



**A Simplified Look at a  
Complicated Belief**

**Part III**

**The New Testament**

**Session 18**

# UNDERSTANDING CHRISTIANITY

## Part 18 – The Acts of the Apostles

### The Book of Acts

-Acts is a sequel to Luke's gospel, written by the same author, to the same person (Theophilus).

-Acts records the activities of the leaders of the early Church.

-It begins with the Ascension of Jesus to Heaven, and ends in around 62CE.

-The key verses to understanding the book's message:

***<sup>8</sup> But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”***

***<sup>9</sup> After saying this, he was taken up into a cloud while they were watching, and they could no longer see him.***

**-Acts 1:8-9 NLT**

-The apostles were still expecting that the risen Jesus might overthrow the Romans and make Himself King right then, but Jesus told them that their job would be to spread the message about Him across the world

## The Holy Spirit comes to live in Christians

-On the night before He died, Jesus promised the Twelve that the Holy Spirit would come after He had left them.

*15 "If you love me, obey my commandments. 16 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, who will never leave you. 17 He is the Holy Spirit, who leads into all truth. The world cannot receive him, because it isn't looking for him and doesn't recognize him. But you know him, because he lives with you now and later will be in you.*

**-John 14:15-17 NLT**

We know seven things about the Holy Spirit:

**1. He is a “Counselor” who will represent Jesus to His followers**

-He does everything for us that Jesus did for His disciples when He was on earth

**2. He lives with and in Jesus’ followers**

-this is a very close, permanent relationship

**3. He is the Spirit of Truth who teaches people God’s truth**

*<sup>26</sup> But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.*

**-John 14:26 NLT**

*<sup>13</sup> But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come.*

**-John 16:13 NLT**

**4. He could not come until Jesus had left the earth**

-this is why Jesus did not stay on earth forever

*<sup>7</sup> But very truly I tell you, it is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you.*

**-John 16:7 NLT**

## 5. He convicts people of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment

-He shows people that they have sinned and that they deserved God's judgment so that they will realize their need of God's forgiveness and come to Him

## 6. He brings glory to Jesus

-Just as the Son gave glory to the Father, so the Spirit gives glory to the Son

*14 He will glorify me because it is from me that he will receive what he will make known to you. -John 16:14 NLT*

## 7. He helps the disciples to speak to others about Jesus

-The relationship Jesus describes is permanent, as the Spirit makes His home in Christians.

*26 "When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father—the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father—he will testify about me. 27 And you also must testify, for you have been with me from the beginning. -John 15: 26-27 NLT*

In Acts Chapter 1, Luke records Jesus' last words to the apostles before He ascended to Heaven.

-Wait in Jerusalem for a “few days” until they were “baptized with the Holy Spirit”

***5 John baptized with water, but in just a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.” -Acts 1:5 NLT***

-Day of Pentecost (50 days after the Passover, and so 50 days after the death of Jesus), something supernatural happened

*-2 Suddenly, there was a sound from heaven like the roaring of a mighty windstorm, and it filled the house where they were sitting. 3 Then, what looked like flames or tongues of fire appeared and settled on each of them. 4 And everyone present was filled with the Holy Spirit and began speaking in other languages, as the Holy Spirit gave them this ability.*

**-Acts 2:2-4 NLT**

Not surprisingly, it was Peter who spoke to the crowds.

Peter's message in Acts 2 contains several main points:

*-36 "So let everyone in Israel know for certain that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, to be both Lord and Messiah!"*

*37 Peter's words pierced their hearts, and they said to him and to the other apostles, "Brothers, what should we do?"*

*38 Peter replied, "Each of you must repent of your sins and turn to God, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 This promise is to you, and to your children, and even to the Gentiles—all who have been called by the Lord our God."*

*40 Then Peter continued preaching for a long time, strongly urging all his listeners, "Save yourselves from this crooked generation!"*

**-Acts 2:36-40 NLT**

# 1. The supernatural gift of speaking in other languages was a sign of the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy.

