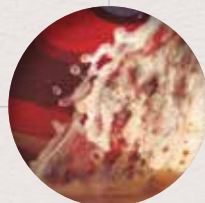
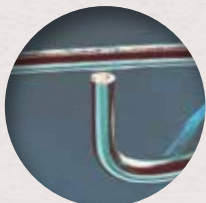


Acts 1-12



EXPLORE THE BIBLE®

Adults • Personal Study Guide • Summer 2024 • CSB

THE REST OF THE STORY

For decades, radio listeners could hear the familiar voice of commentator Paul Harvey giving them “the rest of the story” every afternoon. Each short feature would start with a story. Sometimes, it was tied to a familiar historical event. Other times, it related to what seemed like an everyday, ordinary occurrence. But the payoff was always a surprise ending, a “big reveal” that proved that there was more to the narrative than originally met the eye.

So often in our lives it feels like there’s more to the story than we realize. We get the sense that something is missing, that we don’t have all the facts. It takes a little time and a little digging before we can really understand how all the pieces fit into the larger puzzle.

For example, in the Gospel of Luke, we get a detailed account of what went on during Jesus’s earthly ministry. We read about His birth. We hear His sermons and see His miracles. We watch Him die on a cross and rise again three days later. With meticulous research, Luke laid it all out for us.

But even Luke knew his Gospel was only part of the story. So, he penned a sequel: the book of Acts.

In Acts, we get “the rest of the story.” We see what happened after Jesus went back to heaven. We find out how the church was started and how it began to spread from Jerusalem to Judea and even Samaria. Eventually, we discover how the story of Jesus reached the ends of the known world in just a few short years.

Most important, we see that the early church was made of imperfect people. Peter, John, Paul, and the other heroes of the faith in Acts weren’t perfect. They were just forgiven. They messed up just like everyone else; but they all recognized their need for a Savior, and they allowed Jesus to be their Savior.

The Bible makes it clear that none of us are perfect (Rom. 3:23), which means all of us need a Savior too. Thankfully, the Bible also makes it clear that Jesus died so we could find forgiveness. Thanks to Him, we have hope. There’s more to our story! If you’re ready to accept the salvation that only He can provide, here’s what you need to do . . .

- **Admit** to God that you are a sinner. Repent, turning from your sin.
- **By faith receive** Jesus as God’s Son and accept His gift of forgiveness from sin. He took the penalty for your sin by dying on the cross.
- **Confess** your faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. You may pray a prayer similar to this as you call on God to save you: “Dear God, I know that You love me. I confess my sin and need of salvation. I turn away from my sin and place my faith in Jesus as my Savior and Lord. In the name of Jesus I pray, amen.”

After you have received Jesus Christ into your life, tell a pastor or another Christian about your decision. Show others your faith in Christ by asking for baptism by immersion in your local church as a public expression of your faith.

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*Evangelistic Emphasis



MEET THE WRITER

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FROM **THE TEAM LEADER**

People are drawn to stories. We don't have to look far to see evidence of this truth. Great movies become blockbuster hits, interesting TV series get the green light for an additional season, and outstanding books camp out on the New York Times bestseller list for months.

The book of Acts tells the story of the early church. Unlike works of fiction, this narrative offers a factual, historical account. This quarter we're examining Acts 1-12. These chapters chronicle the beginnings of the church and the incredible growth that resulted. Empowered by the Holy Spirit, these early believers took the gospel to new lands and new people groups. God worked through His people to accomplish His purpose in His timing.

Just as He did long ago, God continues to work in and through His people today. As His church, we are charged with the same task the early believers received: "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8). Believers are equipped and empowered to share the gospel message. When we allow God to use us, we get a front-row seat to watch His kingdom grow.

In Him,

Amber Vaden

amber.vaden@lifeway.com



WORD WISE

Terms listed here are identified in the Bible commentary with a dot (•).

