

Intermission

The Ascension and Calling of Matthias

Acts 1:1 In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach,

² until the day when he was taken up, after he had given commands through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen.

³ He presented himself alive to them after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God.

⁴ And while staying with them he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, “you heard from me;

⁵ for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.”

⁶ So when they had come together, they asked him, “Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?”

⁷ He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority.

⁸ But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

⁹ And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight.

¹⁰ And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes,

¹¹ and said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.”

¹² Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day’s journey away.

¹³ And when they had entered, they went up to the upper room, where they were staying, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot and Judas the son of James.

¹⁴ All these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers.

¹⁵ In those days Peter stood up among the brothers (the company of persons was in all about 120) and said,

¹⁶ “Brothers, the Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke beforehand by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus.

¹⁷ For he was numbered among us and was allotted his share in this ministry.”

¹⁸ (Now this man acquired a field with the reward of his wickedness, and falling headlong he burst open in the middle and all his bowels gushed out.

¹⁹ And it became known to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the field was called in their own language Akeldama, that is, Field of Blood.)

²⁰ “For it is written in the Book of Psalms,

“ ‘*May his camp become desolate,
and let there be no one to dwell in it*’;

and

“ ‘*Let another take his office.*’

²¹ So one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us,

²² beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us—one of these men must become with us a witness to his resurrection.”

²³ And they put forward two, Joseph called Barsabbas, who was also called Justus, and Matthias.

²⁴ And they prayed and said, “You, Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which one of these two you have chosen

²⁵ to take the place in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place.”

²⁶ And they cast lots for them, and the lot fell on Matthias, and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.

Acts 1:1-26

He Really Is Alive!

Was it really possible? He had told them over and over again, but they didn't believe. They wouldn't hear. Now, he had appeared to them all, together, in the same locked room after hearing rumors that he had shown himself to the women and to Peter. Could it really be true?

They thought he was a ghost, for he was dead. Dead for three days. Crucified. The most brutal instrument of **torture** ever devised by mankind. Mass dehydration. Charring in the hot sun. Splinters and shards of wood. Infections oozing out of the body. Long, agonizing suffocation with no way to extricate yourself from the impending death that could be days away. It was utterly exhausting and the one who died on a cross finally succumbed because they were totally spent.

For Jesus, it didn't last that long. The night before had itself been a nightmare. He sweated drops of blood in anticipation of the cruelty and sheer horror of being abandoned by everyone—even his heavenly Father. So when he gave up his spirit, and the soldier thrust a spear through his side, piercing his heart and lungs and the water and blood spilled out, all the onlookers saw it. And they knew: He was dead.

Therefore, says one scholar, “We cannot hope to recapture the stunned joy and awe which followed the discovery [that he was alive]; but we can at least pay attention to the many convincing proofs that persuaded the apostles of its reality.”¹ He kept coming to them, intermittently but repeatedly, over a period of no less than 40 days. This regular succession of public occurrences shattered all doubts. He proved himself to be not a ghost, but a human being. They had never seen anything like this, of course, so he proved to them that he was real, physical, and present in their midst. His body was no longer in a guarded tomb. It was gone. He was there, talking to them. They touched him, saw the marks of the nails and spear. He was a human, raised from the dead, alive. “Death had not been survived: it had been undone.”

The body before them was the same, yet different. It had the marks. It ate food. It talked and reasoned. It was physically present. Yet, Jesus walked through walls. He appeared and disappeared. It could be recognized, or not. Jesus had been glorified, given his eternal incorruptible human body after his resurrection—the firstfruits of what he promised would be given to each one of them upon their own death

¹ David Gooding, *True to the Faith: The Acts of the Apostles: Defining and Defending the Gospel* (Coleraine, N Ireland: Myrtlefield Trust 1990, 2013), 33. The following summary is from his excellent introduction.

in the consummation of time, because they followed him by faith. **Imagine** what seeing this would have done to them. Jesus was showing them what it meant to fully themselves after death, not separated from their body, but regaining a physical, tangible, everlasting body related to the one they had before, but reconstituted and reconstructed indestructible—fit for heaven *and earth*.

Jesus was showing them this so that as they began **their mission**, his disciples might know—*truly know*—the power of the God that they were about to tell to the world, through a message that would change everything everywhere. There really is something to look forward to after death and it is inconceivably greater than we could ask or imagine. But it **comes only through Jesus**—the one who alone has conquered death, and who alone has gone before us to prepare for us an eternal home—a new heavens and earth and the restoration of all things. He is the proof of the promises to come. For **it really happened**, just as he said. And now, the world must know of it. A new kingdom is coming. God calls all men everywhere to repent, to bow their knee to its King of Glory, to see his mercies and kindness in Christ by repenting of their sins and turning to God through faith in his Son by the power and working of the Holy Spirit.

Acts 1:1-26—It’s Context and Structure

In asking the question, **why study the book of Acts**, David Gooding responds, “It is undeniable that the modern mind finds certain features of Christianity unattractive ... The really offensive things ... are, first, **Christianity’s supernaturalism**: its claim that Jesus is God incarnate, that he rose bodily from the grave and ascended into heaven, and that he is literally coming again.”² To this I would give a hearty, “Amen,” but add that there’s a **lot more** to the supernatural Christian worldview than this in the Bible and Acts and that people also find those deeply offensive. But this is the foundation for sure. Second, he adds is its “**dogmatic exclusivism**: its insistence that salvation can be found in no one other than Christ, that there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved (**Acts 4:12**).”³

This is Christianity then in a nutshell. And not because this supernatural God is some selfish tyrant who can’t stand others. It’s because **he alone is unique**, the Creator, and the one who has conquered the problems of sin and death through Jesus—who is himself not just a man, but God With Us.

