



'Acts' - Extra Teaching Points #2

Acts 1:15-2:13 (NASB)

Pages 15-30 in '*Acts For Everyone*' (Part 1) by N. T. Wright

Acts 1:15-26 (NASB)

At this time Peter stood up in the midst of the brethren (a gathering of about one hundred and twenty persons was there together), and said, ¹⁶ "Brethren, the Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit foretold by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus.

*¹⁷ "For he was counted among us and received his share in this ministry." ¹⁸ (Now this man acquired a field with the price of his wickedness, and falling headlong, he burst open in the middle and all his intestines gushed out. ¹⁹ And it became known to all who were living in Jerusalem; so that in their own language that field was called Hakeldama, that is, Field of Blood.) ²⁰ "For it is written in the book of Psalms, 'LET HIS HOMESTEAD BE MADE DESOLATE, AND LET NO ONE DWELL IN IT'; and, 'LET ANOTHER MAN TAKE HIS OFFICE.' ²¹ "Therefore it is necessary that of the men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us — ²² **beginning with the baptism of John until the day that He was taken up from us — one of these must become a witness with us of His resurrection.**" ²³ So they put forward two men, Joseph called Barsabbas (who was also called Justus), and Matthias. ²⁴ And they prayed and said, "You, Lord, who know the hearts of all men, show which one of these two You have chosen ²⁵ to occupy this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place." ²⁶ And they drew lots for them, and the lot fell to Matthias; and he was added to the eleven apostles.*

Q: How did Peter know they needed to replace Judas?

- "As with everything else that happened in the early church – and Luke is probably already hinting at this in the present passage – **they went to two sources for instructions: to the Word of God, and to prayer...** For them, the Jewish Bible (what we call the Old Testament) **was not just a record of**

what God had said to His people of old. It was a huge and vital story; the story of the earlier part of God's purposes, full of signposts pointing forward to the time when, further forward within the same story, the plans God was nurturing would come to fruition." P. 17

- "So it was that, from within the life of constant prayer to which Jesus' followers had given themselves after His ascension, they pondered the Psalms which spoke, as several Psalms speak, of a time when God's people, and God's true King, would be opposed by a traitor from within their midst, betrayed by one who had been counted a close friend and colleague. **Here they found, not indeed a road map for exactly where they were – scripture seldom supplies exactly that – but the hints and clues to enable them to feel their way forward in this new and unprecedented dilemma."** P. 18

Q: Why did they need to replace Judas? Why did there need to be 12 apostles?

- "How could they model, and symbolize, God's plan for Israel (and therefore the world) if they were, so to speak, one patriarch short of a true Israel?" P. 17
- "...what the apostles go on to do really is, in the proper sense, **'the restoration of the kingdom to Israel'**, even though it didn't look the way they, or anyone else at the time, would have thought such an event would look. And for that they needed the powerful symbol of the Twelve to be restored." P. 19
- Through Jesus, God reconstituted Israel in the Church.
 - **Rev 21:14** *And the wall of the city had twelve foundation stones, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.*
 - Old Israel was built on 12 patriarchs; New Israel is also built on 12 patriarchs.

- This is significant because God’s mission for Israel never changed... God never abandoned that mission (to take His mercy to the world); it had been passed on to people who will produce the fruit God is looking for. ([Matt 21:43](#))
- Old Israel was unfaithful to the covenant; so she was replaced with New Israel—The Church.

Q: Why was it so important for them to find someone who had been with them “beginning with the baptism of John until the day that He was taken up from us”, to be a witness of Jesus’ resurrection?

- “It shows that, from the beginning, the **early Christians saw themselves as being the continuation (just as Luke indicates in the verse of the book) of the kingdom work of Jesus** which had begun with John’s baptism.” P. 19
- “And it shows that the primary apostolic task was to bear witness to the resurrection of Jesus Himself. As we shall see, if you take that away from Acts, you are left with nothing. **The resurrection defines the Church, from that day to this. The Church is either the movement which announces God’s new creation, or it is just another irrelevant religious sect.**” P. 20

Q: How would you feel if you were Joseph, (called Barsabbas)? Would you feel less important than Matthias?

- “Part of Christian obedience, right from the beginning, **was the call to play (apparently) great parts without pride, and (apparently) small parts without shame.** There are, of course, no passengers in the kingdom of God; and actually no ‘great’ nor ‘small’ parts either. **The different tasks and roles to which God assigns us are His business, not ours.**” P. 20

Acts 2:1-4

*When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. ² And suddenly **there came from heaven a noise like a violent rushing wind**, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. ³ And **there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them.** ⁴ And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance.*

Q: Why was the day of Pentecost so symbolically important to the birth of the Church?