Aeneas [ih NEE uhs]—name of a paralyzed man Peter healed at Lydda (Acts 9:33)

Ananias [an uh NIGH uhs]—three men by this name appear in Acts: (1) husband of Sapphira, who was struck dead for lying to the Holy Spirit (5:1-6); (2) the disciple who visited Paul after the Damascus road experience (9:10); (3) a Jewish high priest (23:2; 24:1)

Barnabas [BAHR nuh buhs]—disciple who sold his property and gave the proceeds to the Jerusalem church (4:36-37); introduced Saul to the Jerusalem church (9:26-27); traveled with Paul on missionary journeys (chaps 13-14)

Dorcias [DAWR kuhs]—Christian woman of Joppa who was known for her charitable works (Acts 9:36), also called Tabitha; restored to life after becoming sick and dying

Gamaliel [guh MAY lih uhl]—highly regarded Pharisee who was a member of the Sanhedrin (5:34)

Matthias [muh THIGH uhs]—disciple who was chosen by lot and prayer to succeed Judas as an apostle (1:23-26)

Nicanor [nigh KAY nawr]—one of the seven men chosen to distribute food to the Greek-speaking widows of the Jerusalem church (6:5)

Nicolaus [nik uh LAY uhs]—one of the seven men chosen to distribute food to the Greek-speaking widows of the Jerusalem church (6:5)

Parmenas [PAHR mih nuhs]—one of the seven men chosen to distribute food to the Greek-speaking widows of the Jerusalem church (6:5)

Philip—one of the seven men chosen to distribute food to the Greek-speaking widows of the Jerusalem church (6:5); took the gospel to Samaria and baptized the Ethiopian eunuch (8:26-38); not to be confused with Philip the apostle (John 1:43-51)

Prochorus [PRAHK uh ruhs]—one of the seven men chosen to distribute food to the Greek-speaking widows of the Jerusalem church (Acts 6:5)

Sapphira [suh FIGH ruh]—wife of Ananias (5:7-11)

Stephen—one of the seven men chosen to distribute food to the Greek-speaking widows of the Jerusalem church (6:5); the first Christian martyr (7:54-60)

Tabitha [TAB ih thuh]—the Aramaic name of Dorcas (9:36)

Timon [TIGH mahn]—one of the seven men chosen to distribute food to the Greek-speaking widows of the Jerusalem church (6:5)

BIBLE READING PLAN

JUNE

- 1. Acts 1:1-3
- 2. Acts 1:4-8
- 3. Acts 1:9-11
- 4. Acts 1:12-14
- 5. Acts 1:15-20
- 6. Acts 1:21-26
- 7. Acts 2:1-4
- 8. Acts 2:5-8
- 9. Acts 2:9-13
- 10. Acts 2:14-21
- 11. Acts 2:22-24
- 12. Acts 2:25-28
- 13. Acts 2:29-31
- 14. Acts 2:32-36
- 15. Acts 2:37-38
- 16. Acts 2:39-40
- 17. Acts 2:41-42
- 18. Acts 2:43-47
- 19. Acts 3:1-5
- 20. Acts 3:6-8
- 21. Acts 3:9-10
- 22. Acts 3:11-16
- 23. Acts 3:17-20
- 24. Acts 3:21-23
- 25. Acts 3:24-26
- 26. Acts 4:1-4
- 27. Acts 4:5-7
- 28. Acts 4:8-12
- 29. Acts 4:13-18
- 30. Acts 4:19-20

JULY

- 1. Acts 4:21-22
- 2. Acts 4:23-26
- 3. Acts 4:27-31
- 4. Acts 4:32-33
- 5. Acts 4:34-37
- 6. Acts 5:1-6
- 7. Acts 5:7-11
- 8. Acts 5:12-16
- 9. Acts 5:17-20
- 10. Acts 5:21-24
- 11. Acts 5:25-28
- 12. Acts 5:29-32
- 13. Acts 5:33-39
- 14. Acts 5:40-42
- 15. Acts 6:1-4
- 16. Acts 6:5-7
- 17. Acts 6:8-10
- 18. Acts 6:11-15
- 19. Acts 7:1-5
- 20. Acts 7:6-8
- 21. Acts 7:9-12
- 22. Acts 7:13-16
- 23. Acts 7:17-22
- 24. Acts 7:23-26
- 25. Acts 7:27-28
- 26. Acts 7:29-32
- 27. Acts 7:33-36
- 28. Acts 7:37-40
- 29. Acts 7:41-43
- 30. Acts 7:44-50
- 31. Acts 7:51-53

