

## Turning the World Right-side Up: Study 1, Acts 1

Studies for Teens by Mike Apodaca, MA



Begin with prayer for wisdom from God and for the presence and power of the Spirit.

Note: In a Bible Study, as much as possible ask the questions and let the students answer. Where they cannot,

supply the answer and keep everything flowing.

Introduction: There was a movie called, *The Jerk*, starring Steve Martin. In one of the scenes he becomes irate and tells his wife that he's leaving and that he doesn't need anything. Then he picks up an ashtray and says that this is all he needs. Then he grabs a paddle game and says that all he needs is the ashtray and the paddle game.

And then he adds the television remote control.

And then a book of matches.

And a lamp.

He walks down the stairs shouting, "I don't need one other thing!" and then picks up a chair and says, "And this."

You can show the film clip with this link:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rSWBuZws30g>

It is in our nature to cling to the familiar and the comfortable. It helps us define ourselves and our lives if we see them in a bigger

context. We know where we fit. Our context might be our school, our friends, our church, our family, or a combination of these.

In the time of Jesus, the Apostles, the twelve followers of Jesus that He called and trained to replace Him, who had let go of everything else to follow Him, had just had to let go of the one thing that had defined them for the last three years—Jesus. At the end of the Book of John we see the great lengths Jesus went to explain to the Apostles why He had to go. Even when He resurrected, their deepest desire was to cling to Him (John 20:16-17)

As we begin this study together, think of one thing that you are clinging to. Think of one thing that would be very hard for you to live without. It might be a person. It might be your health. It might be your technology. It might be your reputation or your possessions. It might be your family or church or friends. The Father wants us to cling like this to only one thing: Himself.

(Go around the room and ask students what they are clinging to)

### Change #1 Replacing Jesus

Read Acts 1:1-3

**1** In my former book, *Theophilus*, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach<sup>2</sup> until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen. <sup>3</sup>After his suffering, he presented himself to them and gave many convincing proofs

that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God.

Some housekeeping items:

1. Who is Luke writing to?
2. What former book does he mean?
3. Why do you think he's writing this book?

Jesus had risen. Paul tells us that He appeared to many, not just the Apostles. In fact, He appeared to as many as 500 people at one time, most of whom were still alive when Paul wrote (see 1 Corinthians 15:6). Imagine the impact of seeing Jesus alive after the crucifixion. Telling you (and showing you) that He had overcome even death and that His death was for our sins.

4. What is the content of Jesus's message? What does He talk about? The Kingdom of God.

The Kingdom of God is the place where God's authority is. It is where He is King. God is about to establish His Kingdom in the midst of these men and women. It is going to rock their world.

## What's Coming

Read Acts 1:4-11

<sup>4</sup>On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. <sup>5</sup>For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."

<sup>6</sup>Then they gathered around him and asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?"

<sup>7</sup>He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. <sup>8</sup>But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

<sup>9</sup>After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight.

<sup>10</sup>They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. <sup>11</sup>"Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? 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."

We could spend weeks unpacking every word and phrase in this section. There is so much here! Let's look at the broad ideas:

What did Jesus say: Don't leave Jerusalem. God is going to pour out His Spirit. Be there. Why is this important? There is no Christianity without the Spirit. The Spirit is to the church as your battery is to your cell phone. Without the Spirit the church cannot truly worship, pray, or minister for God. Without the Spirit, the church is dead.

What did the Apostle ask?: Is Israel going to get the Kingdom back? This isn't just a political question, but a religious one. God was the King of Israel before they clamored for a human king. We will return to this question more deeply in section 2.

**Digging Deeper:** Look at verse 8:

“And you will receive power...”

The word power here is *dunamis*. It is the base word for our word dynamite. You will get dynamite.

“When the Holy Spirit comes upon you...”

Where does the power, the dynamite come from? The Spirit

“And you will be my witnesses...”

Witnesses tell what they have seen and what has happened to them. We call them eye witnesses. Witnesses to Jesus simply tell others what has happened in their lives in Christ.

“In Jerusalem, Judea, and to the ends of the earth.”

Notice the progression. Start where you are, move out from there in ever growing circles. This is how the word spreads. Do not try to short cut it. Move out in the ever-growing circles.

To sum up: The dynamite is coming, you will be my witnesses from where you are and outward in circles that will encompass the whole world.

So we have the first major transition. Jesus is being replaced by the Holy Spirit. Whereas Jesus lived among them, the Spirit will live within them. It is an amazing reality, but also a drastic change of the status quo.

