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## **Bearing Witness To Christ As Their Hope Acts Chapter 1**

We are beginning the Book of Acts. If you will turn in your Bibles to the Book of Acts, please. Over the next many weeks, we are going to walk through the Book of Acts. Now we are not going to do that all tonight. I'm not sure how long it will take us. If we were to take a chapter at a time, it'd be twenty-eight days in which we would be in it. I cannot tell you what will happen. That is just merely theoretical. It is a possibility, not a probability. But I did want us to talk about Acts, and I trust that some of you have gone ahead and just started reading the book, familiarizing yourselves, and beginning to understand what the book is about. It is a transitional book in the sense that we are being transitioned from the Old Testament into the New Testament. Something new is happening. In:

(II Corinthians 5:17) “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creation...”

What is happening is a new creation. The law is now fading away, and we are now walking in the Spirit. And it is the beginning of the church. Up to this point, it was the law that was reigning, but now the grace of God and the power of His gospel will reign in the hearts of men. God's Holy Spirit will establish the church. It will be a group of people called the "called out" ones. Therefore, we get the word church, *ekklesia*, which means "called out ones". And it will be this group of called out ones who will be witnesses of Jesus Christ. Acts will start off by saying that Christ will come and gather them together and say, "You're going to be my witnesses." And then they'll watch Him ascend into the heavens. The Book of Acts is written by Luke who wrote the book of Luke and the Book of Acts. It's said of Luke that he writes more of the New Testament than any other author, the reason being that the book of Luke is quite long as well as the Book of Acts. And so those two books together take up more pages than all the other books combined. The introduction at the beginning of the Gospel of Luke is similar to that in the Book of Acts in the sense that Luke starts off writing seemingly the

same individual by the name of Theophilus. You see this again in Acts chapter one in verse one where he starts off:

(Acts 1:1) “The first account I composed, Theophilus, about all that Jesus began to do and teach until the day when he was taken up...”

And then he goes on to present the Book of Acts. Much debate has gone on about who Theophilus is. Is this a real person, or does he represent the church? The name itself simply means “friend of God”. So whether or not he is addressing the church as a unit or addressing an individual, he has given him the Gospel in Luke. He makes reference to the fact, and actually defines him, as “most excellent Theophilus”, which we understand as he is really attributing an honor to this individual. So is this a person of great honor to whom he is writing? Or is he saying like Peter says, “you've been called to keep your behavior excellent” as Peter will tell the believers amongst the Christians? Well, we are not going to debate this now. All we can say is that the book is addressed to Theophilus, friend of God. And I would trust that this letter is addressed to you, friend of God, one who loves God with

all your heart. As we come into the Book of Acts, it picks up really where Luke leaves off. Luke basically presents a summary at the very end of that book. Jesus begins by walking with two people on the road to Emmaus and really reveals Himself to them. Shortly after that, He appears to the disciples and shows His hands and His feet. Then He was with them in Bethany and the Mount of Olives. And it is at this place that where Christ ultimately ascended to heaven. I saw a movie recently about this, or at least it was about Jesus. It showed him ascending. It looked like they were having him ascend in the mountains of Galilee. That's not where Jesus was ascending. He ascends on the Mount of Olives in the region of Jerusalem. As a side note, do you remember where Jesus is going to return to claim the earth as His own? On the Mount of Olives! Zechariah tells us He's going to come back there. As He ascends, of course, the angel says, (Acts 1:11) “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus who has been taken up before you into heaven will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven.”