AUGUST

- 1. Acts 7:54-60
- 2. Acts 8:1-3
- 3. Acts 8:4-8
- 4. Acts 8:9-13
- 5. Acts 8:14-19
- 6. Acts 8:20-25
- 7. Acts 8:26-33
- 8. Acts 8:34-40
- 9. Acts 9:1-9
- 10. Acts 9:10-16
- 11. Acts 9:17-19
- 12. Acts 9:20-25
- 13. Acts 9:26-31
- 14. Acts 9:32-35
- 15. Acts 9:36-43
- 16. Acts 10:1-8
- 17. Acts 10:9-16
- 18. Acts 10:17-26
- 19. Acts 10:27-33
- 20. Acts 10:34-43
- 21. Acts 10:44-48
- 22. Acts 11:1-9
- 23. Acts 11:10-18
- 24. Acts 11:19-21
- 25. Acts 11:22-26
- 26. Acts 11:27-30
- 27. Acts 12:1-5
- 28. Acts 12:6-10
- 29. Acts 12:11-16
- 30. Acts 12:17-19
- 31. Acts 12:20-25

BIBLICAL BACKGROUND

BACKGROUND

The book of Acts is “Part Two” of Luke’s correspondence with Theophilus (Luke 1:3; Acts 1:1-2). The Gospel of Luke relates “all that Jesus began to do and teach” (Acts 1:1), Acts relates the advancement of Christ’s gospel through His church. Acts 1-12 feature Peter as the central character in the early formation and growth of the church. Toward the end of this section, the conversion of Saul of Tarsus paves the way for the second half of Acts.

PURPOSE

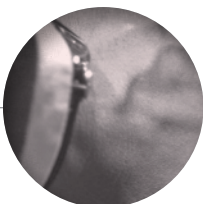
Luke wanted Theophilus to appreciate the incomparable power of the gospel. More than a historical narrative, Acts emphasizes the work of the Holy Spirit through the lives of Jesus’s followers as they obeyed His commission to take the gospel into all the world.

KEY THEMES

- **The church’s commission.** Jesus’s final words before His ascension commissioned His followers to a global evangelistic mission. Each section of Acts records fulfillment of that commission in Jerusalem and Judea, and throughout the Gentile nations.
- **The church’s power.** Jesus promised to be with believers as they fulfilled His commission (Matt. 28:18-20). In Acts 1:1-9, Jesus reiterated this commitment through the promised presence and power of the Holy Spirit. Pentecost was only the beginning of the Spirit’s empowerment. Each advance of the gospel—to the Jews, Samaritans, and Gentiles—was accompanied by evidence of the Holy Spirit.
- **The church’s growth.** Acts describes how the church expanded numerically and developed organizationally throughout Judea and among the Gentiles.
- **The church’s leaders.** Much of Acts relates how God worked in and through the lives of individuals—Peter, Stephen, Philip, Saul/Paul. Some names are lesser known, but each one contributed much to the church’s mission.

OUTLINE

- I. The Church Empowered (Acts 1:1-2:47)
- II. The Church's Early Days (Acts 3:1-12:25)
- III. Paul's First Missionary Journey (Acts 13:1-14:28)
- IV. The Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:1-35)
- V. Paul's Second Missionary Journey (Acts 15:36-18:22)
- VI. Paul's Third Missionary Journey (Acts 18:23-21:16)
- VII. Paul's Arrest and Journey to Rome (Acts 21:17-28:31)





Commissioned

Jesus commissions His followers for kingdom work.

ACTS 1:4-11,23-26

Have you ever witnessed a pastor ordination service? What typically happens when a young pastor is called to his first church is he sits before an ordination council and answers questions. The council then recommends approval, and the church votes to ordain him. As the young pastor kneels in front of the church, ministers place their hands on him and pray for him as the church sets him apart for ministry. You don't have to be a pastor to be commissioned for Christ's service. Jesus calls every believer to His kingdom work.

