

Abounding Grace Christian Church

The Acts of the Holy Spirit through the Church – Part 3

I. Exposition of Chapter One (Continued).

A. Verses 9-11 - Jesus ascends into Heaven.

1. Verse 9 – “Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight.”

- a. After the forty days following His resurrection, Jesus was taken up from them. Luke’s Gospel states that “**He lifted up His hands and blessed them**” and then began to be “**...parted from them and carried up into heaven**” (Luke 24:50-51). The idea of blessing them is understood that He prayed for them and invoked a blessing.
- b. The words “**taken up**” or “**carried up**”, according to Dr. Horton means, “**taken up gradually, not abruptly**”.¹ With the ascension, Jesus wanted His followers to know that He was gone for good, as opposed to the way He appeared and reappeared during the forty days after the resurrection.

“While they were looking on’ stresses the fact that the apostles really saw Jesus ascending, which they bore witness to later. This reference supports the credibility of their witness. In previous post-resurrection appearances Jesus had vanished from the disciples’ sight instantly (Luke 24:31), but now He gradually departed from them.”²

- c. “**...a cloud received Him...**” – Clouds were often a manifestation of God’s presence (cf. Exodus 13:21; 16:10; Numbers 11:25). (NOTE: Sometimes you may hear the expression “**Shekinah**” in reference to the glory of God. It is an extra-Biblical expression describing God’s presence. It literally means; “**to dwell.**”³) According to Horton the Greek could mean, “**...that the cloud swept under Him and He rode it up out of their sight.**”⁴

2. Verse 10 – “And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel.”

- a. The words “**looked steadfastly**” mean, “**to fix one’s eyes on some object continually and intensely—‘to look straight at, to stare at,**”⁵ This shows that these disciples saw Jesus literally and physically ascend into Heaven.

“The bodily ascension of Jesus is a historical fact, attested to by the mouth of many witnesses (Acts 1:9-11; I Corinthians 15:1-7). It was expedient in order to complete His earthly work and to make way for the Holy Spirit to come (John 16:7). Jesus has entered heaven as the forerunner and will continue His work in heavenly ministry until He comes again for His own (Hebrews 8:20; 9:24; Acts 1:1)”⁶

- b. Other Scriptures which speak of the Ascension of Christ: Mark 16:19; Luke 9:51; 24:51; John 7:33; 14:12, 28; 16:5, 10, 28; Ephesians 4:10; I Timothy 3:16; Hebrews 4:14; I Peter 3:22.
- c. “**...two men stood by them in white apparel.**” – Most scholars agree that the “**two men**” were angelic messengers who looked like men (cf. John 20:12; Luke 24:4). “**White apparel**” often speaks of purity.

3. Verse 11 – “Who also said, ‘Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven.’”

- a. The angels announced two things:
 - 1) The same Jesus they had known had entered into Heaven. In Heaven, Jesus is seated at the right hand of the Father. (cf. Matthew 26:64; Mark 16:19; Acts 2:33; 5:31; 7:55; Romans 8:34; Ephesians 1:20; Colossians 3:1; Hebrews 1:3; 10:12; I Peter 3:22.)
 - 2) The same Jesus they had known would return to the earth “**...in like manner as you saw Him go...**”. He will come back in a cloud, bodily, in view of people (Revelation 1:7), and to the Mount of Olives (Zechariah 14:4) - The same way the apostles saw Him go. (NOTE: Luke’s Gospel mentions that when He ascended He was “**...as far as Bethany...**” (Luke 24:50). Bethany was about one and one half miles from Jerusalem on the Mount of Olives.⁷

¹Stanley M. Horton, *Acts: A Logion Press Commentary* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 2001), 44.

²Thomas L. Constable, *Notes on Acts* (<http://www.soniclight.com>: Sonic Light Publication, 2010), 16.

³Paul J. Achtemeier, Harper & Row and Society of Biblical Literature, *Harper’s Bible Dictionary* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1985), 938.

⁴Horton, 44.

⁵Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 281.