² Gooding, 1.

³ Ibid.

Today we look at Acts 1. It tells of the period **between the resurrection and Pentecost**, by highlighting two important and independent stories. The **first** is **vv. 1-11**, a well-structured story that **centers** upon something most would probably answer correctly, if they were asked what it might be: the promise and coming of the **Holy Spirit** (**vv. 4-5**).⁴ But the story itself takes us from the First to Second Comings of Christ.

ACTS 1:1-11 Chiastic Structure

- A. Summary of the First Coming of Christ (1)
- B. The Ascension (2)
- C. The Apostles and the Holy Spirit (2b-3)
- D. The kingdom of God (3b)
- E. **The Promise of the Holy Spirit (4)**
- E'. **The Baptism of the Holy Spirit (5)**
- D'. The Kingdom to Israel (6-7)
- C'. The Apostles and the Holy Spirit (8)
- B'. The Ascension (9-11)
- A'. The Second Coming of Christ (11b)⁵

The **second** is **vv. 12-26**, another well-organized story that centers upon **the prayer of the disciples**, and whose focus is the bringing in of a new Apostle to bring the number back to twelve, after the death of the traitor, Judas.

⁴ A more common reading of the structure is that it centers upon the question of the disciples, “**At this time will you restore the kingdom?**” (6b). But the internal structural logic of the Spirit-center makes more sense to me. For the Kingdom-center see **SDE**, “**Acts 1:1-11**,” *Biblical Chiasm Exchange* (April 14, 2015); **Miller, PerryDox, Koplitz**, 11.

⁵ **Terry N. Beek**, “**The Interrelationship of Theology, History and Literary Artistry in Acts: From a Canonical Reader’s Perspective**,” A Dissertation to the University of Pretoria (2012), 156.

ACTS 1:12-26 Chiastic Structure

- A. Eleven disciples listed (12-13)
- B. Women, Mary, brothers, disciples, 120 (14-15)
- C. Judas (16)
- D. “Part of his ministry” (17-19)
- E. “Let another take” (20)
- F. One (21-22)
- G. Two (23)
- H. **They prayed: Lord, you know the hearts of all men** (24a)
- G'. two (24b)
- F. One (24c)
- E'. “That he may take” (25a)
- D'. “Part of this ministry” (25b)
- C'. Judas (25c)
- B'. “They” (26)
- A'. “The eleven apostles” (26b)⁶

Since they are each their own story and this is the book of Acts, let's call them **Act I** and **Act II**.

What is their purpose? One study of the book suggests in this regard that for the first two chapters, including obviously these two stories in Ch. 1, Luke is following here a **basic outline Jesus tells us about in John**. There, Jesus tells the disciples that he must go away so that **the Helper** will come (**John 16:7-11**). When he comes, he will be a **witness** to convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment and he will give **power to the disciples** themselves

⁶ SDE, “[Acts 1:12-26](#),” *Biblical Chiasm Exchange* (April 14, 2015).

who will be a **second witness**, so that by the testimony of two or three the thing may be established (**Deut 17:6**).

Incorporation into the Body of Christ, the church, only occurs through accepting and believing **the joint testimony** of the ‘*external*’ witness of the Apostolic message and the ‘*internal*’ testimony of the Holy Spirit ... That joint testimony is the only access to Jesus provided and available to humanity as instituted by Christ in the Fourth Gospel. The Apostles and the Holy Spirit are the joint exclusive missionaries (sent ones) of the Son. But the content of their witness is not complete with their testimony to the incarnation, life, ministry, death, and resurrection only, but with their eyewitness to the capstone event of *the ascended Lord and King* [italics added].⁷

The ascension recorded at the end of Luke and then in **Acts 1:1-11** will complete their witness to the content of Jesus’s First Coming. This is **Act I** of the book. Once this occurs, King Jesus establishes his two missionaries by reconstituting the twelve (**Act II—1:12-26**) and sending the Holy Spirit (**Act III—2:1-4**). This then gives them the complete testimony, all that is needed to proclaim to the world, which

⁷ **Beek**, 139.

is precisely what begins to occur in the first sermon (2:5-41), and from there on through the end of the book and down through the centuries even to our own moment. We have already been given everything we need! We will see this in Peter's sermons which include not just the life, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus, but also his ascension to the right hand of power and the Spirit's new coming.

Before getting into the passages, I also want to draw out several parallels with Luke. First, there is the obvious *inverse* parallel. Luke ends with the ascension and Acts begins with it. Luke ends with the promise of the Spirit and then begins with the promise restated. Next, Luke's Gospel begins, with an angelic announcement (Luke 1:11). So also does Acts (Acts 1:11). Third, Mary is in the first chapter of Luke (Luke 1:27) and the first chapter of Acts (Acts 1:14).

