

ACTS LESSON 1

Acts Chapter 1

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Memory verses for this week: *Psa 44:26 Arise for our help, and redeem us for thy mercies' sake.*

Introduction: We begin a new study on the book of Acts this week. This is a great book as it shows some of the trials and accomplishments in the early days of the church age.

The Acts of the Apostles is a unique book when compared to the other books in the new testament. In the gospels we see a difficult time period, particularly among the Jewish believers. These matters were due to the persecution they encountered. Many were reverting to their former selves concerning the interpretation of the purpose of the Law.

The Acts of the Apostles details the final portion of that transition. The Persecution enabled the fulfilling of God's purpose in that it set the church in motion to fulfill its purpose after its empowerment. Within the book is a firm pattern for the church regarding practice. It is a divinely ordered pattern of how God organized the local church, its priorities, and how it should operate.

Luke was inspired by God to pen the book. It picks up in time where the gospel of Luke left off. It was apparently written about 65 A.D., at the time of Paul's initial imprisonment at Rome. The Apostle Peter is prominent in the first twelve chapters. From chapter thirteen onward, the focus is upon the Apostle Paul.

The first chapter of Acts details the ten day time period between the ascension of Jesus Christ and the day of Pentecost. One thing quite evident was the unity of prayer and spirit of the first church. In the first eight verses, Jesus set forth instructions for the church just before its empowerment to fulfill the Great Commission.

The latter portion chapter 1 present three events: (1) The ascension of Christ into heaven. (2) The intervening prayer meeting of the church.(3) The election of Matthias to replace Judas Iscariot.

I. Luke Identified as Writer of Acts

Acts 1:1 The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach,

Acts 1:2 Until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen:

The former treatise referred to is the Gospel of Luke which detailed “all that Jesus began both to do and teach.” Little is known of the Theophilus mentioned. However, both the Gospel of Luke and the book of Acts were addressed to him. The word Theophilus literally means ‘a friend of God.’ In any event, ‘The Acts of the Apostles’ was written directly to him.

In verse 2. Luke, in referring to the writing of the Gospel of Luke, notes that it presented the ministry of our Lord up to the time of His ascension. The “commandment unto the apostles whom he had chosen,” in this context, clearly is a reference to the Great Commission which our Lord commanded at the end of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. It will occur again in Acts 1:8. It should be noted that the Great Commission of our Lord is described as a commandment. Further, it was given “through the Holy Ghost.”

Two reasons that cause us to believe that Luke wrote the book of Acts are stated in the first verse. The first is “The former treatise have I made” which speaks of the book of Luke in his account of the Gospel. And secondly, his direction of the letter to “Theophilus”. We see the book of Luke also directed to this same man.

Luke 1:3 It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus,

Luke 1:4 That thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed.

We see in verse 2 how that Luke declares that Jesus was taken up to heaven, and declares that he gave commandments to the apostles, Jesus’ chosen men to bear witness of the things they had seen and experienced with Christ.

Luke 24:46 And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day:

Luke 24:47 And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

Luke 24:48 And ye are witnesses of these things.

Luke 24:49 And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.

Luke 24:50 And he led them out as far as to Bethany, and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them.

Luke 24:51 And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven.

Luke 24:52 And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy:

Luke 24:53 And were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God. Amen.

II. The Resurrection Ministry of Christ

Acts 1:3 To whom also he showed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God:

Acts 1:4 And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me.

The major emphasis found throughout the Book of Acts is the resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is significant in that without it, there is no foundation. Notice as you read through the Acts of the Apostles how frequently the resurrection of our Lord is set forth. The fact is, “he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs.” The many sightings of Jesus Christ after His resurrection gave “infallible proofs” of His resurrection.

The phrase “infallible proofs” is translated from a word having the sense of ‘irrefutable evidence.’ That simple irrefutable evidence was that He was not only seen for forty days but He also was heard.

1Co 15:5 And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve:

1Co 15:6 After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep.

1Co 15:7 After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles.

1Co 15:8 And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time.

During the 40 days, Jesus spoke “of things pertaining to the kingdom of God.” The kingdom of God is pronounced in the gospels, appearing more than fifty times. In Acts, the emphasis shifts to the church. From here to the end of the New Testament, the kingdom is mentioned only a fraction of the times it was in the gospels.