⁶Kevin J. Conner, *The Foundations of Christian Doctrine*, (Portland, OR: Bible Press, 1980), 218.

⁷Robert James Utley, *The Gospel according to Luke*, Lk 24:50.

B. Verses 12-26 - Matthias is appointed to replace Judas.

1. Verses 12-14 – Jesus’ Disciples return to Jerusalem.

a. **Verse 12** – Take note that they returned to Jerusalem from Mount Olivet. The distance is called, “...a Sabbath day’s journey.” This was a distance of a little more than half a mile.⁸ Luke’s Gospel adds the following:

“And they worshiped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple praising and blessing God. Amen.” – Luke 24:52-53.

b. **Verses 13 – 14** - They entered into “...the upper room...” . Dr. Robert Utley states:

“This was probably the same site as the Last Supper (cf. Luke 22:12; Mark 14:14–15). Tradition says it was the upper level (2nd or 3rd floor) of the home of John Mark (cf. Acts 12:12), who wrote the memories of Peter into the Gospel of Mark. It must have been a large room to accommodate 120 persons.”⁹

- 1) The eleven disciples (the twelve minus Judas) are present; along with Mary, the mother of Jesus, the brothers of Jesus (such as James and Jude), the women who followed Jesus, and others, adding up to about 120 (**Acts 1:15**).
- 2) The brothers of Jesus were not believers before His death and resurrection (**John 7:5, Mark 3:21**), but now that has changed since the Resurrection of Jesus. Both James and Jude became leaders in the Jerusalem church (**Acts 12:17; 15:13; 21:18; Galatians 2:9; James 1:1; Jude 1**).
- 3) **Verse 14** – “**These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication...**” –
 - a) The words “**with one accord**” is a phrase found eleven times in this book. It is made up of two words that mean “**same**” and “**mind**.” This speaks of people who are not necessarily always in agreement, or of the same mind about everything, but they are people who are willing to set aside personal feelings and commit themselves, in this case, to the will and purpose of God.
 - b) “**...in prayer and supplication...**” – Both words mean basically the same thing. Perhaps the use of both is an attempt to emphasize its importance.

“United prayer and praise with expectation that God will fulfill His promise was common in Acts and is still important if we want to see fresh outpourings of the Spirit.”¹⁰

2. Verses 15-20 - Peter sees the need for selecting a replacement for Judas.

- a. **Verse 16** – Peter appeals to Scripture (**Psalm 69:25; 109:8**) **NOTE: The actual quotation doesn’t occur until verse 20 because verses 18-19 are not part of what Peter said but what Luke offered about the death of Judas – thus, the parenthesis.**
- b. **Verse 17** – “**for he was numbered with us and obtained a part in this ministry.**” – Judas was actually a part of Jesus’ ministry and used greatly by the Lord. Jesus sent him out along with the others with authority to cast out demons and to heal all kinds of diseases and sicknesses (**Matthew 10:1-4**).
- c. **Verses 18-19** – **Description of the death of Judas Iscariot.**
 - 1) **Verse 18** – This account may seem contradictory to the description given in the Gospels, namely **Matthew 27:5**. **There are a couple of views concerning this:**
 - a) Some Scholars state that it was typical for someone to hang themselves from a tree over a cliff and that the rope would break and the person would fall tearing their body apart from the fall.¹¹
 - b) Dr. Stanley Horton offers something else: “**People were not hanged by a rope those days. Crucifixion and impalement through the belly over a sharp stake were the two common methods of hanging. Judas, of course, could not crucify himself. But he could set up a sharp stake and fall headlong over it, causing his body to burst open and his intestines to spill out.**”¹²

d. **Verse 20** – Quotes from David’s Psalms – **Psalm 69:25 and 109:8.**

⁸Stanley D. Toussaint, “Acts,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, 354.

⁹Robert James Utley, *Luke the Historian: The Book of Acts*, vol. Volume 3B, Study Guide Commentary Series (Marshall, TX: Bible Lessons International, 2003), 14.

¹⁰Horton, 47.

¹¹Stanley D. Toussaint, “Acts,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, 356.

¹²Horton, 50.