And in one respect, the angel is truly saying that Jesus is going to come back to that exact spot. That is pretty exciting. As we come to the Book of Acts, there is so much to say about it. It covers a span of thirty years. So, you're looking at about 30 AD in which the book begins. People say, "I thought Jesus was like 33 AD." No. Jesus was probably born around April. The time is off. The reason we know this is that we know pretty well the time of death of Herod the Great. Herod the Great died around April. We know that Herod was alive when Jesus was born. So, it's pretty clear that the times have gotten mixed up. But Jesus would actually have died on the cross and been resurrected in the same year, 30 AD, and would have gone into heaven in 30 AD. That would be the beginning of the Book of Acts. The Book of Acts will take us all the way to the time in which Paul will end up in prison where he will write a number of prison epistles during His incarceration in Rome which was about 60 AD. So the Book of Acts takes us from about 30 to about 60 AD. The very beginning pages of the Book of Acts span only a day or two. Tonight, we are going to be talking more specifically about this first and maybe a little bit of the second

chapter, which will take us into the time of Pentecost. It is at that point when Jesus tells the disciples that they must wait until this happens. The disciples had been with Christ around forty days after the resurrection. In those forty days, they have seen Him several times. He has both appeared and sometimes disappeared before their eyes. On one occasion, we know according to the Gospel of John that Jesus fixed a breakfast for Peter. That would be a wild thing--for Jesus to fix breakfast. I'd feel almost guilty, wouldn't you? I should be fixing it for Him. However, there He is fixing breakfast for Peter. Now, I wouldn't normally have fish, but I guess I would have on that day because Jesus fixed fish. There was also a time when He was together with them. And according to I Corinthians Chapter 15, Verse six:

(I Corinthians 15:6) “After that, He appeared to more than 500 brethren at one time...”

Therefore, we know that there was a mingling with the resurrected Christ for approximately forty days. The time span starts from the time of His crucifixion which would have been on the Passover in 30 AD. That would be the

fulfillment of the Passover. Christ, as Paul will say, was our Passover Lamb. Why? Because the Lamb of God was sacrificed on that day. Death will pass over you if you will believe in Him, just like in Egypt. Jesus fulfills that wonderful prophecy of the feast of the Jews in which all the Jews would come together for the Passover, and they would celebrate that. The next feast that the Jews would have would be the Feast of First Fruits or often called Pentecost, which would be fifty days, *i.e.* Penta, which would be fifty days from the time of the Passover. To count, we start with the first Sabbath of the Passover. Jesus was crucified on the Sabbath. And from the first Sabbath of the Passover, we count seven weeks. It's called the Feast of Weeks for that reason. That makes forty-nine days. The next day after the Sabbath would always be what day? Sunday. Therefore, Sunday is going to be the day of Pentecost. From that day forward, the celebration of the first day of the week will be the day on which the church gathered together. As you go a little bit further in the Book of Acts, it says that they gathered together on the first day of the week, which is when we celebrate. We celebrate Resurrection Day. We celebrate a new creation.

God finished the old creation in seven days. Now we have a new day, so a new creation has started. Not only are you going to be newly created in Christ as a believer, but the new creation is the church. A new creation has been established which is what we witness. We see a new birth coming into play. As you go back all the way to Genesis, (Genesis 2:7) “Then the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into His nostrils the breath of life; and Adam became a living being.”

After Christ’s resurrection, God is going to breathe on His church. The Holy Spirit is going to breathe into and give life to the church. When the mighty rushing wind is heard in Acts Chapter Two, it is the birth of the church. God is declaring that the life of His Spirit is going to be within them. Miraculous things are happening in this first chapter as well as the second. The amalgamation of the Old Testament with the New is really coming to terms and fulfillment in Pentecost of the Feast of Booths or more specifically, not the Feast of Booths, but the Feast of Weeks. So let us walk through Acts Chapter One. Acts will start off with Luke conveying that Jesus displayed Himself

to His disciples. Jesus is standing before His disciples and gives them a command. Fundamentally,

(Acts 1:7) “He said to them ‘It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority.’”

We can imagine that one of them cries out saying, “Wait a minute. What about the building of the kingdom? Is this the time that the kingdom is coming?”

(Acts 1:7) “He said to them ‘It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority’”

(Acts 1:8) “but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth””.