Fourth, unlike say Mark's Gospel, Luke begins with a time of preparation, prayer, and waiting for just the right time for Jesus to begin his ministry. Acts will do the same. This is the function of "forty days" (Luke 1:3) between Pass-over and Pentecost in which we find our stories taking place. Furthermore, this reminds us of the forty days of Jesus in his

own temptation before his mission begins ([Luke 4:2](#)).⁸ But it also reminds us of the forty days that Jesus had [to wait to enter into the temple](#) as a child when his parents made purification according to the law after his circumcision ([Luke 1:21 + 22-23](#); see [Lev 12:3-4](#)). After forty days with the disciples, Jesus enters now into the [heavenly temple](#), even now seemingly still obeying God's law ([Heb 9:24](#)).⁹

[Fifth](#), both waiting periods end in a baptism, Jesus by John ([Luke 3:21](#)), and the disciples by the Holy Spirit ([Acts 1:5](#)). In fact, John had told the people that Jesus would later baptize them with the Spirit and fire ([Luke 3:16](#)), and this is what Jesus now tells them to await ([Acts 1:5](#)). [Sixth](#), importantly, at his baptism the Spirit descended upon our the Lord ([Acts 1:22](#)) and this is what will happen in [Acts 2:1-4](#). The Body of Christ, his church, is mirroring their Holy

⁸ And of course, the “forty” interludes in the OT, especially in the stories of Noah (Gen 7:4), Joseph's death (Gen 50:3), and of Moses (Ex 7:7; 25:18; 34:7) and Israel (Ex 16:35; Num 13:25), and the rules of Saul (Acts 13:21), David (2Sam 5:4), and Solomon (1Kg 11:42).

⁹ I learned this week that Jesus was born wrapped in swaddling clothes, and he died being wrapped in linen clothes. There is a Mary and Joseph at his birth. There is a Mary and Joseph at his death. Simeon announces what Messiah will be at his birth. Simon-Peter announces who Jesus was at Pentecost. These were given by one of the panelists (perhaps Alistar Roberts) in [Peter Leithart, “Episode 330: The Ascension and the Apostolate in Acts 1 \(Book of Acts Series\),”](#) Apple Podcast. Several of the biblical-theological connections in this sermon are inspired by this podcast.

Head—the Lord Jesus. **Seventh**, understand that Luke begins in the context of secular kingdoms: Caesar (**Luke 2:1**) and Herod (**Luke 1:5; 3:1**). Acts, however, begins in the context of the kingdom of God (**Acts 1:3, 6**). In this way, Luke is contrasting two kingdoms, beginning here and going all the way through the book of Acts. **And let's not forget** the change that happens to the Apostles seemingly during this chapter. They go from cowards, scared, heedless, not understanding to bold, brave, understanding, men who are now ready for precisely what Jesus had prepared them for three and a half years to do, all made possible by his forty days of visits and teaching and proofs.

Learning to Read the Bible as Jesus Taught: A Key to Understanding Acts

The Ascension and Promise of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:1-11)

As we get into the text, I've decided that at least for this week, the best thing I can do to you help you understand what's going on is to **return to the end of Luke**. That makes sense, given all the connections between its end and Acts' beginning. Specifically, I want to focus again on that great

theme of **hermeneutics** (how to interpret the Bible) and this great change we see in the disciples over the course of these forty days. Luke told us that Jesus taught the disciples thusly, “**And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself**” (**Luke 24:27**). And again, “**These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled**” (**44**).

I explained in that sermon that this was **not just a handful of one-off passages** that Jesus said, “OK, this one is about me and this one and this one and that’s it.” He wasn’t given them merely an exegesis of certain passages. Rather, he was telling them **how to read** all the passages of the OT. Think in this regard about how Acts begins, “**In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach, until the day when he was taken up, after he had given commands through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. He presented himself alive to them after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God**” (**Acts 1:1-3**).

There is a lot going on in this introduction, but let's think for a moment about these "proofs."

What do you suppose it means by **proofs**? Did he keep having to show them his nail marks because they couldn't believe it? Do you think he was giving them the different apologetic arguments for the existence of God? Maybe it simply refers to him coming again and again to eat with them ("He presented himself alive to them"). I really don't think any of these, except the last, has much to do with the proofs. I believe the "proofs" are proofs that he kept showing them, not just that one night, but every time he came to them and taught them about **how Scripture is about him**. To put it another way, they had an extended forty day Bible Study, learning exactly how to interpret the Bible. This will show itself in remarkable ways in what we will see for the rest of our time. It's really quite extraordinary, because it will encompass the sacrificial system, prophecies, and types in some very unexpected places.

Let's move through these three verses quickly. **Theopolis** is the "**Beloved of God**" to whom Luke is writing both of his volumes. Whoever he was in the First Century, his name

means that anyone loved by God is the recipient of this book.

Luke summarizes all of his Gospel by simply saying it was about how Jesus “*began*” to do and teach many things, until he was taken up. This refers to the ascension which he is about to describe for a second time (see **Luke 24:50-53**). But notice the word “*began*” to teach. What does that mean? It means that Jesus is far from finished with his work. That’s what the rest of the NT is for! It’s just that rather than doing it in his own incarnated person, he is going to do it *through his Spirit* and *Church*. Acts is therefore an extension of Jesus’ doings and teachings.

Luke says that Jesus gave commands through the Holy Spirit to the Apostles whom he had chosen. We are going to see what these commands are as we move through the rest of the chapter. The main teaching, Luke says, is about the “*kingdom of God*.” This will also unfold not just through Acts 1, but the rest of the book and so we will leave that alone for now.

Vv. 4-5 continue the introduction. “*And while staying with them he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, ‘you*

heard from me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.” This is **the first prophecy** mentioned and it takes us back to the end of Luke. “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. And behold, I am sending *the promise of my Father* upon you. But *stay in the city* until you are clothed with power from on high” (**Luke 24:46-49**).