- How does Christ's commission apply to you?
What examples have you experienced this week?
-
-

UNDERSTAND **THE CONTEXT**

ACTS 1:1-26

In Acts, Luke continued the story of Jesus. His Gospel and the opening verses of Acts describe what Jesus began to say and do. The rest of Acts details Christ's establishment of His church through people He chose, commissioned, and empowered.

After the resurrection, the disciples thought Jesus might fulfill the popular messianic expectation by restoring the kingdom to Israel. Despite everything they had heard and witnessed, they still did not understand the realm they were to serve was the kingdom of heaven.

Jesus knew the disciples could not accomplish the global task by themselves. If they were to be His witnesses and make disciples throughout the world, they needed more. Just before returning to heaven, He promised they would receive divine power after faithfully waiting in Jerusalem for the Holy Spirit. Had they attempted Christ's mission in their human ability, they would have failed miserably. Only through the Spirit could they fulfill their commission.

After Jesus's forty-day post-resurrection appearances and ascension, His followers waited and prayed. The promised power required prayerful patience. For ten days, the larger group of followers gathered in Jerusalem, possibly using the same upper room where Jesus conducted their last Passover together.

This extended period did not lack action. They shared fellowship and prayed. They also recognized the need to replace Judas, whose betrayal of Jesus and subsequent suicide left a gap among the apostolic leaders. After more prayer and seeking God's direction, they selected Matthias. He had participated in Jesus's ministry from the earliest days as one of the larger groups that followed the Lord. Still, they needed more than just another partner. Effective ministry required power only the Holy Spirit could give. So, they stayed focused as they prayed and waited on God.



How does Luke's repeated emphasis on the Holy Spirit encourage you to serve in the Spirit's power?

EXPLORE **THE TEXT**

STAY FOCUSED (ACTS 1:4-8)

⁴ While he was with them, he commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for the Father's promise. "Which," he said, "you have heard me speak about; ⁵ for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit in a few days." ⁶ So when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, are you restoring the kingdom to Israel at this time?" ⁷ He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority. ⁸ But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

VERSES 4-5

During the forty days after His resurrection, Jesus appeared to His followers in Jerusalem and Galilee (John 21:1-23). After they returned to Jerusalem, Jesus *was with them*, and gave further directions. He commanded them to remain in *Jerusalem* to *wait for the Father's promise*. Before they could go, they must wait. They needed immersion in *the Holy Spirit*. Only through the Spirit's divine presence and power could they accomplish their task.

Baptism in the Holy Spirit did not mean speaking in unknown languages, but rather receiving the Spirit's power to be Christ's witnesses (Acts 2:1-8). Since Pentecost, believers receive the Holy Spirit at regeneration (see Rom. 8:9-11).

VERSES 6-8

The apostles seemed confused about what their commission involved. They wondered if the Spirit's coming pointed to the *restoring* of an earthly *kingdom to Israel*. Jesus reminded them that they were not to worry about *times or periods* set by the *Father*. Instead, they should focus on being Jesus's *witnesses* through the *power* of the *Holy Spirit*. Jesus's commission served to reset expectations and clearly define the mission. They not only would witness for Christ (something they did), but they also would *be* His witnesses (something they became). The Holy Spirit transforms believers into living testimonials of the risen Lord Jesus.

Their work began close to home, but eventually it would spread to all parts of the world. Jesus taught that the gospel should be offered first to the Jews (Matt. 10:5-6). At the same time, He did not limit God's mercy to Jews alone. The apostle Paul later reiterated this principle (Rom. 1:16). Jesus's witnesses should begin at **Jerusalem**, but then they would take the gospel throughout **all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth**.