Though all believers will someday be in the kingdom, it, by its very nature, is Jewish in character. The church, by its nature, would prove to be largely gentile. Jesus, in his final days prior to the ascension, however, continued to speak to His Jewish brethren of things pertaining to the coming kingdom.

As our Lord assembled together with the apostles in the forty days prior to His ascension, He “commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father.” The promise referred to, no doubt, is given in Luke 24:49 where Jesus said, *“And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem until ye be endured with power from on high.”*

The promise of the Father was the impending outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the soon-to-be empowered church. The principle set forth by our Lord was for the

apostles to wait for the power of God through the Holy Spirit before attempting to fulfill the Great Commission.

Acts 1:5 For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.

There is much to consider in this short verse concerning the baptisms mentioned. *“For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.”* The English preposition with, used both with water and the Holy Ghost, here, is translated from the Greek word (en). It more frequently is translated as ‘in.’ The Greek word (baptizw) baptidzo from which the English word baptize is interpreted and literally means to immerse— in this case, in water. Likewise, Jesus foretold how in not many days (literally, ‘a few’), they would be baptized in the Holy Ghost.

This is evidently more of a metaphor than the pronouncement of new doctrine which many claim to exist. It is commonly known as the 2nd blessing, being baptized by fire, being slain in the spirit. There are more names for this supposed doctrine. On the day of Pentecost, soon to come, the apostles indeed were immersed ‘in’ the Holy Ghost and thereby empowered by Him.

1Co 12:12 For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ.

1Co 12:13 For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.

We know from our study in John that Jesus appeared unto His disciples many times, and we have at least three times documented in the bible. By many convincing manifestations Jesus declared himself to be alive. As Thomas had to attest, Jesus was alive, and after seeing Christ for the first time after His resurrection, Thomas called Christ “My Lord and my God.”

John 20:24 But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came.

John 20:25 The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe.

John 20:26 And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you.

John 20:27 Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing.

John 20:28 And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my

God.

John 20:29 Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.

We know by verse 3 that Christ showed Himself to the disciples for 40 days during which time He taught them many things and gave them instructions as to what they were to do as individuals and collectively as the church. In verse 4, Christ told them to go Jerusalem and to wait for the Holy Spirit. Jesus taught them many things during this time about the kingdom of God, and we are to be expanding Christ's kingdom as we reach others for the Lord.

The apostles felt that Jesus might return at any time and set up His earthly kingdom. Today, we know that time is drawing near for His imminent return due to the many signs that have come to pass as revealed in the book of Revelation. The apostles were to go to Jerusalem and await the arrival of the Holy Ghost. This came on the day of Pentecost when Jesus baptized the church with the Holy Ghost as was foretold by John the Baptist.

Mat 3:11 I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire:

III. The Disciples Question the Lord

Acts 1:6 When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?

Acts 1:7 And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power.

The next time the apostles were gathered together with Jesus, "they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" The apostles, all Jews, still were thinking in terms of Jesus establishing His kingdom at that time. In so doing, the long lost Jewish kingdom would also be so restored. Their interest in the kingdom at this point may have been more nationalistic than spiritual.

They longed to see Israel restored as an independent, premier state among the nations. They of course knew that Jesus would be the King. Their focus, however, still was upon the promised Jewish kingdom, so clearly prophesied in the Old Testament prophets and spoken of by our Lord.

In verse 7, Jesus gently reprimanded His eager disciples, pointing out to them that knowing the time and dates when these things would come to pass was not in their reach. This knowledge was reserved unto the Father. That truth remains to this day so beware of date setters. What was far more important for them to know was about to be spoken in the coming verse.

The disciples were eager to see Jesus take the Throne of David and to usher in His kingdom. They ask if He will at this time restore again the kingdom of Israel. The disciples knew and understood the teachings of how Israel would be reestablished one day.

Isa 9:6 For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.

Isa 9:7 Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.

Dan 2:44 And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.

Zec 14:9 And the LORD shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one LORD, and his name one.