- “For a first century Jew, Pentecost was the fiftieth day after

Passover. It was an agricultural festival. It was the day when farmers brought the first sheaf of wheat from the crop, and offered it to God; partly as a sign of gratitude, and partly as a prayer that all the rest of the crop, too, would be safely gathered-in. But, for the Jew, neither Passover nor Pentecost were simply agricultural festivals. These festivals awakened echoes of the great story which dominated the long memories of the Jewish people—the Exodus from Egypt—when God fulfilled His promises to Abraham by rescuing His people. Passover was the time when the lambs were sacrificed, and the Israelites were saved from the avenging angel who slew the firstborn of the Egyptians. Off went the Israelites that very night, and passed through the Red Sea into the Sinai desert. Then, 50 days after Passover, they came to Mount Sinai where Moses received the Law. Pentecost, the fiftieth day, isn’t (in other words) just about the ‘first fruits’—the sheaf which says the harvest has begun. **It’s about God giving to His redeemed people the way of life by which they must now carry out His purposes.**” P. 21

- “When the Israelites arrived at Mount Sinai, Moses went up the mountain and came down again with the law. Here, Jesus has gone up into heaven in the ascension, and – so Luke wants us to understand – He is now coming down again; not with a written law carved on tablets of stone, but with the dynamic energy of the law, designed to be written on human hearts. P. 22

Q: Why does Luke point out that “a noise like a violent rushing wind” was coming “from heaven?”

- “The whole point is that, through the Spirit, some of the creative power of God Himself comes from heaven to earth and does its work there. The aim is not to give people a ‘spirituality’ which will make earth irrelevant. The point is to transform earth with the power of heaven, starting with those parts of ‘earth’ which consist of the bodies, minds, hearts, and lives of the followers of Jesus—as a community: notice that, in verse 1, Luke stresses the fact that they were all together in one place; the Spirit comes, not to divide, but unite.” P. 23
- “The risen Jesus in heaven is the presence, in God’s sphere, of the first part of ‘earth’ to be transformed into ‘new creation’, in which heaven and earth are to be joined; the pouring out of the Spirit on earth is the presence, in our sphere, of the sheer energy of heaven itself.” P. 23

Q: What is the significance of “tongues of fire” resting on each one of them?

- “Luke clearly intends to describe something new; something that launched a great movement— as a fleet of ships is launched by the strong wind that drives them out to sea, or a forest fire is started by a few small flames. He intends to explain how it was that a small group of frightened, puzzled, and largely uneducated men and women could so quickly become, as they undoubtedly did, a force to be reckoned with right across the known world.” P. 23

Q: What should we expect to see when the Spirit of God comes to us?

- “What the Spirit will do when He comes, is anybody’s guess. Be prepared for wind and fire—for some fairly drastic spring-cleaning of the dusty and cold rooms of one’s life. But we should not doubt that God will give His Spirit to all who seek Him, or that the form and direction that any particular Spirit-led life will take will be (ultimately, and assuming obedience and faith) the one that will enable that person, uniquely, to bring glory to God.” P. 25

Acts 2:5-13

Now there were Jews living in Jerusalem, devout men from every nation under heaven. ⁶ And when this sound occurred, the crowd came together, and were bewildered because **each one of them was hearing them speak in his own language.** ⁷ They were amazed and astonished, saying, “Why, are not all these who are speaking Galileans?” ⁸ “And how is it that we each hear them in our own language to which we were born?” ⁹ “Parthians and Medes and Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰ Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the districts of Libya around Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, ¹¹ Cretans and Arabs — **we hear them in our own tongues speaking of the mighty deeds of God.**” ¹² And they all continued in amazement and great perplexity, saying to one another, “What does this mean?” ¹³ But others were mocking and saying, “They are full of sweet wine.”

Q: What is the significance of the disciples speaking in the languages of those from other nations?

- “But on the day of Pentecost they didn’t need to switch languages, or to worry about translation. It was all done for them.

People are often surprised by this, because many have seen ‘the gift of tongues’ not as a gift of being able to speak other specific languages, but rather as the gift of a kind of heavenly babble, a succession of syllables and sounds, which, though they may sound like a language, do not appear to be so, in fact, neither to the speaker nor to any listeners.” P. 28

- “The whole question of Acts 1, you remember, was of how God would fulfill the promise to extend His Kingdom – His saving, sovereign rule; not only *in* Israel, but *through* Israel – to reach the rest of the world. In other words, the question had to do with the challenge to see how God was going to fulfill what He had said to Abraham in Genesis 12:3 (*‘In you, and in your family, all the families of the earth will be blessed.’*). And this promise to Abraham comes directly after the dramatic and comic chapter in which the people of Babel are building a tower, thinking arrogantly to make a name for themselves. God’s response, as always, to human pride and arrogance, is to overturn the project, and ridicule the people; which He accomplishes by confusing their languages so they cannot understand one another, and cannot, therefore, work together on creating a human society which would have no need of the creator God. Now, Luke is implying, with the day of Pentecost, that this curse is, itself, overturned; in other words, God is dramatically signaling that His promises to Abraham are being fulfilled, and the whole human race is going to be addressed with the Good News of what happened in and through Jesus.” P. 28-29

Follow Up Assignment

- Q: If we, the Church, are the restored Israel, how should that affect the way we make decisions day to day?
- Q: Do you see our Church, your ministry, and/or your small group as parts of the movement that announces God’s new creation, or are they just religious groups?
- What are you doing to make sure they are not just religious groups?
- Q: What role has God called you to play in His Kingdom movement?
- If it is a great part, do you perform it without worldly pride?
 - If it is a small part, do you perform it without shame?