- **God is a missionary God—He desires people of all nations to hear and believe the gospel. How do your prayers align with God's purposes? Go to imb.org/pray to learn specific ways to pray for missions and missionaries.**

The idea of offering salvation to the Samaritans and Gentiles must have been challenging to these Jewish men. Jesus had prepared them for this larger ministry by deliberately including both groups in His ministry (Matt. 15:22-28; Luke 10:25-37; John 4:4-9,39-42). Eventually, various apostles preached throughout Judea, Samaria, and regions of Asia Minor, Greece, Macedonia, Rome, and beyond.

Jesus's commission did not end with the apostles. It includes all Christians of all the ages. Over the centuries, the gospel has spread throughout the globe. We share that responsibility. Believers are expected to remain focused on telling others about Jesus. Starting with the people we know the best, we continue telling the good news wherever we go (Matt. 28:18-20).

- **How can our unanswered questions become distractions that shift our focus off telling others about Jesus?**
-
-

KEY DOCTRINE: *Evangelism and Missions*

It is the duty of every child of God to seek constantly to win the lost to Christ by verbal witness undergirded by a Christian lifestyle, and by other methods in harmony with the gospel of Christ. (See Matthew 9:37-38; Romans 10:13-15.)

WITH URGENCY (ACTS 1:9-11)

⁹ After he had said this, he was taken up as they were watching, and a cloud took him out of their sight. ¹⁰ While he was going, they were gazing into heaven, and suddenly two men in white clothes stood by them. ¹¹ They said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up into heaven? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come in the same way that you have seen him going into heaven.”

VERSE 9

Jesus’s departure was not sudden, unlike His initial appearance to the disciples following the resurrection (Luke 24:36-37). They had been intently listening to Jesus when **he was taken up** as they watched.

Luke did not explain the manner of Jesus’s ascension. Unlike the whirlwind that bore Elijah toward heaven, Jesus needed no mechanism to return to the Father. The phrase *taken up* simply means He was lifted up from the earth into the heavens.

As Jesus rose, **a cloud took him out of their sight**. The cloud did not bear Jesus upward but obscured Him from the disciples’ sight at some point. He intended for them to turn their attention from His departure and prepare for the mission He had given them.

VERSES 10-11

Stunned by the spectacle, the disciples froze as they **were gazing into heaven**. The word *gazing* describes intent focus. The form of the verb means they not only looked but kept on looking. Their eyes were fixed on Jesus **while he was going**.

Confronted with an overwhelming supernatural event, the apostles momentarily forgot what Jesus had just told them. Despite His promise to return at the end of the age (Matt. 24:3), they wanted to hold on to Him visually as long as possible.

Their attention was captured by an angelic intervention. It occurred **suddenly** and unexpectedly. Luke’s description of **two men in white clothes** is similar to other angelic manifestations, including the appearance to the women at the empty tomb (Luke 24:4-9).

Addressing the apostles collectively as **men of Galilee**, the angels intended to adjust the disciples’ focus from the departing Jesus toward their mission for the returning Jesus. Their question was not to seek cognitive information but to break the disciples’ emotional paralysis. Jesus was no longer in sight, but they were still standing there **looking up into heaven**.


Jesus had been ***taken from you into heaven*** but would return. The angels' pronouncement addressed several important truths. First, it acknowledged their personal grief as well as amazement. Jesus was not merely ascended, but He had been taken up *from* them. They thought they lost Him forever at the crucifixion and now He had left again.

Second, the angels assured the group that ***this same Jesus*** would return. They should alleviate their sense of loss with the anticipation He would ***come*** again. Paul later used this image to encourage the Thessalonian Christians who grieved the death of loved ones (1 Thess. 4:13-18). Christ's return would produce a blessed reunion.

Third, Jesus's manner of return would occur ***in the same way*** that the disciples had seen Him ***going into heaven***. Granted a vision of future events, John declared Jesus's return would be undeniable as He comes "with the clouds" and "every eye will see him" (Rev. 1:7).

This angelic pronouncement conveyed a sense of urgency surrounding Jesus's final commission to His followers. They could not remain static, hoping to hold on to this moment. Once they received the promised Holy Spirit, they had vital work to do.

Like these disciples, we must urgently carry out our witnessing commission. Jesus does not impart the power of the Spirit for our personal enjoyment but for our participation in His gospel mission.

