

Forty Days

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Acts 1:1-11

The first chapter of Acts covers a period of fifty days and is divided into two sections. The first division is 40 days long, and the second is 10 days long. The dividing point at day 40 is the ascension of Christ. The period of 40 days carries significance in the Bible. Often, the Bible uses this phrase to designate a time of important spiritual challenge or a vital meeting with God (Elijah and Moses).

- When Noah and his family went into the ark, it rained 40 days and nights (Genesis 7:12)
- Moses was on Mount Sinai for 40 days and nights when God gave him the law (Exodus 24:18)
- The Army of Israel under King Saul's command was mocked by Goliath for 40 days (1 Sam 17:16)
- Elijah fasted for 40 days when he was on the run from Jezebel (1 Kings 19:8)
- Jonah gave Nineveh 40 days to repent, or God would overthrow the city (Jonah 3:4)
- Jesus was in the wilderness for 40 days, being tempted by Satan (Mark 1:13; Luke 4:2)
- Now, Jesus spends a 40-day period blessing and ministering to the disciples.

The disciples, the 11 in particular (soon to be 12, with the addition of Matthias, vss. 15-26), were commissioned as witnesses and, subsequently, apostles (vs. 25) of the church in Jerusalem. What is a commission? “a formal written warrant granting the power to perform various acts or duties.” “an authorization or command to act in a prescribed manner or to perform prescribed acts.” “authority to act for, in behalf of, or in place of another.”

The Foundation of Acts: Luke writes his account of the apostles on the strong, defensible foundation of Christ's resurrection (**Acts 1:3**, *He presented himself alive to them after his suffering by many proofs [tekmēria – plain indications; extremely convincing, factual evidence that helps establish the truth of a claim], appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God.*) For 40 days, he was seen by men. He ate with them. He showed his scars to them. He taught them. He blessed them.

I. The Communication of Luke (Acts 1:1-2)

A. The Content of Acts

1. Luke's gospel “*dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach*” from the Son of God's birth until his ascension. **Luke 24:51**, *While he blessed them, he parted from them and was carried up into heaven.*
2. In Acts, Luke moves on to the apostles' actions and commissioned work (**Acts 1:8**, “...*you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.*”)

B. The Need for Acts (volumes 1 (Luke) and 2). Knowledge is central to the success of the gospel!

1. **Philippians 1:9–10**, *And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, 10 so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ.*
2. **Colossians 1:9–11**, *And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, 10 so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; 11 being strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy;*
3. **2 Timothy 2:15**, *Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.*
 - a) Read the word of God broadly (1 or 2 times a year through the Scripture).
 - b) Read the word of God deeply (A small book or section each day for 30 days).
 - c) Read the word of God consistently (A time, place, and reading schedule).
 - d) Read the word of God prayerfully (Ask God to open your spiritual eyes)
 - e) Read the word of God obediently (Follow the directions for life).

II. The Proofs of Jesus (Acts 1:3)

A. Jesus spent the 40 days post-resurrection frequently meeting the disciples and “proving” himself.

1. **John 20:30**, *Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not*

written in this book;

2. **Luke 24:39**, *See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me, and see. For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.*"
3. **Luke 24:41–43**, *And while they still disbelieved for joy and were marveling, he said to them, "Have you anything here to eat?" 42 They gave him a piece of broiled fish, 43 and he took it and ate before them.*

B. Jesus presented himself to many after his resurrection.

1. **1 Corinthians 15:5–8**, *And that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. 6 Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. 7 Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. 8 Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me.*

C. Jesus continued his teaching on the Kingdom (The Inclusio Acts 1:3, 6; Acts 28:31)

III. The Dynamite of the Spirit (Acts 1:4-5, 8a)

- A. The Spirit promised (Luke 24:49) (cf. Luke 11:13; 24:49; John 7:39; 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7; 20:22), was that the Holy Spirit would be sent (cf. Acts 2:33). (Ezekiel 36:25-27)
- B. The Spirit's Power – 1) To Resist temptation Luke 4:1; 2) discern spiritual things (1 Cor 2:12-13,14)

IV. The Mystery of the Kingdom (Acts 1:6-7)

- A. God is under no obligation to explain himself to us. **Deuteronomy 29:29**, *"The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law. 1 Corinthians 4:1, This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.*
- B. The disciples frequently asked about the Kingdom, a constant topic among Jewish disciples.
 1. The disciples on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:21)
 2. The disciples knew that the coming of the Spirit related to the coming of the Kingdom (Ezekiel 36 and Joel 2)

V. The Mission of the Apostles (Acts 1:8)

- A. The Promise of the Spirit (Pentecost)
 1. The recapitulation of the baptism of Jesus and the descent of the Spirit (Matthew 3:16)
 2. In the upper room, Jesus breathed on the apostles and said, *"Receive the Holy Spirit"* (Jn 20:21-22)
- B. The Mandate of the Church
 1. You will receive power. We are powerless until filled with the Spirit.
 2. You will be my *"martys,"* witnesses.
 - a) It is a person who has observed an act or event (the apostles & resurrection).
 - b) It is a person who presents a testimony by which he defends and promotes a cause.

VI. The Motivation of the Believer (Acts 1:9-11)

- A. The Glory of God – The scene is of Jesus returning to the glory of heaven (Luke 24:50-51).
 1. He was lifted up while the disciples were looking.
 - a) The passive construction of the verb "he was taken up" implies God the Father is the agent that took Jesus back to heaven (Acts 1:2, 9a)¹
 2. Clouds hid the glory of God throughout Scripture
 - a) **Exodus 40:34–35**, *Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. 35 And Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud settled on it, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle.*
 - b) **Matthew 17:5**, *He was still speaking when, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him."*
- B. The Return of Jesus (Acts 1:10-11)
 1. The disciples' gaze into heaven; the human emotion of departure is palpable.
 2. The angels (2 in white apparel) reassure the disciples of their task and Christ's return.
 3. Jesus will return in his glorified body as the disciples saw him go (John 14:2-3, Luke 21:27).

¹ Kistemaker, Simon J., and William Hendriksen. Exposition of the Acts of the Apostles. Vol. 17. New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1953–2001. (56)