Notice **what repeats**. **First**, you have “**Jerusalem**.” This all had to start in Jerusalem. Why? A couple of reasons, one of which I’ll tell you now. Because this **kingdom must begin with the Jews** who were given the covenants and kingdom of old. Jerusalem is the capital where God’s Name was placed—that is Christ. I’ll hint at the second by quoting a verse in this regard, “**Then to the place that the LORD your God will choose, to make his Name dwell there, there you shall bring all that I command you: your burnt offerings and your sacrifices, your tithes and the contribution that you present, and all your finest vow offerings that you vow to the LORD**” (**Deut 12:11**). The place is Jerusalem and his

Name who dwelt between the cherubim on the ark of the covenant in the temple is Jesus, the Angel of the LORD, the God of Israel. It is from here that the sacrifices must begin, even as **Jesus has just died in Jerusalem** as the once-for-all sacrificial lamb who takes away the sin of the world.

The second repetition is being **baptized with the Holy Spirit**—the “promise” of the Father sent from on high. It also recalls Jesus’ baptism early in Luke from John the Baptist, so as happened to Jesus, so too shall it happen to his disciples.

Moving on, we come to **vs. 6**. In some readings of chiasmic structure, this is the **center**. Although I think this is incorrect, it is nevertheless worth pointing out that it is possible to see it that way, and this means its focus is worth thinking about. **“So when they had come together, they asked him, ‘Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?’”** This hints at something Jesus told them during the Passover. **“I assign to you, as my Father assigned to me, a kingdom, that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”** (**Luke 22:29-30**).

Now, the disciples have had really messed up thinking, along with almost everyone else, about the kingdom of God. They've all thought it must be a *political* kingdom of the order of this age. That is, the Messiah will come and be a king who will rule from a new temple in Jerusalem where he will make even Caesar bow. Curiously, there is a lot of eschatology going on in the modern church that has the same exact idea. And if that doesn't happen, they say, Jesus is not reigning. Amazingly, this is the last time the disciples make this mistake (which begs the question why we continue to make it), and we'll see just how differently they would think about it even by the time we come to the election of Matthias to replace Judas in just a few short verses.

What caused this change? Jesus says, “*It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority*” (7). Now this gets a *little tricky* to talk about. The most important thing to see about Jesus' response here is that he is deflecting the question. His answer is essentially saying, “*Wrong question, guys.*” It is in effect a non-answer. Yet, the language does seem to imply that he will restore the kingdom to Israel. And from here, there are tons of different

interpretations, including both the one I mentioned a moment ago which causes so much speculation about things like Revelation and other prophecies, and also those like full-preterists who completely spiritualize the whole thing so that there is no bodily resurrection, bodily return of Christ, or earthly rule save in a spiritual sense at any point in the future. Instead of driving into that ditch at 100mph, let's keep reading to see how Jesus' non-answer actually became a satisfactory answer to the disciples.

The Lord continues, “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8). This is the thesis statement of the book which shows the geography of how Luke will organize Acts: Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria, the ends of the earth. But it's the focus on receiving power when the Holy Spirit comes upon them that is the first thing that begins to change their outlook about the coming kingdom.

What's so interesting about this is that the Spirit's coming in power which will come upon *them* is actually the inauguration of the very kingdom they are looking for. And yet, it is not the consummation of that kingdom which will

only occur at the Second Coming, but we aren't able to see that yet. The point is, there is a connection to the kingdom and also a disconnection in that it is very clear that the Spirit coming in power is not the answer there were expecting. Nor is his coming at Pentecost the "time or season," for that they are not allowed to know. Yet, Jesus is telling them that the Spirit's coming is to happen very soon. And it satisfies them regarding the Second Coming question. This begs a question, which is **why doesn't this extraordinary gift of the Spirit satisfy our eschatology questions**, especially when our questions are identical to theirs.

Let me reiterate that it is **the Spirit's coming** which I believe *is* **the central focus** of **Acts 1:1-11**, which then highlights what will happen in ch. 2, and which will be the driving power behind everything else in this book. This is the core message of Acts and its implications are everything else we will read. Knowing that there is a center and structure here is not only helpful for seeing this main point, but for interpreting what is about to happen correctly. For in a chiasmic structure, the pairs help interpret one another.

Here is what happens. Jesus suddenly **vanishes**, for the last time in bodily form anywhere in the NT, save perhaps

Revelation's visions. "And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight" (Acts 1:9). This is the ascension, and it is what everything in Jesus' earthly ministry has been driving towards. This is the completion of his earthly ministry. And in it, Jesus will be seated at the right hand of all power and authority both in heaven and on earth. At the ascension, Jesus is now exalted as king.

In one of the main OT prophecies about Christ that people think of, Daniel 7 is surely looming large here. In the vision, Daniel see one like a son of Man coming to the Ancient of Days (Dan 7:13). While some see this as a prediction of the Second Coming, that isn't what the text says. It says he receives a kingdom and dominion (14). This is exactly what Jesus is receiving at the ascension! It is a dominion that is everlasting, shall not pass away, will never be destroyed, and will cause all peoples to bow their knee. This is literally the Apostolic *kerygma*, their proclamation, from this moment onward until the end of the Bible. "At the name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven and on earth" (Php 2:10), for when Jesus had spoken to them, he "was taken upon into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God" (Mark 16:19). The right hand is the hand of power, the military arm, the high prince. It *now* belongs to Jesus the God-

man who has been raised from the dead. He isn't awaiting all power. He has it all ... now. His kingdom has come and his will is beginning to be done on earth as it is in heaven. Not in its *consummated* form, but nevertheless, it is really happening. The fact that you sit here today in his church in Colorado in 2024 is **proof**, because this is unprecedented in all the world prior to Pentecost.