 **How does the promised return of Jesus add to the urgency we should feel in sharing with others?**

THROUGH PRAYER (ACTS 1:23-26)

²³ So they proposed two: Joseph, called Barsabbas, who was also known as Justus, and Matthias. ²⁴ Then they prayed, "You, Lord, know everyone's hearts; show which of these two you have chosen ²⁵ to take the place in this apostolic ministry that Judas left to go where he belongs." ²⁶ Then they cast lots for them, and the lot fell to Matthias and he was added to the eleven apostles.

VERSE 23

Genuine prayer unites believers in seeking the mind of God. In the upper room, the apostles and other disciples engaged in united prayer (v. 14). As they prayed, Peter encouraged them to select someone to take the

place of Judas. He cited Scripture and the need for the candidate to meet certain qualifications. Any new apostle should be an eyewitness of Jesus's resurrection (vv. 15-22).

While the eleven remaining apostles could have asserted apostolic authority to make the selection, Peter addressed the whole assembly of 120 disciples (vv. 15-16). The word **they** in verse 23 suggests the entire church participated. The group **proposed two** candidates, respecting the right of all the gathered believers to be part of the decision.

Often faithful believers serve without much recognition. The gospels do not mention **Joseph** or **Matthias** (also **known** as **Barsabbas** and **Justus**). Nevertheless, the assembled church knew them and prayerfully considered which should be God's choice.

VERSES 24-25

The believers did not presume to assert their personal preferences in such an important decision. The phrase **then they prayed** demonstrates their commitment to seeking God's will. They knew God had already **chosen** the one to assume this responsibility. This was not a popularity contest but a humble seeking of God's will.

They prayed specifically, following Jesus's example and His teaching about prayer (Matt. 6:9-13). They referred to the **apostolic ministry that Judas left**. Their prayer mentioned that Judas went **where he belongs**. Some commentators note this phrase could be translated as "to his own place" or "a place of his choosing." It was a sad statement of fact. Judas's choice demonstrated he was never a true follower of Jesus (1 John 2:19).



**How can this passage help you make decisions?
What decision do you need to pray about right now?**


VERSE 26

Having submitted the matter to the Lord in prayer, they **cast lots for them** (the two prospective apostles). Some scholars view the church's process much like voting. Others hold to the use of marked pebbles as the assembly sought to know the mind of God.

Regardless of the specific method, because they submitted the matter to the Lord, they could trust Him to lead them in the correct decision. Whenever we yield our will to the Father, we need not worry about if or where He will lead. He guides us “along the right paths for his name's sake” (Ps. 23:3).

When **the lot fell to Matthias**, no one objected. Even Joseph Barsabbas appears to have agreed with the choice. We cannot pray “your kingdom come” without yielding to “your will be done” (Matt. 6:10). Consequently, Matthias **was added to the eleven apostles**. His was not a position to attain or a right to assert but a responsibility to accept.

Believers must pray when seeking to fill roles of service. The church belongs to Christ as His body (1 Cor. 12:27). Since He is its head (Col. 1:18), we are to seek His will regarding who should bear various responsibilities. Prayerfully placing choices in His hands yields peaceful hearts and powerful results.

 **What role should corporate prayer play when a group of believers are making a decision?**

BIBLE SKILL: *Use Other Scripture to help understand a Bible passage.*

Read all the Great Commission passages: Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:46-47; John 10:21; and Acts 1:8. List the key idea for each one. Record the similarities and differences between them.

APPLY THE TEXT

- + Believers are expected to remain focused on telling others about Jesus.
 - + Believers must urgently carry out their witnessing commission.
 - + Believers should pray when filling roles of service.
- Consider how the believers prayed together to seek God's will about an important decision. As a group, discuss how God's mission for the church should impact the way we pray and what we pray for.

- Consider how you should respond individually to decisions your church makes as it prayerfully seeks God's will. Will you pray to submit your will to the Lord's will? Take time now to pray for your church leaders.

- Memorize Acts 1:8.

Prayer Needs