## **The Centrality of the Spirit to Christian Life**

“To live with nothing coming from us and everything coming from God is to live in the Spirit. The Spirit continually gives Life with a capital L. It is this secret which produced the confident spirit that characterized Paul and empowered him to spread the fragrance of the knowledge of Christ everywhere he went.” Ray Stedman, <http://www.raystedman.org/authentic-christianity/the-secret>

“Anyone who is not in a relationship with the Holy Spirit is not a Christian.” Francis Schaeffer, *True Spirituality*, pg. 77

Discuss with the students their ongoing relationship with the Holy Spirit within them. If they have little or no experience, encourage them that our study in Acts will help them establish this relationship and will help them to walk in the Spirit.

## **Section 2: Replacing Cultural Heritage**

Read Acts 1: 12-26

<sup>12</sup>Then the apostles returned to Jerusalem from the hill called the Mount of Olives, a Sabbath day’s walk from the city. <sup>13</sup>When they arrived, they went upstairs to the room where they were staying. Those present were Peter, John, James and Andrew; Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew; James son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James. <sup>14</sup>They all joined together

constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers.

<sup>15</sup>In those days Peter stood up among the believers (a group numbering about a hundred and twenty) <sup>16</sup>and said, “Brothers and sisters,<sup>15</sup> the Scripture had to be fulfilled in which the Holy Spirit spoke long ago through David concerning Judas, who served as guide for those who arrested Jesus. <sup>17</sup>He was one of our number and shared in our ministry.”

<sup>18</sup>(With the payment he received for his wickedness, Judas bought a field; there he fell headlong, his body burst open and all his intestines spilled out. <sup>19</sup>Everyone in Jerusalem heard about this, so they called that field in their language Akeldama, that is, Field of Blood.)

<sup>20</sup>“For,” said Peter, “it is written in the Book of Psalms:

“‘May his place be deserted;  
let there be no one to dwell in it,’  
and,

“‘May another take his place of leadership.’

<sup>21</sup>Therefore it is necessary to choose one of the men who have been with us the whole time the Lord Jesus was living among us, <sup>22</sup>beginning from John’s baptism to the time when Jesus was taken up from us. For one of these must become a witness with us of his resurrection.”

<sup>23</sup>So they nominated two men: Joseph called Barsabbas (also known as Justus) and Matthias. <sup>24</sup>Then they prayed, “Lord, you know everyone’s heart. Show us which of these two you have chosen <sup>25</sup>to take over this apostolic ministry, which Judas left to go where he belongs.” <sup>26</sup>Then they cast lots, and the lot fell to Matthias; so he was added to the eleven apostles.

So we have to ask—Why couldn’t there be 11 apostles? Why take up 14 verses in the first chapter of Acts to explain how Judas was replaced? What does this all mean?

This goes back to the Apostle’s question earlier: Will the Kingdom of God be restored in Israel? What was Israel? Israel was 12 tribes led by the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. In the ancient world, 12 was the number of government. So, what connection do you see between Israel and the Apostles? This is where God is going to establish His Kingdom, with these 12 spiritual descendants of Jesus. This is the new Israel. (See Galatians 6:16, 3:29). God still has a plan for His people Israel. However, His Kingdom is now in the church.

Notice who picked Matthias: God did. The Apostles did not take a vote.

There was once a Bible teacher who was concerned with the many Christians who were trying to hear from God. He made the statement in his class, “There is no place in the New Testament where God makes a choice for someone. In fact, I will give ten dollars to anyone who can show me one place in the New Testament where this is so. In fact, I will give ten silver dollars.” One of the students raised his hand and showed this verse. A week later, when the class assembled again, the teacher dropped ten silver dollars in his hand.

God guides His people—he always has. He answers when we ask for Him to show us where He wants us to go and what He wants us to do.

In this section, the Apostles finally give up their misconception of how the Kingdom would come. They had been raised believing that the Messiah would come as a conquering King over Israel. Even now, after the death and resurrection, there is still this idea. Old ideas die hard. We have all been raised with our own false understandings about God, Jesus, the Spirit, and the Christian life and mission. These misconceptions will affect our view of ourselves and others. These misconceptions have powerful control over our lives. They can debilitate us.

Consider the person who has not been loved by a father. To them the word “father” has very negative connotations. It may be very difficult for this person to hear that in Christ God is now their loving father. They have no frame of reference to understand this. In situations like this (and we all have them) we need to come before God and ask Him to renew our minds in Christ. We need to come with a willing heart, ready to be taught the truth about God and ourselves. The Spirit is the best of all possible teachers. He will take the word and apply it to our hearts and lead us into the fullness of all that is ours in Christ.

**John 16:13-14** <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. <sup>14</sup> He will glorify me because it is from me that he will receive what he will make known to you.