In verse 7 Jesus tells the disciples that it is not for them to know the time when God would choose to establish His Kingdom, but only the Father knows the time. And while we look for the soon return of Christ, even if it is another 10, 20, or even more years than that, know that God does have an appointed time for Christ to return.

Just as in the fullness of time Jesus came and was born of a virgin, and there was the exact hour that He was to die, God has a time appointed when the world will be judged, and afterwards, the Millennial Kingdom of Christ will be established. Note that Jesus never denied there would be a kingdom, but he simply tells them it is not in their ability to know the exact time and hour.

IV. The Church Was to Receive Power to Carry out the Great Commission

Acts 1:8 But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

Acts 1:9 And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight.

Jesus told His disciples that they would “receive power” when the Holy Ghost came upon them. The reference of the holy Ghost coming upon them is an Old Testament concept which essentially refers to the New Testament principle of being filled with the Holy Ghost. In numerous places throughout the Old Testament, when the Spirit of God came upon someone, he inevitably was endued with special power by the Holy Ghost.

Jesus used a phrase familiar to his hearers, however the greater truth was, when the Holy ghost came upon them, they would “receive power” for the task ahead of them. The word translated power (dunamiv dunamis) is the base word from which English words such as dynamite or dynamo derive. In each case, the sense of great power being unleashed is apparent. As a result, the apostles would be empowered witnesses of Christ. The word translated witnesses (martuv martus) derives from a family of similar words. They all have the sense of telling others of what one has first-hand knowledge.

The word also on some occasions co exists with a word that means ‘martyr.’ Many in the early church, as they in fact witnessed, became martyrs. Recall Stephen, for example.

Acts 1:8 is the final record of the Great Commission given by our Lord. It is referred to as a commandment in verse 2 of this chapter. In this account, Jesus specified the geographical sequence of the execution of the commandment. They were to be witnesses of the resurrected Christ, first, in Jerusalem. That was where they were. It was the focal point of the crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension of our Lord. As the church was brought forth in Acts 2, indeed they witnessed in Jerusalem. But then they were also to be witness of Him in all Judea. Judea was the province of which Jerusalem was a part. It was the immediate region round about.

The early church quickly spread into Judea. However, Jesus also instructed them to witness in Samaria. Samaria was the next adjacent region, just to the north. What is also significant was the social relationship between Jews and Samaria. In a word, the Jews detested the Samaritans. They did not like to interact with them and would go to great lengths to avoid contact with them. Nevertheless, Jesus commanded the gospel to go to Samaria. In chapter 8, Jesus Christ was witnessed of in Samaria.

Finally, they were to witness of Him unto the uttermost part of the earth. The focus has moved from the epicenter of Judaism to the outer reaches of the gentile world. This was initially fulfilled in Acts 8 as persecution drove early Christians to places such as Antioch and Cyprus. Paul later fulfilled this altogether.

The witness of Jesus Christ was geographically specific, beginning at Jerusalem and reaching to the ends of the world. There remains a principle to this day of beginning at home with the gospel and working out to all the world. There also is the revelation of how the gospel was to be to the Jew first and then to the gentile.

The ascension of Christ is presented here in greater detail than anywhere else in the Scripture. Brief allusion is made thereto in Luke 24:51, Mark 16:19, as well as in I Timothy 3:16. While the disciples watched Jesus, He was lifted up and a cloud literally took Him up out of their sight taking Him up to glory.

We have spoken many times in our studies about the Great Commission that was given to the church in Matthew 28:18-20.

Mat 28:18 And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.

Mat 28:19 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

Mat 28:20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

Jesus explains in verse 8 that the apostles would be empowered by the Holy Spirit for the mission that they were to partake of for the Lord. This directive was to all of us, we who make up the church. The command was to be witnesses of the Lord first in Jerusalem, then in all Judea, and in Samaria, and then unto the uttermost parts of the earth. In the apostles time, they did evangelize all of the inhabited world that they knew about in their day.

I'm proud of our church having missionaries to many churches all around the world, but sometimes we fail right here in our own backyard (our Jerusalem as it could be called), to witness to the lost in our own neighborhoods. Sometimes it is easier to witness to a stranger than to our friends and family. But we are to be witnesses for the Lord to all that do not know Christ as Lord and Savior. In verse 9, we see that after Jesus spake to the disciples, he was taken up from them into heaven.

