

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

JANUARY 31ST–FEBRUARY 1ST, 2026 // BOOK OF ACTS

THE BOOK OF ACTS

Written by Luke, it is a continuation of a narrative written to Theophilus around 64 AD.

- Though it's been named the "Acts of the Apostles," it is about the birth of the Church and the work of the Holy Spirit through the ministry of Peter and Paul.
- God the Father is revealed in the Old Testament, Jesus is revealed in the Gospels, and the Holy Spirit is revealed in Acts.
- It emphasizes the connection between community, leadership, and vision through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit in fulfilling the mission of every Believer.
- It encourages the Church to boldly say "yes" to God's plan, even when faced with opposition.
- It is the bridge linking the Gospels to the Epistles (letters) of the New Testament.

FORETOLD (ACTS 1:15–20) BROTHERS AND SISTERS

We see a continuation of the prayer meeting that was started by the other Apostles, the women—including the mother of Jesus—and Jesus' brothers.

- This gathering has grown to around 120 people, likely consisting of Jesus' disciples.
- Peter isn't sure what it will look like when the Holy Spirit comes, but he assumes responsibility for completing the 12.

WHY 12?

Why not simply continue with 11?

- The New Testament incorporates much of the Jewish symbolism associated with the 12 tribes of Israel, with the 12 signifying the fulfillment of the Old Testament's righteous remnant.
- Twelve were also necessary to fulfill promises, like the one in Matthew 19 with the 12 disciples sitting on 12 thrones in the Kingdom.

JUDAS'S BETRAYAL

Peter recounts the events involving Judas, reminding them that while Judas led the arrest of Jesus, the act was necessary for the fulfillment of Scripture.

- It can be easy to focus on the negative aspects we encounter, but we must remember that **God is continually at work, using all things for His good. God is never taken by surprise!**
- It's hard to believe that someone with an intimate relationship with Jesus could turn against Him.
- **Just because someone is close to the truth doesn't mean they will be devoted to the truth.**
- **We all have a choice, and we face this decision every day. What will we decide today?**

FIELD OF BLOOD

We see a slight discrepancy between this account of Judas and the one in Matthew.

- Matthew states that Judas hanged himself, whereas the account in Acts likely serves as a continuation of that story.
- **This story helps us see the difference between despair and the hope we find in Christ. For those who follow Christ, there is hope.**

GETTING DIRECTION FROM THE WORD

Though Peter had not yet received the Holy Spirit, he still found guidance through the Word.

- He recognized the prophecy about Judas's tragic end and understood that the next step was to find someone to take his place.
- **We can draw the same encouragement when we are uncertain about our next steps. It is crucial to continuously immerse ourselves in Scripture to keep it in our hearts.**

MINISTRY (ACTS 1:21–26)

QUALIFICATIONS

Peter outlined the requirements for anyone who would become the 12th disciple.

- They needed to have been present from the beginning in order to serve as a witness to both the words and works of Christ. Additionally, **they had to testify of His resurrection.**
- While these criteria were not explicitly stated in Scripture, **they reflected common sense and wisdom.**

TWO PROPOSED

Even though Jesus had His 12 disciples, there were many others who shared a deep love for and commitment to Him.

- Among these individuals, two were chosen who met the necessary qualifications: Barsabbas and Matthias.
- While little is known about them, **their importance shouldn't be underestimated**, reminding us that every contribution matters.

THEY PRAYED

The next step after identifying the two who met the qualifications was to pray.

- They reminded themselves of God's omniscience, which means He knows everything. Just as God knew Judas would betray Jesus, He also knew the hearts of everyone in that room.
- Similarly, **we should approach God in prayer, reminding ourselves of His attributes.**

MATTHIAS CHOSEN

They cast lots to determine who God had chosen. This method is similar to rolling dice or drawing straws and is often seen in the Old Testament.

- This moment signifies the last instance of such decision-making. We now have the Holy Spirit, our Counselor, to guide us.
- **What about Barsabbas? What were his expectations? What are our expectations?**

PENTECOST (ACTS 2:1–13)

THE DAY OF PENTECOST

This was an annual feast in the Jewish tradition, celebrated 50 days after the Passover.

- It was the Feast of Firstfruits, and it was associated with the giving of the law, also referred to as the Torah.
- We see powerful similarities here—**just as firstfruits signify new beginnings, we see new beginnings with the Holy Spirit and the law now being written on hearts.**

A RUSHING WIND AND FIRE

In the Old Testament, wind was closely associated with the Spirit of God. In Hebrew, the word "*ruach*" is used to mean both spirit and wind.

- Fire is also used to signify the presence of God, evident in the moment Moses encountered the burning bush and when God descended upon Mount Sinai.
- **In the upper room, we see God resting on His people through the Holy Spirit, transforming them into His living temple.**

FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT

This marks the first "baptism" of the Holy Spirit. **Now this happens when we begin our relationship with Christ and trust in Him for our salvation**, symbolized through water baptism.

- After receiving the Holy Spirit, we are continually filled as He actively works in our lives. **Do we yearn to be continually filled with the Spirit?**

A CROWD

People from many nations flocked to Jerusalem for the Feast of Pentecost. It was at a time in the year when travel was easier, making the feast well-attended with a vibrant crowd.

- The people gathered when they heard the sound of the mighty rushing wind and became the first witnesses of the outpouring of God's Spirit on His people.

"AREN'T ALL THESE ... SPEAKING GALILEANS?"

Imagine their disbelief when they saw a bunch of uneducated people speaking in their native languages, especially since they were not known for speaking well.

- It would be akin to Uncle Si speaking French with perfect eloquence—it's not something you would expect to see or hear, **reminding us God will use the most unexpected people for His upside-down Kingdom.**

DECLARING THE MAGNIFICENT ACTS OF GOD

From the very beginning, it's clear that the gospel was intended for all nations. We may become so focused on the aspect of speaking in tongues that we overlook the true purpose behind it: **to glorify God.**

- **We must remember to avoid interpreting a description of past events as a prescription for how things should happen in the future.**

ASTOUNDED AND SNEERING

Some people were in awe of what was happening—filled with wonder—while others mocked, accusing the disciples of being drunk.

- **When Christ shines in our lives, there will be those who question us—some genuinely curious and others not. Will we be ready to give them a meaningful answer?**

SEEKING

- Seeking is hard.
- **It's not always easy to know if we are heading in the right direction in pursuit of God's will.**
- **While we seek direction, we must prioritize seeking God more than simply chasing answers. We can't let the need for an answer become an idol.**

EXPERIENCING

- What does it look like to experience God in our seeking?
- **We must continually be filled with the Holy Spirit.**
- **What does this look like in our lives? It involves being in fellowship with other Believers, studying Scripture, praying, and trusting God in every aspect of our lives, instead of relying on our own strength.**

PROCLAIMING

- We do this so we can be witnesses, joyfully proclaiming everything that God has done.
- **Are we ready to share this message with everyone? If not, what steps do we need to take?**
- **We have an opportunity to get together in Life Groups, equipping ourselves for the present and future. Are you part of a Life Group? We have the opportunity to pray on February 20th. Will you be here? It's okay to not have everything figured out, but let's trust in the One who does.**