**2 Corinthians 3: 14-18** <sup>14</sup> But their minds were made dull, for to this day the same veil remains when the

old covenant is read. It has not been removed, because only in Christ is it taken away. <sup>15</sup> Even to this day when Moses is read, a veil covers their hearts. <sup>16</sup> But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. <sup>17</sup> Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. <sup>18</sup> And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

**Ephesians 1:17-18** <sup>17</sup> I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit<sup>[a]</sup> of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. <sup>18</sup> I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, <sup>19</sup> and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is the same as the mighty strength<sup>20</sup> he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, <sup>21</sup> far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age but also in the one to come.

### **What have we learned?**

God has a plan. We need to cling so completely to Him, and to nothing else, that when He rearranges the chairs in our lives, we don't fall apart. Loss is a part of life. We will lose relationships,

people we love, we may lose jobs and our homes, and we may lose our health or maybe even our lives. But we will never lose our Heavenly Father and our salvation in Him. Let's determine to cling only to the One who does not change and put our trust only in Him.

## What this Means for Us

The Christian life can be thought of as one great renovation. God is out to renew our minds (Romans 12:1-2), our hearts, and our actions. He wants to create a new architecture in us, one where He is Lord over all in us and in our lives. This process is known as sanctification, becoming holy, or wholly God's.

Many like the safety of the familiar. They enjoy knowing what is coming next. They like to go places they have been before. They know the route. But the familiar can become an idol in our lives. We can define ourselves by what is comfortable and what we are used to.

Our God wants us to be willing to open our hands and let go of anything that is keeping us from being fully available to Him. A. W. Tozer compared our souls to gloves. Gloves are made to fit hands, even as our souls are made to fit God through His Spirit. But when we hold on to other things—things like our jobs, our friends, our family, our technology, our school, our lives—then the glove is filled with other things and the hand cannot get in. God calls us to empty ourselves of these other things so that He can fill us with His Holy Spirit. Now understand, this does not mean to run to a monastery to leave everything behind for God (unless He calls you to do this). We can live our lives, but we must do so under His Lordship and ready at any moment to give up anything He asks us to.

Consider the Rich Young Ruler. His glove was filled with things and the wealth he had acquired over generations. Jesus sees him as a man whose glove is full, a person who has no room for God. He calls him to empty the glove and let God inside.

## Acts 1 Questions Section 1: Read Acts 1:1-3

The Apostles had been through a lot in forty days. Jesus had been crucified on the Passover (He was the Passover Lamb) and resurrected on the day of First Fruits (when Israel brought in the first of the harvest). He had appeared to them and taught them about the Kingdom. Now they were about to celebrate the Pentecost, the day when the full harvest began.

1. Why did Luke use the phrase, “what Jesus began to do and teach”? Is Jesus still doing things? Is he still teaching things?
2. What did Jesus do during the forty days after His resurrection? What impact do you think this had on the disciples? What has been your relationship with the risen Lord?
3. What did Jesus teach about? What does this mean to you? How can the Kingdom be present in our lives?

## Section 2: Read Acts 1:4-11

But now Jesus is leaving. The believers will have to transfer their dependence on the Spirit who will be with them and in them. He will be to them what Jesus has been up till now. They have to let Jesus go and welcome this new chapter in their lives. Notice: There is no Christianity without the Holy Spirit. They could not have started the church without Him. He is to the church as a battery is to a cell phone.

1. Why does Jesus have to leave? What does this tell you about the importance of the Holy Spirit to the church? What has been your experience with the Holy Spirit?
2. Notice the way the church grows: from Jerusalem to Judea to Samaria and to the ends of the earth. It moves out in

circles. We call the inner circle our oikos, the ten to twelve people that God has strategically and supernaturally put into our lives. Who are the people in your oikos?

### Section 3: Read Acts 1:12-26

The disciples also have preconceptions to work through. They were raised as Jews who believed that the Messiah would come to rule over the world from Jerusalem. Even after the resurrection, they still want to see Jesus take his throne. Jesus has to tell them that all things are in God's hands.

After the ascension into heaven, the Apostles are faced with a quandary—what to do about Judas' vacant seat. The reason there were 12 Apostles in the first place was because 12 is the ancient number of government. The Apostles saw themselves as the new Israel. Notice how Matthias is chosen—they go before God and ask Him to make the choice. Since there is no direct voice from God telling them what to do, they ask God to show them His decision through the casting of lots. Understand, either man would have fit the qualifications. Either man would have been a good choice. But they wanted more, they wanted God's choice.

1. God had to change the ideas of the disciples and get them ready for new realities. What old ideas have you had to change since coming to Jesus? How has the Christian life changed your views of yourself, of the meaning of your life, of your relationships, and your future? What has God made new in your life?