V. The Promise of Christ's Return

Acts 1:10 And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel;

Acts 1:11 Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.

The disciples were transfixed as they "looked steadfastly toward heaven." As they did, "two men stood by them in white apparel." Though these two are called men, the context makes it evident they were in fact angels sent from God with the announcement made in verse 11. Notice the angels referred to "this same Jesus." The same Jesus who wrought compassionately and mercifully in His earthly ministry is the same one who is in heaven, returning someday.

In Revelation 1:7, the bible says "*He cometh with clouds and every eye shall see him.*" The eschatological event alluded to here most likely is the return of Christ in glory at the end of the Tribulation. The Rapture is described in I Thessalonians 4:17 as being "*caught up together with them in the clouds,*" Furthermore, the

second advent specifically is referred to as “with clouds” (Revelation 1:7) whereas the mention of clouds pertaining to the Rapture seems incidental.

I’m afraid that when Christ returns, He may find many of us standing around wondering what is going on like the disciples were here when the two angels spoke to them. The “White apparel” is an indication that these were heavenly beings, not human men clothed in white. And their message was clear. As Jesus had left, He would return. That means that He would come back visibly, in a body, on the clouds. We have this promise in other chapters of the bible, one of the best accounts is in I Thessalonians Chapter 4.

1 Th 4:13 But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.

1 Th 4:14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.

1 Th 4:15 For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.

1 Th 4:16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:

1 Th 4:17 Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

1 Th 4:18 Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

Another promise of Jesus’ return can be found in John Chapter 14.

John 14:1 Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.

John 14:2 In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.

John 14:3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.

John 14:4 And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know.

John 14:5 Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way?

John 14:6 Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

W. A. Criswell in the Believers Study Bible mentioned an important reason why Christ ascended before the apostles

Only Luke records the ascension of Christ (cf. Luke 24:49–53). Where his Gospel ends, his history of the church begins. The language here simply indicates that

Jesus bodily left this earth and entered into that other order of reality, namely, the spirit world. The phrase “taken up” or its equivalent appears four times in this chapter (cf. vv. 2, 9, 11, 22). The word “up” makes clear metaphorically that the ascension removed Christ from the realm of time and space in which He accomplished the redemption of mankind. He returned to the order of infinity and eternity with the Father. The ascension impressed upon the minds of the disciples four crucial truths: (1) During a 40-day period the Lord had disappeared and reappeared to the disciples. Now they would see Him no more. A formal exodus from the earth was necessary to make that departure certain to His followers.

VI. The 10 Days of Waiting for the Spirit

Acts 1:12 Then returned they unto Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a sabbath day's journey.

Acts 1:13 And when they were come in, they went up into an upper room, where abode both Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, Philip, and Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon Zelotes, and Judas the brother of James.

The mount of ascension is specifically identified as Mount Olivet. His ascension to glory was upon the Sabbath day (Saturday) as noted by the reference to a Sabbath day's journey (approximately nine tenths of a mile). The actual distance from Jerusalem to the top of Olivet probably is less, but within the prescribed maximum set by the rabbis. We know from Acts 1:3, our Lord was upon the earth forty days after His resurrection. Forty days from the resurrection Sunday falls upon Saturday (the Sabbath).

The disciples returned to Jerusalem as instructed by the Lord in Luke 24:49 and repeated in Acts 1:4.

The eleven apostles “went up into an upper room.” This most likely is the same upper room where the disciples partook of the last supper as recorded in Luke 22:12 and Mark 14:15. Such an upper room was not unusual in first-century Jerusalem as a second or third floor area of a private house. It is noteworthy these eleven were all from Galilee. Jerusalem was not their home-town. This large upper room may in fact have been their living quarters as they ‘tarried at Jerusalem.’

In this list of the apostles, Simon the Canaanite (Matthew 10:4) is referred to as “Simon Zelotes” Luke also called him Simon Zelotes in Luke 6:15. This distinguished him from Simon Peter. He evidently had at one time been a part of the Zealot party and the name stuck with him. Also, Judas “of James” is perhaps used to distinguish him from Judas Iscariot.

Acts 1:14 These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren.

