

# LESSON 1

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## INTRODUCING THE BOOK OF ACTS; THE WAITING PERIOD

### INTRODUCTION

The gospel story has a sequel. It is the greatest sequel ever written, the sequel of sequels—the sequel to the story of Christ (see 1:1, 2). We call it the Book of Acts. The Book of Acts is unique because it is the only book of church history in the New Testament. Without Acts, the actions of the early church would be unknown to us except for a few facts we could glean from the writings of Paul.

The study of Acts is a challenge partly because of its length. It is the third longest book in the New Testament. Luke is the longest and Matthew is the second longest. Acts is almost the same length as Matthew. Incidentally, this means that Luke wrote more of the New Testament than any other writer. Luke and Acts combined comprise almost 30 percent of the New Testament.

1. What does the word “apostle” mean, and how is it used in the Book of Acts?
2. Who wrote the Book of Acts? To whom? When? Why?
3. From what standpoints can the Book of Acts be approached?

### INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT (1:1, 2)

A noted Hollywood movie-maker said that a motion picture should begin with an earthquake and build to a climax. Using that criterion, the second chapter would have been a great start to the Book of Acts, as the Holy Spirit came with fiery tongues and the sound of a mighty wind. Instead of beginning with noise and excitement, however, chapter 1 starts quietly. It opens with Jesus talking to His apostles and closes with a business meeting.

4. Why does the Book of Acts begin as it does?
5. What were the “orders” spoken of in 1:2?

### **ASCENSION (1:3–11)**

Luke noted that Jesus qualified the apostles to be His witnesses by appearing to them after His resurrection. After forty days, Jesus had done what He had stayed to do, and it was time for Him to return to heaven. Jesus' ascension was the culmination of His sojourn on earth. He had completed His work; He was going home to glory (Eph. 4:10; 1 Tim. 3:16; 1 Pet. 3:22).

6. What major obstacle did Jesus have to overcome as He taught His disciples about the kingdom?
7. What indication is there in 1:6 that the disciples did not understand the true nature of the kingdom?
8. What was the missionary strategy that Jesus outlined for every generation in the latter half of 1:8?
9. What does the word "witness" mean, as used in the Book of Acts?
10. What were the two parts of the angels' message in 1:11?

### **WAITING IN JERUSALEM (1:12–14)**

In the previous section we stressed that chapter 1 tells of the *preparation* needed before the establishment of the church. We noted two important aspects of that preparation: the promise of the Spirit and the promise of Christ's return. In this section, we will see what else was needed to prepare the disciples. This stage of the preparation occurred as the apostles waited in Jerusalem.

11. Why was Jerusalem probably the last place to which the disciples wanted to go?
12. Who was probably included in the term "the women" in 1:14?
13. What do we know from the Scriptures that the little group of waiting disciples did before the day of Pentecost?

## **REPLACEMENT OF JUDAS (1:15–26)**

The apostles and others had one more task to do during the waiting period: They had to secure a replacement for Judas.

14. How can we reason that Judas was not chosen for the purpose of betraying Jesus?
15. Why was the field in which Judas died called “a potter’s field” (Mt. 27:7)?
16. To which Psalms did Peter refer in 1:20?
17. What were the qualifications for Judas’ replacement?
18. Why was this replacement necessary?
19. What did the disciples do in 1:26 when “they drew lots for them”?
20. Had God intended for Paul to be the twelfth apostle?