Let me add just one more thing here. In Daniel 7, this kingdom is actually **transferred to the saints** who receive it too and begin to rule with the Son of Man. “**But the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever, forever and ever**” (18). It's the same language. What is given to the Son is given to the saints. And again, “**... until the Ancient of Days came, and judgment was given for the saints of the Most High, and the time came when the saints possessed the kingdom**” (22). Judgment has now been given. The ruler of the world has been cast out. At Christ's death. The verdict has been rendered: **Not Guilty! Justified**. It is happening now, and don't think for a second that the Apostle's weren't reading all this in precisely this way.

We could talk about this all day, but we must continue. “**And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes**” (**Acts 1:10**).

These are **angels**. They **parallel the two angels** in dazzling apparel who were at the tomb forty days earlier (**Luke 24:4**). That's deliberate. These aren't just guys walking around. Even more, there's something going on here that is represented in the **ark of the covenant** and where it eventually resided *in Jerusalem*.

Recall that the ark has **two cherubim that guard the throne** (**Ex 25:18; 2Chron 3:10**). Recall that this in turn comes from the two Cherubim whom God sent to guard the **entrance to Eden** (**Gen 3:24**). Why would I say this? Look at what the men say. “**Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven**” (**11**). This is remarkable, but you need to think about what has just happened.

Jesus has just ascended into the cloud. Think about **Samson's parents who saw the Angel of God**, knew it was God himself, and thought they would die. “**So Manoah took the young goat with the grain offering, and offered it on the rock to the LORD, to the one who works wonders, and Manoah and his wife were watching...**” (**Jdg 13:19**). “**And when the flame went up toward heaven from the alter, the angel of the LORD went up in the flame of the altar**” (**20**). And they fell with their faces on the ground and the angel of the LORD appeared no more to them (**21**).

Now, understand something else. Whenever a sacrifice was offered on the fire at the tabernacle or temple, it **went up like smoke**, like a cloud, into heaven. Also, when the tabernacle and temples were dedicated, they were filled with a cloud, right into the Most Holy Place. Hebrews teaches you that Jesus entered into the heavenly temple at his ascension. “**For Christ has entered, not into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf**” (Heb 9:24). In other words, the ascension is Jesus entering into heaven once-for-all now having offered the perfect sacrifice. The cloud symbolizes this heavenly reality. And these two angel-men are the guardians of the entryway. When they say they are looking into heaven, it is more than just gazing at the sky. It is that these men are at a portal there on the Mt. of Olives, and they’ve just seen Jesus enter the Most Holy Place, right next to Jerusalem, which is the second reason why it must all begin in Jerusalem. Earth and heaven intersect.

Rather than kill them though, the angels simply ask them **why they are gazing**. “**This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw**

him go into heaven” ([Acts 1:11](#)). This verse has been a matter of great controversy.¹⁰ From Chrysostom and Augustine, from the Creeds and Confessions, this has been taken to refer to [the Second Coming of Jesus](#). I believe this is correct and that the simplest way of seeing this is by looking at the parallels in the structure (see structure below).

- A. “He was taken up” (1); “He did present himself alive” (3); “being seen by them” (3)
- B. “speaking the things concerning the reign/kingdom of God” (3b)
- C. Jerusalem (5)
- D. Baptized with the Holy Spirit (5)
- E. “At this time” (6)
- F. “Restore the reign/kingdom to Israel” (6b)
- E’. “It is not yours to know the times or seasons” (7)
- D’. “You shall receive power at the coming of the Holy Spirit upon you” (8)
- C’. In Jerusalem... 8b
- B’. “And these things having said” (9a)
- A’. “He was taken up,” “from their sight” (9b); “they were looking” (10); “gazing,” “taken up into heaven” (11)¹¹

In [vs. 1](#), Jesus is taken up. In [vs. 11](#) he is taken up. Same Greek word (*analambanō*). In [vs. 3](#), he is “seen” by them. In [vv. 9-11](#) they are also seeing. The seeing is parallel, meaning that it is [the same kind of seeing](#). This is not some “spiritual” sight only; it is visible to the eyes. The structure demands that. Hyper-preterists are gravely mistaken. Furthermore,

¹⁰ For a long, but excellent treatment of this see [Keith A. Mathison](#), “[Acts 1:9-11 and the Hyper-Preterism Debate](#),” *Ligonier Ministries* (2004).

¹¹ This structure is one of those that see the Kingdom of Israel as the center (see n. 4 above). It is helpful for a visualization of the comparisons we will now make.

Vs. 1 very clearly summarizes the *First Coming of Christ*. Then the ascension. We've just seen the ascension restated and now his coming again is parallel, which must mean Luke wants us to know this is the *Second Coming*. This is the times and seasons which the disciples wanted to know about, but Jesus would not tell them. And it is the angel's announcement here to them that finally settles the matter in their mind. It doesn't matter when he comes to them because Jesus is reigning now and he is giving them a gift of unimaginable power and measure.