This distinguishing characteristic of these momentous days was the unity of ongoing prayer. It is not a coincidence that massive prayer preceded the outpouring of the Holy Ghost ten days later, on Pentecost. God, no doubt, laid it upon their hearts to spend such time in prayer after all they had observed and heard. The word continued clearly implies ongoing longevity of prayer.

The phrase “with one accord” indicates the unity of spirit of the church. In addition to the eleven apostles, the believing women, Mary the mother of Jesus, and His brothers continued together in prayer with them. For those who believe the myth of the perpetual virginity of Mary, mention is made once again in the Scripture of His earthly brethren.

It is also of interest that this is the last time in the Bible mention is made of Mary the mother of Jesus. Though she without doubt was a godly woman, no reference is made to her again anywhere in the context of the scriptures. That should give some indication of her role in New Testament theology. It is quite evident that by this time some of Jesus’ earthly brothers knew Him as Savior.

We see that the disciples returned as commanded and waited in an upper room. They set an excellent example for us as they abode there and prayed, all being in one accord and being concerned one for the other. They were waiting and looking for the imminent return of Christ.

1 Th 4:17 Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

They believed the Lord, and they were patiently awaiting his return. You and I are commanded to be ready for we know not what hour the Lord may return. The disciples were doing what Christ had commanded them... to go to Jerusalem and wait until they were endued with power from on high. Sometimes we tend to get ahead of God. When He commands us to wait, we need to wait. The disciples had learned in their walks with the Lord to believe and obey Christ. If we want to please the Lord, we too will obey His commandments.

Luke 24:49 And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.

VII. The Choice of Matthias

Acts 1:15 And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples, and said, (the number of names together were about an hundred and twenty,)

Acts 1:16 Men and brethren, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas, which was guide to them that took Jesus.

The sum total of the disciples meeting in the upper room for prayer was about one hundred twenty. Though there is no record that the Lord directed Peter to replace Judas Iscariot to return the number of apostles to twelve, the act itself implies that Peter was the under Shepard. With that said, Peter was no doubt directed by the Lord to do so. There was no rebuttal as it should be providing everyone there was led by the Spirit of God and was of the same accord.

Peter evidently was referring Psalm 69:25 as the basis for replacing Judas. That verse will not actually be quoted until Acts 1:20, but Peter begins to allude to it here. What is perhaps more significant is the admission that the Holy Ghost spake by the mouth of David. This is a clear allusion to the Holy Ghost's inspiration of the Scripture in general, and Psalms in particular. Peter clearly identifies the 69th Psalm as Messianic prophecy. He applied it particularly to Judas Iscariot and his betrayal.

Around 120 were present for the first business meeting of the church after the ascension of the Lord. Many believe that the church was originated on the day of Pentecost, but I believe if we carefully study the scriptures we find that the church was started during Jesus' ministry. A couple of verses come to mind that point to Jesus establishing the church during His public ministry. The fact that Jesus set up the second of the church's ordinances with the disciples also points to the church being in existence prior to Pentecost.

1 Cor 12:28 And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.

We see that apostles were first set into the church before all others.

*Mat 16:18 And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.
Mat 16:19 And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.*

We know that Jesus was the foundation of the church, not Peter as some have falsely taught. But we see that Jesus proclaims that "I will build my church."

We see in verse 16 that it was necessary that Judas Iscariot betray the Lord so that scripture might be fulfilled. It was a horrible thing that Judas did, but apparently his purpose in life was to betray our blessed Savior to the Priests who sought to put Christ to death. The Holy Spirit foretold what Judas would do by the pen of David over in Psalms 41.

Psa 41:9 Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me.

Judas was the guide to those who came to take the Lord back for trial that night. We know Judas was number with the twelve, but unfortunately, he never knew the Lord. Jesus spake of how that one of them was a devil from the beginning.

Mark 14:21 The Son of man indeed goeth, as it is written of him: but woe to that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! good were it for that man if he had never been born.

Acts 1:17 For he was numbered with us, and had obtained part of this ministry.

Acts 1:18 Now this man purchased a field with the reward of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out.

Acts 1:19 And it was known unto all the dwellers at Jerusalem; insomuch as that field is called in their proper tongue, Aceldama, that is to say, The field of blood.