It's an interesting sentence because the fact is that what He is really conveying is that this is a new day in which they were not coming into a realm of understanding but rather into a realm of “faith.” Then He seems to tell them, “And you will be so empowered by the Spirit of God that you won't even feel like you need to understand.” One of

the great phenomena of our faith is when a person receives Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, it is almost like all the questions go away. It doesn't mean that you don't have questions, but it's like they don't matter. Once you breathe in the Spirit of God, you breathe in the Spirit of Truth, and He says, "I've got you." And you go, "He's got me." And He says within your heart, "You're mine." Then you say, "I'm yours." It is just something that is inexplicable. It doesn't matter if you took a class or not. It doesn't matter. You are good with this. You know that God's got this. And you begin to walk by faith and not by sight. I think, in a way, this is what Jesus was telling them. Do you see any kind of timing to that?

(I John 4:18) "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear..."

We just know He loves us. We know He's got us. Yeah. I have no reason to fear. Right? The Spirit of Truth is in us. And, in our modern times, truth is defined in so many ways. Not only is it talking about that which is not false, but it's talking about that which is sincere and that which is genuine. When you have the Spirit and that sense of

“somebody loves me”, then you know it is not a lie.

There's a genuineness of that heart, and you can feel it, and it is within us. So Jesus tells them that they are going to receive this power. Not many days from now, this is going to happen.

(Acts 1:9) “And after He had said these things, He was lifted up while they were looking on and a cloud received Him out of their sight.”

This is a great and wonderful picture. We know that Scripture tells us that when He comes, He is going to be coming in the clouds. And I know that people often think about the billowy things that are in the sky. But I would say, “No.” He's talking about His saints, and He's talking about the angels. They will be wearing white, and they will come in such numbers that you will literally see a cloud of the saints and angels. It's going to be a magnificent picture. So they watch Him go up into the heavens and, of course, they are dumbstruck.

(Acts 1:9) “And after He had said these things, He was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud received Him out of their sight.”

(Acts 1:10) “And as they were gazing intently into the sky while He was going, behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them.”

(Acts 1:11) “They also said, ‘Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven.’”

(Acts 1:12) “Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day’s journey away.”

(Acts 1:13) “When they had entered the city, they went up to the upper room where they were staying...”

Of course, we understand according to Acts Chapter 12, I think it is, that the upper room is Mary’s house, mother of John Mark. Apparently, she had a pretty large mansion and a lot of money. We know that because there were gates before you went into the courtyard of the house. That is where the church initially started meeting. It is, obviously, a fairly good-sized upper room because there were one hundred twenty people meeting there. And you can just imagine the anticipation. I mean, they just watch

for the Savior to come. For all they know, He would come back tomorrow. What they do know is that something magnificent is going to happen with the power of the Spirit coming upon them. They don't even know exactly how that's going to happen. The Scripture then continues, (Acts 1:13) "...that is, 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."

Now this is interesting; the disciples were listed, plus it also mentions that there were some of the women.

(Acts 1:14) "These all with one mind were continually devoting themselves to prayer, along with the women, and Mary, the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers."

Not all of the one hundred twenty in attendance are mentioned. But it says they began praying in the upper room. As they continue praying, there is a camaraderie that begins. I don't think this is an accident. The Scripture tells us,

(Acts 1:15) “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,”

Do you see that? A gathering of about one hundred twenty. Why do you think it says about a hundred and twenty? Because God doesn't really know how many people there were? No! Because Luke doesn't know. Okay? Because he's not writing by the Spirit? Right? The reason it says about a hundred and twenty is that, in order for a community to be autonomous and established, it was necessary according to Jewish tradition for there to be one hundred and twenty members in order for them to make their own decisions. And so it was necessary to have at least one hundred and twenty to make their own decisions about things. That's a pretty interesting tradition, and God would fulfill that even though it was more the tradition of man. God would make sure everything was, if I can put it this way, kosher and appropriate. So, according to the Jewish law, one hundred and twenty men were necessary to establish a community. And in the text, Peter stands up in the midst

of them. As he is praying, his heart is stirred. So here you are with these people who have they been praying since Jesus ascended to heaven. We are probably looking at maybe days at the most. It could be the same day. But here they are, and Peter's heart is stirred as they're praying. And he recalls what Jesus said.

