

# Acts 1: A New King is Here, His Reign Extends Over the Whole Earth

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## I. Introduction

How do you see your Christianity? Is it something powerful and life-transforming or is it that thing you do Sunday morning? The book of Acts reveals that Christianity is not another religion. It is the power of God to change lives and the world. If this is not your experience with Christianity, then you need to look again at what Christianity really is.

## II. Acts 1: Goodnews, There's a New King on Earth and His Kingdom is the Whole World

**The Book of Acts**, several titles have been suggested for the book, e.g., "The Acts of Peter and Paul," "The Acts of the Risen Christ." The title that stuck, "The Acts of the Apostles," has its problems: the book records acts of those who aren't apostles and the apostles it does speak of are primarily Peter and Paul. The author of the book is Luke. We know this from comparing the beginning of his Gospel with the beginning of Acts: both works are addressed to Theophilus, who was likely a wealthy Roman official who financed the writing of both works, i.e., Part 1, the Gospel of Luke, and Part 2, Acts. There are other factors that indicate Luke as the author: Luke and Acts share in common 700 Greek words that don't appear in any other New Testament book. Luke was a companion of Paul (Colossians 4:14; 2 Timothy 4:11; Philemon 24), was present during some of the events in Acts (16:10-17; 20:5-21:18; 27:1-28:16), but was not named in Acts as the rest of Paul's companions are. The book ends with Paul's first Roman imprisonment, so Acts was likely written toward the end of his imprisonment ca. 62 A.D. Acts is crucial to Scripture because it picks up where the Gospels leave off and records the first three decades of the Church, thus it gives background information to many of the epistles. It also legitimizes Paul's apostleship. It's not accidental that Peter and Paul are the focus. Acts shows that Paul (apostle to the Gentiles) had the same apostolic authority as Peter (apostle to the Jews). To prove this, Acts describes several things that both men do, e.g., both heal a lame man (3:1-10; 14:8-10), confront a sorcerer (8:18-24; 13:6-12), were worshipped (10:25; 14:11-13), and raise the dead (9:36-42; 20:9-12).

**Acts 1:1-3**, Acts is a continuation of what "Jesus began both to do and teach," 1:1. Thus, for forty days before Jesus ascended to heaven, He spoke to His disciples of "things pertaining to the Kingdom of God," 1:3. Why? Because they were to continue to bring the Kingdom of God to earth as Jesus had begun to do in the Gospels.

**Acts 1:4-8**, Jesus' final words to His disciples contain the key to the entire book. Before the apostles could begin their world-wide mission, they needed something. They needed the power to turn the world upside down with the Gospel; they needed the baptism of the Holy Spirit. The Father had promised this and Jesus had earlier spoken of it (John 14:26). However, this prompts the disciples to ask Jesus if He was now going to establish His Millennial Kingdom. Why did they ask this? Because they knew from Scripture that Israel's salvation and the Messianic Kingdom would be preceded by an outpouring of the Holy Spirit (Isaiah 32:15-20; 44:3-5; Ezekiel 39:28-29; Joel 2:28; Zechariah 12:10-13:1). They want to know if they're now going to sit on the twelve thrones Jesus promised (Matthew 19:28). Jesus explains that this information belongs to the Father alone. As for them, they will be empowered by the Holy Spirit to go out into the world with the Goodnews about Jesus, the King of Salvation and His world-wide Kingdom.

**Acts 1:9-11**, after Jesus' final words to His disciples, He's taken up and the Shekinah glory of God in the form of a cloud (as in Exodus 13:21) receives Him out of their sight. Two angels then inform the disciples that Jesus will return in the same way (Matthew 24:30).

**Acts 1:12-14**, they return to Jerusalem, likely to the upper room where they observed the Last Supper. Jerusalem was not a safe place for them since they would have to face Israel's leadership who crucified Jesus. Those present are the eleven disciples along with Mary the mother of Jesus and His brothers, who no longer doubt their brother (John 7:2-5), but accept Him as Messiah. They were all unified in prayer awaiting the Promise of the Father, the Holy Spirit.

**Acts 1:15-20**, it is now time to replace Judas, who betrayed Jesus. So Peter, the leader of the apostles, speaks to those assembled, who were about 120. He notes how the Holy Spirit, speaking through David in the Psalms, predicted Judas' betrayal and how his apostolic office would be given to another. As he says this, Peter mentions how Judas purchased a field with the blood money he got for betraying Jesus and about his brutal death—his body fell headlong and burst open. Some find contradictions here since the Gospels say that the priests purchased the field, which was used as a cemetery for the poor (Matthew 27:7). And there's no mention of Judas falling headlong, only that he hung himself (Matthew 27:5). Regarding the field, according to Jewish law both statements are true: Jewish law prohibited the temple treasury from accepting blood money (Matthew 27:6). The money had to be returned to the donor. If the donor died, it had to be used to buy something that served the public good. So the priests purchased the field in Judas' name which was used to bury the poor. But the legal documents would've said that Judas purchased it. As for the discrepancy regarding Judas' death, once again, both statements can be true: Jewish law stated that if a dead body was found within the city walls between Passover night and Passover day, it would render the city unclean. This meant that the morning Passover sacrifice could not be observed. Another law was added; it stated that once the dead body was thrown over the city wall that faced the valley of Hinnom, it would render the city ceremonially clean. Thus, Judas' body, after he hung himself, was likely thrown over the city wall, which then burst open.

**Acts 1:21-26**, in order to qualify to replace Judas as the twelfth apostle, the individual had to have been with Jesus from the beginning of His ministry until His ascension. Out of the 120 men who were present, only two qualified: Joseph called Barsabas and Matthias. Having set these two before the Lord, they ask Him to reveal which one He's chosen to replace Judas. They weren't asking Him to choose, but to reveal His predetermined choice. They cast lots and the Lord reveals (Proverbs 16:33) His choice: Matthias. Some see error in the way this was done and they use the fact that Matthias was not mentioned again in Scripture to prove that he was the wrong guy. But according to this logic, you'd have to question the rest of the apostles who also are not mentioned again in Scripture. Some think that Paul should've been the twelfth apostle. But Paul would not have qualified; he was not with Jesus from the beginning to the end of His ministry.

### III. Conclusion

**What does your Christianity look like?** When you think of Christianity what comes to mind? Does the Church today look like the early Church? Is it taking the world by storm and transforming lives everywhere it goes? If not, why not? What about your Christianity? Are you different, that is, transformed and taking that transformation to others? Or are you still struggling with the same things? The Acts of the Apostles is the story of the early Church, but Jesus is the star. Through the Holy Spirit, Jesus conquers the world by transforming the lives of everyone who believes in Him. Jesus becomes their Savior, not only of their eternal destiny, but their marriages, families, workplaces, etc., etc. This story can be yours too; your life can be transformed like theirs was.