

## ACTS commentary and resources

### **From the Bible Project on You Tube**

Acts 1-12: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CGbNw855ksw>

Acts 13-28: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z-17KxpjL0Q>

### **From the “Teacher's Commentary”**

#### **The Adventure Begins – The Book of Acts**

##### **Overview**

The "New Testament church" has fascinated Christians through the ages. The excitement, the vitality, the depth of fellowship portrayed in early Acts has attracted us. Many have sought to recapture those days: some by a reemphasis on the Spirit, others by restructuring the church as an institution.

No one can duplicate any moment in history. Yet as we study these first chapters of Acts we do discover principles which will vitalize Christian experience. We probably will not need to abandon our old. But we will need to make a fresh commitment to the God who worked so powerfully in the men and women of the early church. He lives today, and He is fully able to work just as powerfully in us.

##### **Filled**

◆ The events at Pentecost have been the focus of much theological debate. The text says the Holy Spirit filled the followers of Jesus. Specific signs were associated with that particular filling. There was a rushing, violent wind. Visible tongues of fire rested on each person. And when a crowd gathered each foreigner heard Jesus' followers "speaking in his own native language" ([Acts 2:8](#)). To understand the works of the Spirit it is important *not* to identify the Spirit's "filling," or the Spirit's "baptism," with any one of these signs. "Filling" is not itself tongues, or visible fire.

##### **Commentary**

I remember very clearly walking with five-year-old Paul the day he started kindergarten in Dallas, Texas. Paul was proud and excited—his first day at school! How grown-up he felt, and how grown-up and confident he looked. He was taking an important step into life's great adventure.

Each of us has times like this. For parent and child such moments are a strange mixture of excitement and loss. A whole phase of life is being left behind. We move on, sad, and yet somehow happy to meet the unknown.

It must have been very much like this for both Jesus and the disciples after Christ's resurrection. Their years together were past. The agony of the cross was history, swallowed up in the joy of Resurrection. During the 40 days after Christ rose, as Jesus still met with the disciples, both the Lord and the 11 must have been torn. Both knew the disciples would soon be launched on the greatest adventure the world has ever known, stepping out into the unknown to share Jesus with their whole world. They may have desperately wanted Jesus to remain with them. Yet, deep inside, the disciples must have known that they had been prepared for just this mission. They stood poised, hesitating, and yet eager to move on.

### A New Focus

While the faith of Israel served as a foundation for the new faith about to break on a world unaware, what would happen during the months and years ahead was unknown to the disciples. This must have been hard for them. Usually we're most comfortable in familiar surroundings and situations.

We can see this in the disciples. For 40 days Jesus spoke with them about His Father's intention to build His own kingdom in man's world. Jesus also encouraged His disciples: "Wait for the gift My Father promised. . . . In a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit" ([Acts 1:4-5](#)). Jesus did not push His followers unprepared into an adventure too great for them; He reminded them that He had promised them power. Even so, the disciples still looked longingly at the old patterns of thought and life. "Lord," they asked, "are You at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" ([Acts 1:6](#))

This was a revealing and an important question. The Old Testament had foretold Jesus' coming, but the dominant impression the Jews had received was of His coming to be their King. They had visions of the Messiah rescuing them from Gentile dominion and giving them the exalted political and military position promised by the Old Testament prophets. Jesus' death had been doubly shocking to His followers. Not only had they loved Him, but they had also firmly expected Him to crush Rome's political and military power and to establish Israel as the dominant world power.

The believing Jews in Old Testament times knew that God rules over the whole world of men. Therefore, His sovereignty over history itself was recognized. But the Old Testament saint longed for the day when the hidden authority of Yahweh would be revealed to all, when the Lord's Messiah would rule *visibly* over the world of men. So even the Twelve who were closest to Jesus were disappointed as He continued to teach and preach and heal instead of confronting the Roman Empire.

Jesus had gently taught His followers that the Old Testament also spoke of the Messiah suffering and dying for men's sins. Christ's ministry was leading Him to a cross rather than a crown. But up to the very end, the disciples still had visions of their Camelot: a New Jerusalem, with Jesus (and themselves) ruling the world. The death of Jesus had crushed that hope

momentarily. But when Jesus arose, the vision of power and glory again caught and held their imaginations. "Are You *at this time* going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" clearly reflects their longing for the life they had dreamed of so long.

Jesus' answer was gentle ([1:7-8](#)). First He pointed out that the prophesied kingdom would come, but that its coming was *distant* rather than "at this time." God will keep His promises, and this world will know Jesus' rule. But for now life is to have a different focus for Jesus' followers. That focus, stated in utmost simplicity, is this: "You will be My witnesses." Jesus Himself is the focus, the center of the believer's life. The meaning of our lives, the reason that our time on earth can be a great adventure, is summed up in the fact that Jesus is real, and that our every action can be a clear demonstration of the vital impact of the living God on human experience.

This was something that the disciples had not yet grasped, but soon would. Jesus, living within them, would Himself transform their experience. Then everything they were as individuals and as a community would witness to His presence.

These words, "You will be My witnesses," were the last ones Jesus spoke to the 11. As a silent crowd of disciples watched, Jesus rose up, soaring away until the clouds hid Him from sight. Two angelic messengers completed Christ's answer to the earlier question. "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" ([Acts 1:11](#)). This present time, during which the focus of our lives and the heart of our adventure with God is summed up in Jesus, will come to an end. As Old Testament days came to an end in the cross, our age will come to an end when Jesus returns—to establish the kingdom promised in the Old.

Yes, that day will come. But for then the disciples had to turn away from the Mount of Ascension and return to Jerusalem to see what new thing God had in store. There they waited, gathering for prayer. Waiting for a challenge, and a joy, that they could not yet imagine!

*Acts commentary is from*