(Acts 1:16) “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.”

You have probably had the experience of praying when the Lord just puts certain passages of Scripture into your mind. And the passage of Scripture that came into Peter's mind is Psalm 109. I can imagine that they were probably fresh in his mind because of the fact that he had watched the treachery. He himself had denied Christ, but he had not betrayed him like Judas. When he had seen the treachery of Judas, it must have gripped His heart to see His Savior betrayed the way that He was. Have any of you ever been betrayed by somebody? If so, you can feel just slightly what he was feeling. Yet it was Christ who was

betrayed. And Judas did it for money. You know what I mean? Money. He sold Jesus for money. Really? So, he begins to remember these passages in the Psalms that write specifically about this. What the Book of Acts is going to show us in the New Testament is that, up to this point, the people have been sinning against the law, but now they are sinning against grace. I don't think there is a more intense proclamation about this than what is found in the book of Hebrews as it warns us. See here. Just because it is grace doesn't mean it's not treachery. It's far more treacherous to sin against grace than it is the law. Take a moment and turn with me to

(Hebrews 2:1) “For if the word spoken through angels proved unalterable, and every transgression and disobedience received a just penalty, how will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?”

Of course,

Hebrews 1:5) “For to which of the angels did He ever say, ‘You are My Son...’”

And Christ is so far greater than the angels. Why is he comparing Christ with the angels? Because the angels

were the givers of the law. Christ is the giver of salvation and of the fulfillment of the law. Far greater is His Son. For this reason, we must pay closer attention, as it says in Hebrews Chapter Two Verse One (quoted above), we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it.

(Hebrews 2:2) “For if the words spoken through angels proved unalterable, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense,”

(Hebrews 2:3) “how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?”

How will you escape if you betray the Savior? Interesting passage in Hebrews chapter 10, and we won't do too much in the book of Hebrews. But I just want to show you this comparison. It says this in

(Hebrews 10:26) “For if we go on sinning willfully, after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins,”

(Hebrews 10:27) “but a certain terrifying expectation of judgment and the fury of a fire which will consume the adversaries.”

(Hebrews 10:28) “Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses.”

(Hebrews 10:29) “How much severe punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled underfoot the Son of God and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified and has insulted the Spirit of grace?”

Do you understand the comparison and the contrast? You have a sinning against the One, and I can just sense Peter as he realizes that he has crossed the line. He didn't just sin against the law. He sinned against grace. And so he begins to quote this text in particular, Psalm 109, which goes into it and does so pretty intensely. I mean, the author says to

(Psalm 109:8) “Let his days be few; Let another take his office.”

(Psalm 109:9) “Let his children be fatherless And his wife a widow.”

(Psalm 109:11) “Let the creditor seize all that he has, And let strangers plunder the product of his labor.”

Let him die, let His children die, let His wife die, let everything die that he ever touched. It really goes into great depth. And Peter realizes that he really crossed the line. I guess the reason I'm saying this is because we need to be reminded of just how terrible it is to reject the love of God. And this is why Paul will write in 2 Thessalonians, some will spend eternity in hell

(2 Thessalonians 2:10) “...because they did not accept the love of the truth so as to be saved.”

(Hebrews 2:3) “How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?”

The greater the grace, the more intense the punishment. If you look again in Acts Chapter One, he begins to pull up in his memory the very fact that Judas had betrayed Jesus

(Acts 1:18) “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.”

This field even to this day is called the Field of Blood. We know according to Matthew Chapter 27 that it was also the potter's field. The picture of it, of course, is that pottery was kind of like flesh in the sense that it can

break. It is just made of clay. And so you would see all these broken jars in the potter's field. There would be a place where nothing grew. And then ultimately, it became a place where they would throw bones and bodies; hence, this is a place of blood. This really describes the resting place of Judas. And Peter will say that it is just like the Lord had caused him to think of this. But he says,

(Acts 1:22) "...one of these must become a witness with us of His resurrection."