*28 "Then, after doing all those things, I will pour out my Spirit upon all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy. Your old men will dream dreams, and your young men will see visions."*

**-Joel 2:28 NLT**

In other words, the gospel is God's plan to save people, promised by Him and now fulfilled.

## 2. Jesus is the Lord and Messiah

-How did the message about Jesus spread from a few followers in Jerusalem across the world?

a. God endorsed Jesus' message through His miracles, which they had seen themselves

b. The people had executed Jesus, but this was also part of God's plan



c. God raised Him from the dead as King David had foreseen, and as the apostles had witnessed

d. Jesus is now seated beside God the Father in heaven

e. Jesus is now pouring out the Holy Spirit on the apostles

Conclusion: The evidence is clear – Jesus is the Lord and Messiah!

### **3. They must respond to the message**

a. Repent – “turn from your sins”

b. Trust – “turn to God”

c. Be baptized

### **4. God will respond when they repent and believe by giving them the Holy Spirit**

– Christians believe that our lives can only really change by God’s power, not by our own effort.

*10 "The gospel must first be preached to all the nations. 11 "When they arrest you and hand you over, do not worry beforehand about what you are to say, but say whatever is given you in that hour; for it is not you who speak, but it is the Holy Spirit.*

**-Mark 13:10-11 NLT**

This was the first time that the Christian “gospel” was preached, and the results were amazing: 3000 people responded and were baptized. This was the beginning of the Church

### **The Gospel spreads out from Jerusalem**

-The first Christians were all either Jews or God-fearing Gentiles.

-Was the message Jesus only for the Jews??

-What about the Gentiles

Acts 4:1-22 ...the Church in Jerusalem continued to grow as new people became Christians. God performed miracles through the apostles, and the Christians continued to meet together

Peter and John preached the message about Jesus even to the Jewish leaders who had executed Jesus

They faced opposition from the High Priest and his closest followers, who had been the most bitter enemies of Jesus. One young man called Stephen was stoned to death by these Jewish leaders for preaching boldly about Jesus (Acts 7)

On this occasion a man called Saul was involved.

*-On that day a great persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. <sup>2</sup> Godly men buried Stephen and mourned deeply for him. <sup>3</sup> But Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off both men and women and put them in prison.*

**-Acts 8:1-3 NLT**

## Peter's two letters

Peter wrote two letters in the New Testament. 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter

-Written to Christians who were suffering for their faith in Jerusalem and in Rome

-Peter encouraged them to keep living for God because they have the hope of eternal life. He told them that it is worth suffering for Jesus because God will reward those who suffer for doing what is right.

Peter came to understand about the death of Jesus:

- **1 Peter 1:18-20** –

*<sup>18</sup> For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors,<sup>19</sup> but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. <sup>20</sup> He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake.*

**-1 Peter 1:18-20 NLT**

Peter says that Jesus died as a perfect sinless Lamb (the picture is of the Old Testament sacrifices for sins) to pay the ransom price to free people from their sins.

- **1 Peter 2:21-25** –

*-<sup>21</sup> To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.<sup>22</sup> “He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.”<sup>23</sup> When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. <sup>24</sup> “He himself bore our sins” in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; “by his wounds you have been healed.” <sup>25</sup> For “you were like sheep going astray,” but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls. -1 Peter 2:21-25 NLT*

Peter referred back to the great prophecies of Isaiah 53:4-12 and showed how Jesus has fulfilled these by dying.

Peter was fulfilling Jesus’ special command to him to “feed my sheep” (John 21:17), by encouraging Christians to keep on growing in their faith.

He also challenged all church leaders to do the same:

*<sup>1</sup>To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder and a witness of Christ's sufferings who also will share in the glory to be revealed: <sup>2</sup>Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, watching over them—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve;<sup>3</sup> not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. <sup>4</sup>And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.*

**- 1 Peter 5:1-4 NLT**

**Key Lesson: The gospel of Jesus spread because the Holy Spirit empowered the apostles**

The disciples were transformed into apostles of Jesus by the Holy Spirit who came to live in them on the Day of Pentecost. They began to spread the good news about Jesus across the world, and it continues to spread today. The gospel is good news for people of all cultures and races, and can still transform lives today.