Peter continues concerning Judas. Indeed, Judas was numbered with the twelve and had partaken of their ministry. Further details of his suicide are given here. Matthew 27:5 explains that he hung himself. Acts 1:18 does not contradict that account. Rather, it adds further detail. Evidently, as Judas hung himself, the rope broke and his body fell to the rugged rocky ground headlong. Upon impact, his body literally “burst asunder . . . and all his bowels gushed out.”

The infamy of his suicide and its grisly aftermath became known to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. They, in the Aramaic language called the place Aceldama or “The field of blood.” Matthew’s Gospel records in 27:3-8, how the high priests took Judas’ returned blood money and bought a potters field calling it “The Field of Blood.” That parcel of land may well be one and the same place upon which Judas committed suicide.

The church was gathering here to replace Judas, who went out and hung himself when he realized what he had done. This should be a warning to all of us that not everyone who names the name of Christ is saved. Many times, churches are destroyed from within when Satan has one of his own to become a member of the local church.

The bible says we will know who is a Christian by their fruits. If there is never any good fruit coming from a person, we may need to witness to that person even if they have their names on the church roll. Only from the heart can a person be saved. We must hear the Gospel, be convicted and drawn to God by the Holy Spirit, and when we believe and repent of our sins, we will be saved. But it is an individual decision that each person makes on his or her own. You parents can’t save you, and you can’t have the faith to save anyone else. But praise God, we can witness and tell others the Gospel, and when we are faithful to do this, God is faithful to save many.

In Matthew, it speaks of the field of blood.

Mat 27:3 Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders,

Mat 27:4 Saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, What is that to us? see thou to that.

Mat 27:5 And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself.

Mat 27:6 And the chief priests took the silver pieces, and said, It is not lawful for to put them into the treasury, because it is the price of blood.

Mat 27:7 And they took counsel, and bought with them the potter's field, to bury strangers in.

Mat 27:8 Wherefore that field was called, The field of blood, unto this day.

Mat 27:9 Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him that was valued, whom they of the children of Israel did value;

Mat 27:10 And gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord appointed me.

Acts 1:20 For it is written in the book of Psalms, Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein: and his bishopric let another take.

Acts 1:21 Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us,

Acts 1:22 Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection.

Peter recalled Psalm 69:25 and applied it to Judas. His guidance was that someone else should take Judas' place as one of the apostles. Peter furthered his purpose. What is of interest is found in verse 22. One of the clear distinctions of an apostle is defined: One who was a witness of Christ's resurrection.

Acts 1:23 And they appointed two, Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias.

Acts 1:24 And they prayed, and said, Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, show whether of these two thou hast chosen,

We see in verses 20 through 22 that there were certain requirements that had to be met for a man to fill the office of an apostle. The man was to have been baptized of John to take part in the ministry of the apostles. Two men were chosen, Barsabas and Matthias. When the church voted, it says that the lot fell upon Matthias. It does not say that the man became an apostle, but that he was to take part in the apostleship.

Acts 1:25 That he may take part of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place.

Acts 1:26 And they gave forth their lots; and the lot fell upon Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.

In the final verses of the chapter, the account is recorded how that Matthias was chosen to be the successor to Judas. What is of interest is that never again in the Bible is anything of Matthias ever heard. Some say it may have been because Peter was acting on his own rather than waiting upon the Lord. The Lord chose Saul of Tarsus some time thereafter. Without a question, God ordained him as an apostle. There is no record of the death of Matthias.

I think it is important for us to notice how they went about selecting Matthias. At first, they prayed. They acknowledged that God knew the hearts of all men. We know that we sometimes can not even know our own heart.

Jer 17:9 The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?

The men were wise and let God do the choosing. In our lives, in our choices in this life, if we are wise, we will always include the Lord in our decisions, and let him direct our path. We see that we have scripture to back up the fact that Judas was lost and never regenerated. In verse 25, it speaks of Judas going to "his own place." As we mentioned earlier, Christ spoke of one of the disciples as "He is a devil."

John 6:70 Jesus answered them, Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?

John 6:71 He spake of Judas Iscariot the son of Simon: for he it was that should betray him, being one of the twelve.

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Prov 4:18 But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

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