I have heard people debating whether Judas was sorry. Then they would raise the question of whether he would be in heaven. No. He's not going to be in heaven. He wasn't sorry. He was sorry that he felt guilty, but he wasn't sorry for what he did. If he had been, he would have repented. The Scripture tells us that repentance means to "think differently about", which means that he would have turned to Christ instead of sacrificing his own life. We know that he is called "son of perdition" which means "son of destruction". And, as Jesus said, it would be better for him never to have been born. So it's clear that he was not sorry. The passage then goes into the whole concept,

so we've got to fill His position. And, in the filling of His position, we are watching the time clock of the Old Testament. The sun is going down on the Old Testament. And at this particular event, they drew lots. That's what they did. That's what the priest did. That's what they would do often to make decisions in the Old Testament.

(Proverbs 16:33) “The lot is cast into the lap, But its every decision is from the Lord.”

That's how decisions were made. This will be the last time because now decisions will be made by the unity of the Spirit in the hearts of the people within the church. It will no longer be the casting of lots. It will be the Spirit of God within them directing their paths. Thus, this is the end of the Old Testament. But they would draw lots, and they needed to find somebody for office. They have two guys that they're looking at. Right? One is Matthias. Who's the other guy? Joseph or Justus or however many names he had. I think he had three names. One, he's called by a name that means “son of”, so by his father's name. The other is Justus, which is a Latin term for just. And then he has the name Joseph, which means to add to. It's

interesting that Joseph has all these names. I think in many ways that Scripture is really describing the kind of person he is. And if you think about it, what do you think when you hear the name Joseph? Who do you think of? The Joseph of the Old Testament, right? A guy with a coat of many colors. He is the favorite Joseph in Scripture. And then we look at this Joseph and see that he was not called Joseph. He was called Barsabbas. Every time you see the “Bar-“ in front of a man’s name, it means “son of”. And the “-sabbas”, in this particular context, actually means a person who is “ready and willing”. Thus, Barsabbas is a son of somebody who's ready and willing. And then if you look, he has one more name which means “just”. I think the passage is indicating that he probably had a reputation of being a just person. What's interesting to me is that you have a reputation of being just; you have a perception of being willing; and you look like a favorite person. Yet the lot doesn't fall on you. That's pretty interesting to me. But it falls on Matthias, which means “gift of God”. And I think what Scripture is revealing to us is that God makes the choices. Clearly, we know man looks at the outward appearance, but God looks at the

heart. God is making the choice here. And He says, “I know your heart. And I know who would be best according to heart.” And this is why it is so important that the church makes decisions based on the Spirit of God rather than based on appearances as the church moves into this new era. The law was about appearances. But now we are going into the realm of how God sees people. In fact, the text will read this way,

(Acts 1:24) “And they prayed and said, ‘Thou Lord, who knowest the hearts of all men, show which one of these two Thou hast chosen to occupy this ministry and apostleship...’”

What was necessary in order for these two men to even be in the drawing? Do you remember? He had to be with Christ from the beginning. He had to be with Christ from the time of the baptism through witnessing the resurrection. This is interesting because Judas never witnessed the resurrection, did he? If you think about it, that, too, is evidence of salvation in our lives. There is a resurrection that takes place in our lives. We witness a

resurrection in our lives. Paul would even make mention of His own life in which, and he says,

(Philippians 3:10) “ that I might know Him and the power of His resurrection (in me).”