Because our temptation is to stand there gazing up into heaven as well, listen to Spurgeon in a sermon on this

There are good brethren in the world who are impractical. The grand doctrine of the Second Advent makes them stand with open mouths, peering into the skies, so that I am ready to say, "Ye men of Plymouth, why stand ye here gazing up into Heaven?" The fact that Jesus Christ is to come again, is not a reason for star-gazing, but for working in the power of the Holy Ghost. Be not so taken up with speculations as to prefer a Bible-reading over an obscure passage in the Revelation to teaching in a Ragged-school or discoursing to the poor concerning Jesus. We must be done with daydreams,

and get to work. I believe in eggs, but we must get chickens out of them. I do not mind how big your egg is, it may be an ostrich's egg if you like; but if there is nothing in it, pray clear away the shell. If something comes of your speculations, God bless them; and even if you should go a little further than I think it wise to venture in that direction, still, if you are thereby made more useful, God be praised for it! We want facts, --deeds done, souls saved.¹²

Before moving to the second story, let me give just a couple more things to think about as far as what we've just seen. There are **parallels** here, deliberate, with other **OT stories**. For example, **Moses ascends to the cloud**, receives the law, and delivers it to the people. He was changed, and the people knew it. Or think on the **ascension of Elijah** where after going into heaven, his protégé Elisha is clothed with power from on high, given a double portion of his spirit (**2Kgs 2:9-15**). These were types, OT shadowy echoes of that find their ultimate expression not just in Jesus' ascension, but in what is about to happen to his church.

The Choosing of Matthias (Acts 1:12-26)

¹² C. H. Spurgeon, "An All-Round Ministry Addresses to Ministers and Students."

The second story of Acts 1 still takes place **before the day of Pentecost**. They have returned to Jerusalem from the Mt. of Olives, a Sabbath's days journey away (**Acts 1:12**). They go back to the upper room where they had been staying since Passover (**13**). Luke tells us first that **the eleven** remaining Apostles are present. He puts them into pairs: **Peter and John** begin the list. They will play the most prominent role as characters to begin Acts. Then we have **James and Andrew**. James will figure in Acts when he is martyred. He is John's brother and Andrew is Peter's. **Philip and Thomas** come next, then **Bartholomew and Matthew**, then **James the son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot** and finally **Judas the son of James** (**13**).

Let's not dwell on them, for we have discussed them at length in Luke's Gospel. He continues, "**All these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer**" (**14**). This is **foreshadowing** of what will happen as the church expands later in the book, for the idea with more things added will occur on more than one occasion (**2:42; 6:4; etc.**). Then we learn that it isn't only them present. They were "**together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers**" (**1:14b**). This is **Mary's cameo** in Acts and it serves

to bring Jesus' birth story together with this, the birth of his church, by **connecting her to both events**. What astonishing gifts God gave to this woman! His brothers are also there, apparently now having believed. Jesus' mother and brothers are those who believe, yes, but God was pleased to actually save his half-brothers through their shared mother. And God always has worked like this, through families, saving them to the thousandth generation of those who love him.

We see next that **Peter stands up** and begins to announce something. Some have pointed out that Peter's name was also **Simon** and that **Simeon** is the counterpart at Jesus' birth announcement. It adds what seems to be a throw-away line that "**the company of persons was in all about 120.**" But I want you to think about what Luke is doing with this number, for our author has himself learned a very important thing. That is, **the entire Scripture is about Jesus**—including the things Jesus will now begin doing through them. At the dedication of the temple, Solomon sacrificed 120 thousand sheep (**2Chr 7:5**), vestibule of his temple was 120 cubits high (**2Chr 3:4**), he had 120 priest consecrate it (**2Chr 5:12**). There were 120 Kohathite singers (**1Chr 15:5**). Hiram gave him 120 talents of gold to help him built it (**1Kg 9:14**; see

also the queen of Sheba; **1Kg 10:10**). This is a priestly-kingly number associated with the temple.¹³ And as we know from Peter himself, God’s church is a “**royal priesthood**” (**1Pet 2:9**). It is not accidental that this number was chosen. Luke knows how to read his Scripture. The 120 represent **the dedication of a new temple** is about to take place—Jesus’ temple—his church.

The focus of Peter’s address shows that he has also learned how to interpret Scripture. “**Brothers, the Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke beforehand by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus. For he was numbered among us and was allotted his share in this ministry**” (**Acts 1:16-17**). There’s a lot going on here, so let’s take it in some kind of reasonable order.

First, how would Peter know something was being fulfilled in Judas’ betrayal? Our minds probably think of what he will say after Luke’s parenthesis in **vv. 18-19**. Peter says, “**For it is written in the Book of Psalms, ‘May his camp become desolate, and let there be no one to dwell in it’ and ‘Let another take his office’**” (**20**). The first comes from **Ps 69:25**.

¹³ Apparently, the Babylonians knew this too, for there were 120 satraps in Darius’ kingdom (Dan 6:1).

The second from **109:8**. In a nutshell, Jesus has taught Peter that **the Psalms are about him**. Not in some cookie cutter way, but according to all of the multifaceted cuts of the diamond that are his incarnation, ministry, betrayal, death, resurrection, ascension, sending of the Spirit, church, and so on.

But while our minds usually only think of prophecies, let's think about these in relation to what Luke says just before it. Put into a parenthesis in the ESV it says, “(Now this man acquired a field with the reward of his wickedness, and falling headlong he burst open in the middle and all his bowels gushed out. And it became known to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the field was called in their own language Akeldama, that is, Field of Blood).” This serves more than just the purpose of giving us the historical data concerning what happened to Judas. We are encouraged by Peter's quotation to **read this in light of the OT as well**.

