**Question:** What was the attitude of the disciples just before and just after Jesus Ascension?

- II. In Acts 1:9-11, Jesus ascended into heaven.
  - A. The disciples had experienced many emotions during the previous fifty days.
    1. They had seen the crowd worship Jesus when He rode the donkey into Jerusalem.
    2. They had seen him taken prisoner and crucified.
    3. Peter had learned how weak he could be.
    4. They had experienced the exhilaration of Jesus' resurrection.
    5. They had enjoyed meetings with Him during the previous forty days.
    6. Now they were watching Him ascend into the clouds.
  - B. The disciples were probably apprehensive, not knowing what to expect next.
  - C. They were probably still afraid that they would be arrested and killed.
  - D. They were probably sad to see Jesus go away.

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- E. They were probably curious about what Jesus had meant by the promise of the Holy Spirit. But they obeyed Him and waited in Jerusalem.
- F. In Luke 24:51-53, Jesus blessed His disciples before ascending into heaven.
  - 1. They worshipped Him.
  - 2. They returned to Jerusalem with great joy.
  - 3. They praised God in the temple.
  - 4. They blessed God in the temple.

**Question:** What is the Great Commission, and how many times did Jesus say something to the disciples?

- III. The Great Commission was given four times to the disciples.
- A. It was given in Matthew 28:18-20.
    - 1. They were in Galilee.
    - 2. The disciples were told to go, to teach, and to baptize.
    - 3. This was probably between day ten and day thirty after Jesus resurrection.
  - B. It was given in John 20:21.
    - 1. The disciples were in Jerusalem.
    - 2. The time period was resurrection night.
    - 3. Jesus told ten of His disciples that He was sending them. Thomas was not there.
  - C. It was given in Mark 16:15
    - 1. The disciples were told to go to the whole world.
    - 2. They were told to preach the gospel.
    - 3. On this occasion, which was soon after the resurrection, Jesus spoke to the remaining disciples.
  - D. It was given in Acts 1:8.
    - 1. The disciples had asked once again about Jesus' Second Coming.
    - 2. He simply told them to go and to be His witnesses.
  - E. **Why would Jesus had told to go, to preach, to teach, and to baptize on four different occasions? He was teaching them embryonically.**

**Question:** Why did the disciples choose Matthias to be with them? According to Scriptures, what came of Matthias after he was chosen?

- IV. In Acts 1:12-15, two remarkable events occurred. In Acts 1:16-26, the disciples picked a successor for Judas.
- A. In verse 14, the women that had been close to Jesus were given equal status with the men that had been close to Him.
    - 1. Jesus elevated the status of women for all time.

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2. Before Him, women had not had any value in society. In Old Testament genealogies, women are almost never mentioned.
- B. In verse 15, Peter became the group's leader.
  1. The first eleven chapters of Acts happened during the first two or three years of the church (32-35AD). Peter is the leader of the church in Jerusalem and much of the writing involves his time of leadership.
  2. Acts 11:19-20 show a ten year gap during which Paul returned to his home town (Tarsus) and started some churches. ***This is called the silent period.***
  3. The last part of the Book of Acts is called the Pauline period and began around 44AD. This part of the book covers Paul's ministry to the Gentiles.
- C. In verses 16-22, Peter spoke to the others.
  1. He shared how Judas had betrayed Jesus.
  2. In verses 23-26, he also told them that they needed to pick a replacement for Judas.
  3. The group had to choose between two men named Joseph Justus and Matthias.
  4. They chose Matthias.
- D. ***Neither man was ever mentioned again in the Bible. Was choosing one of them a mistake?***
  1. Most of the other disciples are not mentioned again in the Bible.
  2. Therefore, one cannot say that choosing Matthias was a mistake. He might have had a very dynamic ministry even though nothing about it is recorded in Scriptures.

**Question:** How was the Holy Spirit building Jesus' church in this lesson? How was the Holy Spirit showing His deity in this lesson?

- V. The Holy Spirit showed His control in verses 15 through 22.
  - A. I Corinthians 14:33 says, "For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints."
    1. The disciples were gathered in one place, in orderly fashion, and praying.
    2. The Holy Spirit was bringing Peter into an early leadership role.
    3. The Holy Spirit gave a dumb fisherman instant leadership abilities.
  - B. John 14:26 says, "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."
    1. The Holy Spirit gave Peter immediate understanding of Judas Iscariot's role and how that the betrayal had been prophesized by David.
    2. The Holy Spirit brought to Peter's remembrance of Scripture concerning the land purchased by Judas being desolate.

VI. Next week's lesson: "The Birth of the New Testament Church" (Acts 2:1-47)