There is a power of resurrection within us. Anyway, they drew lots and it fell upon Matthias, and he was numbered among the eleven apostles. These things began to point to this new time in which everything is about to change. And I think in a very subtle way, if I could put it this way, the choosing of Matthias was the beginning note in which God was going to show it's going to be His grace that chooses people. It's going to be His Spirit that moves. He knows their hearts. He is going to move. I've often thought it to be an uncanny thing when sometimes you just have in your mind that this person is really going to come out for the Lord. And you step back and realize that the person didn't. And the person that you thought was not going to come to the Lord does. You realize, “I can't psych this out.” This has to be the Lord. The Lord knows those who are His. And sometimes a person on an initial visit or whatever, you sum up and perceive that he's this

kind of person or that kind of person, and you realize that the Lord knows those are His. And very often, they are those that you would never choose. But God is moving in the hearts of those that He sees are genuine and real. It is that which initiates us into the Pentecost. And this is the day that everything begins to change. Now it's important at this juncture for you to understand the whole history behind this. It goes all the way back to Exodus. I'm not going to have you turn there, but I am going to suggest that you might want to write down certain chapters in the Old Testament which will give you something to read tonight. It would be helpful if you do this. As we go into this, what you're going to realize is that this Pentecost is a major day. Now, once again to define it clearly, we are now fifty days from the time that Jesus Christ was crucified. And we are now at this grand feast in which the Jews have gathered again together. This is a Jewish feast, a Jewish holiday, the Feast of Weeks, which they would celebrate. They would call it not only the Feast of Weeks because you would count seven sevens of Sabbath and then the next day, which would be the Sunday, but they would call it the Feast of the First Fruits. The First Fruits

were the time of the year when all the First Fruits of harvest would come, and they would present them before the Lord. And they would do what is called a wave offering. If you were to go back into Acts, here are passages to read: One is Exodus Chapter 12, Exodus 19, and Leviticus 23. Please read these, and we will talk about them later. I don't think we are going to really have time to go into them thoroughly, but I will allude to them as we go. As you look in those passages and, for instance, Leviticus Chapter 23, it talks about the celebration of the Feast of the Weeks. And one of the things they would do is bake two loaves of bread which would be part of the wave offering. Now, once again, the reason they call it wave offering is they would wave it before God. Always a wave offering was a free will offering which means that you wanted to give it. You are giving it because you want to, and you are waving it because you are thankful. "This is what You, Lord, did for me." It's like saying thanks for the harvest. Things are going great. Really appreciate it. What is interesting about the two loaves of bread is that they are different from the Passover bread. The Passover bread, if you remember, had to be unleavened bread. This

bread is leavened bread. That's very interesting. We will talk about how that comes into play. God is going to declare that He is coming to the Gentiles, which would clearly not be unleavened. It would be very much leavened. We are going to see that within the passage. Pentecost had another point to it though. That it was fifty days after the Resurrection. Do you remember the Passover in Exodus? The Passover in Exodus was the symbol of the death angel passing over every house if the blood of the lamb was on the lintel over the door. Right? Okay. After that first Passover, the very next day, they left town. Right? In fact, they were going to eat this in a hurry as part of the eating of the Passover meal because they're getting out of town. They are "getting out of Dodge" because of the fact that Pharaoh is letting them go due to the death of his firstborn. And now he's really angry and hurt and has strong emotions. So he lets the people go. And they leave. When you go through the time in which they began to leave and the parting of the waters and all that, fifty days have passed. See Exodus Nineteen. What do you think is happening? I'll tell you what's happening. Fifty days later, we are now in the third month. Now, the

first month of the year is Nisan and Abib which is our April-May time. Spring. On the first day of the month is the beginning of the preparation for the Passover, but it's not till the fourteenth day that the Passover lamb is sacrificed. So it is the middle of the month when it begins. They leave on the fifteenth day, the middle of the month. The first day of the third month is when they arrive at Mount Sinai. I won't go into the details of the text because I'll have to pull you into the passage, and we'll never get anywhere tonight if I do that. But as you begin to number through the days, we are at day forty-six. Moses goes up onto the mountain; then he comes back down and talks to the people. Day forty-seven, he says, "God is going to give you these laws. Are you ready for them?" "Yes. We will get ready for them." And then he turns to them and says, "You consecrate yourselves. You get ready because I'm going to go get the laws." And it is on the fiftieth day that he will bring down the law to his people. It will be the day of Pentecost. It will be a day in which they will celebrate that God's law has come upon them. The power of God has spoken to them from the mountain. The mountains were shaking and the power of

God was felt. Now, when do you think God will choose to let the Israelites know that He is going to speak again? What day do you think He is going to use? Pentecost. Yeah. Pentecost. So it is going to be on Pentecost that He's going to use after the resurrection. And according to what we understand in verse two,

(Acts 2:2) “And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a mighty rushing wind...”