When we do, we discover some amazing things, especially as it regards the intermediate time between **the end of David's reign** (Jesus is the Son of David) and the beginning of the **reign of Solomon** (his son). 1Kgs 2 tells us about Solomon (we've just seen him with “120”), replacing **Joab the**

traitor with **Benaiah** the son of Jehoiada (**1Kg 2:25**). What happened in that story is a profound parallel to Judas. Joab committed treachery against David and so Solomon had him put to death. We are told that he was buried in his “**wilderness house**” (**34**). Well, Peter quotes the Psalm that Judas’ **house** would remain **desolate**. When Judas killed himself, his body burst open and his guts gush out. They stated to call the place the “**Field of Blood.**” Solomon commanded Benaiah to kill Joab because “*the guilt for the blood that Joab shed without cause ... bring back his bloody deeds on his own head ... so shall their blood come back on the head of Joab*” (**31-33**).

Apparently, Luke and Peter both saw this story as **a type** of what was being ultimately fulfilled in their own days, as the Davidic king was now ascending to heaven and his kingdom would now be ruled by another—his church. We can reinforce this interpretation because in the next chapter of Kings, **Solomon is given the Spirit of Wisdom** to rule over Israel (**1Kg 3:12**), and this is precisely what we will now see as Peter leads the others into their first judgment for the church, the electing of a man to take Judas’ office.

Peter begins that it must be “one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us—one of these men must become with us a witness to his resurrection” ([Acts 1:21-22](#)). It quickly becomes a story that reminds us of a kind of reversal of Jesus’ trial. “And they put forward two, Joseph called Barsabbas, who was also called Justus.” His name means “A son that suspends the water,” but his name looks a lot like Barabbas. The fact that he is a Joseph means that there is now a Mary and Joseph called out at Jesus’ birth, his death, and now here.

The other is Matthias (“Gift of God”). We really don’t know much about him. In the Bible, he is only mentioned here. Clement of Alexandria refers once to Zacchaeus that could be read as Matthias, but it doesn’t seem that Zacchaeus was always with Jesus during his ministry. The Clementine Recognitions identify him as Barnabas, but why would Luke tell us much about Barnabas later without mentioning this? Eastern tradition says he first planted churches in Cappadocia. Nicephorus the historian says he preached in Judaea and then east of Cappadocians in Aethiopia (modern-day

Georgia) where he preached to barbarians and meat-eaters before finally being crucified.¹⁴ According to Hippolytus of Rome, however, he died of old age in Jerusalem.

This all simply goes to show you that it is **not Matthias the person that matters** to this story. There's something **theological** going on. Earlier I brought up Peter and the night of Jesus' betrayal where he told the disciples—"those who have stayed with me" (**Luke 22:28**), that **he would assign to them a kingdom** and they would "eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (**Luke 22:30**). This language of the kingdom is what caused them to ask Jesus if this was the moment he would restore the kingdom (**Acts 1:6**). But it is the prediction of **sitting on thrones judging** the twelve tribes that seems more in mind now. For if there are only eleven of them, this doesn't fit with twelve. Peter is seeing here that someone else has to sit in order to bring the number back to completion.

What's remarkable is how they do it. It becomes **the center of this second story** as Luke has written it. "**And they prayed** and said, 'You, Lord, who know the hearts of all,

¹⁴ This all comes from the Wiki on Matthias.

show which one of these two you have chosen to take the place in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place” (Acts 1:24-25). Look first at how they prayed to the “Lord.” He is the one who “searches hearts” (a reference to texts like David telling Solomon that the LORD searches hearts; 1Chr 28:9). But, this is the same title (*Kurios*) which they have called Jesus throughout his ministry. Yes, it is also a word used for the Father, but these men are now praying to the Father through Jesus, the first prayer of its kind after the resurrection in history.

Next, we see that they “cast lots.” This reminds us of something like the Day of Atonement, which is also there in the cloudy ascension ideas we saw earlier. They cast a lot for the two goats and one went to the Lord. But this is not gambling. They have just prayed, acknowledging that the Lord will choose the lot. “The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the LORD,” Solomon wrote (Prov 16:33). In so doing, the lot fell on Matthias, and he was numbered with the eleven apostles (Acts 1:26). In this way, the number is completed again and the prediction of the twelve beginning to rule over the nations can begin to be fulfilled, not as

politicians or kings, but as those who have the power to bring people out of the kingdom of Satan into the light of Christ.

Why Stand There Despondent?

These two stories [open our book as an intermission](#) between the ministry of Jesus and that of his church. They serve so many important functions, but to me the one I want to put into your mind is that [their new understanding of Scripture](#), of Jesus' point in coming, of his kingdom has transformed them. The Spirit has not yet been sent, so it isn't that ... yet. It is how they have learned to read their Bible that has become for them the power of God, for now they truly understand that the Gospel really is all about Jesus. They easily could have [continued in their despondency](#) when Jesus left them, acting just as they had when he was killed. We all have that tendency even when simply saying a temporary goodbye to our loved ones when we go away on a journey.

But they didn't. And it's because their minds had already been renewed by Jesus through the Word. They were coming to see that the fulfillment of the ages was beginning to dawn on them! No, it may not have been the way they thought it would be or even wanted it to happen. But because it came from the resurrected Savior who was not seated above all power and authority in heaven, what would that matter? Jesus was about to inaugurate the kingdom in a way it had never come to earth before. Those were all just shadowy pictures, even during the earthly ministry of Jesus.