So what we are going to see is, instead of the fire and the brimstone, a breath of life. (Maybe not expecting that.) But, the people who are gathered are going to see these flames of fire over the heads of the people. And where are they right now? They are in the upper room. And then they start telling people the mighty deeds of God from the upper room. At this juncture, I don't think they're in the upper room. According to Luke at the end of Acts Chapter Two,

(Acts 2:46) “Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple...”

They were daily going into the temple. I think at this point in the narrative that they are in the temple. Why are they

in the temple specifically on this day? It is the day of Pentecost. And it is a day on which there are going to be wave offerings. You would offer wave offerings before God. It was a celebration of God's Word, and it was a celebration of God's provision to you. And the whole reason that you were waving these offerings was only one reason--gratitude. And what Scripture is doing is transforming the whole dynamics of the relationship from the law to grace. And worship takes a whole different genre because now worship is about gratitude. Let me show you a passage that would clarify this even better. Hebrews Chapter Twelve reads:

(Hebrews 12:18) “For you have not come to a mountain that may be touched and to a blazing fire, and to darkness and gloom and a whirlwind,”

Where was that? El Sinai. Right?

(Hebrews 12:19) “and to the blast of the trumpet, and the sound of words, which sound was such that those who heard begged that no further should a word be spoken to them.”

(Hebrews 12:20) “For they could not bear the command  
“If even a beast touches the mountain, it will be stoned.”

(Hebrews 12:21) “And so terrible was the sight...”

I didn't think anything scared Moses, did you?

(Hebrews 12:21) “So terrible was the sight that Moses  
said, I am full of fear and trembling.”

(Hebrews 12:22) “But you have come to Mount Zion, to  
the city of the living God, to the heavenly Jerusalem, and  
to myriads of angels,”

(Hebrews 12:23) “to the general assembly and church of  
the firstborn (the firstfruits) who are enrolled in heaven,  
and to God, the Judge of all, and the spirits of righteous  
men made perfect,”

(Hebrews 12:24) “and to Jesus, the mediator of a new  
covenant, and to the sprinkled blood which speaks better  
than the blood of Abel.”

(Hebrews 12:25) “See to it that you do not refuse Him  
who is speaking...”

Once again, there is a higher accountability because of a  
greater message. Right?

(Hebrews 12:25) “See to it that you do not refuse Him who is speaking. For if those who did not escape when they refused him, much less shall we escape who turn away from him who warns from heaven.”

(Hebrews 12:26) “And His voice shook the earth then...”

Now watch the text,

(Hebrews 12:26) “...but now he has promised saying, ‘Yet once more I will shake not only the earth, but also the heavens.’”

(Hebrews 12:27) “This expression, ‘Yet once more,’ denotes the removing of those things which can be shaken as of created things, in order that those things which cannot be shaken may remain.”

Now watch Verse 28 which is a key phrase.

(Hebrews 12:28) “Therefore, since we have a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude...”

Gratitude. Our worship has changed. And there is no worship that is acceptable in the sight of God that is not the worship of gratitude. In the Old Testament, it was enough to fulfill the law. But now that the Spirit has come

and grace has been revealed, there is only one acceptable worship--gratitude.

(Hebrews 12:28) “...let us show gratitude by which we may offer to God an acceptable service of worship with fear and reverence...”