For the power of the kingdom comes with the coming of Jesus' Holy Spirit. The Spirit proves that Jesus is reigning now, in his Temple—the church. He is the one witness who calls to you internally to take up your cross and follow Jesus. Today, you've seen a glimpse of what the power did to transform eleven meager disciples and their band of 120. What you will see as we move on are things even more powerful. They now know how to read the Scriptures rightly. And it brought about a powerful call to action. What will these things do in you?

MOVEMENT 1
CHRIST'S PROGRAM FOR THE RESTORATION OF ALL THINGS
(1:1-4:4)

- I. From the Resurrection to the Ascension (1:1-14):
 Christ briefs his apostles for worldwide witness to himself
1. The forty days' demonstration by 'many convincing proofs' that Jesus is alive again after his suffering (1:3)
 2. He gave them instructions (1:2); he commanded them (1:4); 'You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem . . . and to the ends of the earth' (1:8)
 3. ' . . . you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses. . . ' (1:8)
 4. 'They all joined together constantly in prayer. . . ' (1:14)
- II. From the Ascension to Pentecost (1:15-26):
 The gap in the apostolic witness caused by Judas' defection is made up
- "Judas . . . shared in this ministry [apostleship]." (With the reward he got for his wickedness, Judas bought a field; there he fell headlong, his body burst open and all his intestines spilled out. Everyone in Jerusalem heard about this, so they called that field . . . Akeldama, that is, Field of Blood) (1:16-19)
- 'Lord, you know everyone's heart. Show us which of these two you have chosen to take over this apostolic ministry, which Judas left to go where he belongs' (1:24-25)
- ' . . . one of these must become a witness with us of this resurrection' (1:22)

MOVEMENT 2
OPPOSITION TO THE PROGRAMME
(4:5-6:7)

- V. First Investigation by the Sanhedrin (4:5-31):
 To account of the miracle of healing, and to try to stop preaching in the name of Jesus spreading.
1. The healing of a congenitally lame man, over forty years old, constitutes undeniable evidence that God has raised Jesus from the dead (4:9-10, 14, 22)
 2. "Everyone living in Jerusalem knows they have done an outstanding miracle. . . ." But to stop this thing from spreading any further . . . they . . . commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus' (4:16-18)
 3. ' . . . the place where they were meeting was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly' (4:31)
 4. ' . . . they raised their voices together in prayer to God' (4:24)
- VI. A View of the Christian Community (4:32-5:16):
 Judgment on two dishonest members strengthens the witness of the community
- 'No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own . . . those who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the money . . . and put it at the apostles' feet' (4:32-37)
- Ananias and Sapphira sold a piece of property, pretended to give all the money to the apostles, but kept back part for themselves. For lying to the Holy Spirit, they both fell dead. "' . . . how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit . . . ?" . . . great fear seized all who heard what had happened' (5:1-11)
- 'With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus' (4:33)

MOVEMENT 1
CHRIST'S PROGRAM FOR THE RESTORATION OF ALL THINGS
(1:1-4:4)

- III. The Miracle of Speaking in Tongues (2:1-47):
 Peter explains the significance of the miracle: the resultant converts number 3,000
1. The resurrection of Jesus from the grave: 'But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him. . . . "You [God] have made known to me the paths of life. . . ."' (2:24-28)
 2. 'Repent and . . . you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit' (2:38)
 3. 'Exalted to the right hand of God . . . God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ' (2:33-36)
 4. 'When the people heard this they were cut to the heart. . . . Peter [said], "Repent Save yourselves from this corrupt generation" (2:37-40)
 5. 'They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching. . . ' (2:42)
- IV. The Miracle of the Healing (3:1-4:4):
 Peter explains the power by which the miracle has been performed: the number of converts rises to 5,000 men
1. A lame man is laid daily at the gate of the temple to beg for alms. (3:2-3)
 2. The apostles, unable to give financial relief, give instead the superior gift of complete healing in the name of Jesus (3:4-10)
 3. 'The priests . . . seized Peter and John, and . . . put them in jail. . . ' (4:1-3)

MOVEMENT 2
OPPOSITION TO THE PROGRAMME
(4:5-6:7)

- VII. Second Investigation by the Council (5:17-42):
 To call the apostles to account for their defiance of the ban on preaching in the name of Jesus
1. The miraculous release of the apostles from prison: 'But . . . and angel opened the doors of the jail and brought them out. "Go . . . and tell the people the full message of this new life"' (5:19-20)
 2. 'We are witnesses . . . and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him' (5:32)
 3. 'God . . . raised Jesus from the dead—whom you had killed. . . . God exalted him to his own right hand as Prince and Saviour' (5:30-31)
 4. 'When they heard this, they were furious and wanted to put them to death. But . . . Gamaliel [said] . . . "Leave these men alone!"' (5:33-35)
 5. ' . . . they never stopped teaching. . . ' (5:42)
- VIII. Another view of the Christian Community (6:1-7):
 Another wrong is righted, without the apostles being diverted from their ministry of the word
1. Certain widows are neglected in the daily allocation of relief (6:1)
 2. The apostles point out that while the ministry of material relief is important, they must confine themselves to the ministry of the word (6:2-4). Seven officers are appointed to look after the daily allocation (6:3-6)
 3. ' . . . a large number of priests became obedient to the faith' (6:7)

Gooding, Table 2 (pp. 28-31)

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