So it is that Pentecost is going to open up that new door of worship in the body of Christ. And what's going to begin to happen is that God is not only going to reveal Himself to the Jews on this day, but He is going to declare to the Jews that this message, like the leavened bread, is going to all. Why two breads? Well, it's talking about fellowship. Right? This gospel is going to go to all the nations. What would be the best sign to use to reveal to a Jewish person that he was no longer going to be the messenger of this message, but that the Gentiles would? You have them speak in other languages. You have all the languages of the known world start proclaiming the mighty deeds of God. And that's exactly what happens.

(Acts 2:3) “And there appeared to them tongues as of fire, distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them.”

(Acts 2:4) “And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit. And they began to speak with other languages, as the Spirit was giving them utterance.”

(Acts 2:5) “Now there were Jews living in Jerusalem, devout men from every nation under heaven.”

So they'd come from all over the world to celebrate the feast of Pentecost.

(Acts 2:6) “And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together. They were bewildered because they were each one hearing them speak in His own language.”

These people had come from all different parts of the world. You say, “well, he's not talking about different languages.” Oh, yes. He is.

(Acts 2:8) “And how is it that we each hear them in our own language to which we were born?”

(Acts 2:9) “Parthians, Medes, Elamites, residents of Mesopotamia, Judea, and Cappadocia, Pontius and Asia.”

He lists them. It repeats more than once that they were each hearing in their own language. This becomes the indictment against the Jews because they had rejected

the Savior. He now is going to the nations. The reason that God had called Abraham was that he might be blessed and he might be a blessing to the nations, but his children were not. So God says, "We'll turn this around. We'll make the Gentiles a blessing to you. And they'll be the ones that proclaim the message." So the fundamental way that Acts will proceed is according to what Jesus tells them before he leaves the earth,

(Acts 1:8) "...You are going to be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, Samaria, and even to the uttermost parts of the earth."

So this is the outline of Acts. What you're going to see is the proclamation at Pentecost of the Gospel in Acts Chapter Two in which Peter will stand up and proclaim and even quote out of the book of Joel. We'll talk about that as we go a little bit further. And they will cry out, "What must we do?" And at that moment as they begin to cry out, Peter will say, "You need to repent and be baptized." And 3,000 at that moment will come to receive the Lord. Shortly thereafter, five to six thousand more will come and receive the Lord. So this church is growing

exponentially. Then shortly after that, you will see God telling them, "Okay. Jerusalem, Judea, okay. You have to go out." And they go to Judea, which is okay. "We'll go out." God then goes, "Now Samaria. I want to go to Samaria." So you know what He does? He hires a guy. He gets this guy by the name of Saul and pays him "big bucks." Saul is out there ravaging the church. What do you think happens to this big conglomerate of Christians? They move out. They just start scattering. And where do you think they start scattering? Well, they first start scattering in Samaria. And then before long, they are in the uttermost parts of the earth. And so, you begin to have these witnesses that are going out of these different places. And the first Gentile church is a little bit north and west, towards the water, at Antioch. Even to this day, we have the Greek Orthodox Church, the Antiochan order. We see the beginning of the church. What is God doing? He is proclaiming His Word, and we begin to see the Spirit of God rule this wonderful thing called the church. And it will be the Spirit of God Who holds us no longer to the law but holds us to a greater accountability because the message that this church is going to proclaim is a message

above all messages. It's a message of the grace of God. And do not trample the message of the grace of God. We will watch this as we continue to walk through the Book of Acts. Well, we went further probably than you thought today. If I stay on this schedule, then, we will probably take twenty-eight days in the Book of Acts.

## **Prayer**

Father, we give You thanks for this book that begins to help us understand the beginning of the church, how it all started, and how it clearly dovetails out from the Old Testament, and how You were giving testimony to Your people, as well as using this new beginning community as a testimony to them. Lord, what a wonderful thing You birthed on that day, this thing called the church. It was no longer a word that came from a shaking mountain. It is a word that comes into our hearts and changes us and shakes our lives. We give You thanks for this wonderful testimony, in Jesus' name. Amen.