

# K.E.Y. Bible Study

**Description:** **K.E.Y. Bible Study** introduces the essential biblical narratives, concepts, and themes, and teaches the student how to apply the message of the Bible to daily living. Each teaching session is self-contained, which allows participants to join in the study at any time during the five years.

**Purpose:** To teach the most significant events, passages, and doctrines of the Bible in a manner and using methods which encourages and empowers the student to:  
Keep the faith that we have received  
Be Equipped to serve the Body of Christ  
Yoke or connect with others for the purpose of ministry

## **The Beginning or the End of Jesus' Ministry? Acts 1:1-11 August 19, 2015**

### **Introduction to the Book of Acts**

If Jesus were a mere human being instead of being both divine and human, the opening chapter of the book of Acts would be the postscript, or the afterward, of Jesus' ministry. In reality, it is the unfinished continuation of his ministry. John Stott reminds his readers that the first two verses of the book of Acts differentiate the Christian faith from all other religions. Whereas all other religious leaders completed their work in their time on earth, Jesus only "began" his work while he was on earth. Through the Holy Spirit, His presence continues throughout history. Acts is not about what happened "after" Jesus; it is about what is happening now as Jesus lives in those who believe in and follow Him. Over the centuries, some have suggested that it should be called "The Acts of the Apostles", while others have endorsed the title "The Acts of the Holy Spirit." It is best read as "the continuing acts of Jesus through His followers."

### **Background to the Book of Acts**

While Scripture does not specifically say that Luke is the author of the book of Acts, it does give us a very strong clue. The opening verse references writing a previous book to Theophilus, to whom the Gospel According to Luke was written. For that reason and others, it is assumed that Luke wrote the book of Acts. Luke probably wrote Acts in the early 60s A.D., approximately 30 to 35 years after the cross, resurrection, and ascension.

The Book of Acts is both historical narrative and directed (or instructive) narrative. It is historical in that it describes events that are for the most part in chronological order. It is directed in that Luke is selective in what he describes. He wants the readers to see what Jesus did through His followers. The first century was time of political turmoil, a time of a religiously pluralistic culture, and a time in which the public morality was

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being redefined. The first century and the twenty-first century are very similar. This fact should give great hope to Christians today.

## Background to Acts 1

The events occurred in approximately 28 A.D. - 30 A.D., or 33 years after the birth of Jesus. While Jesus was on earth in physical form for 33 years, the dating system was later adjusted. With the calendar revisions, Jesus was born in approximately 5 B.C. - 3 B.C. and was crucified 28 A.D. - 30 A.D. These events occurred near Jerusalem and close to or on the Mount of Olives.

## What Happened?

### **Acts 1:1: *In my former book, Theophilus...***

Luke specifically addressed the person to whom he was writing. In his Gospel account, Luke identified Theophilus as the “most excellent” which was a title often reserved for highly placed Roman officials. While we do not know his historical details, Theophilus was probably a highly respected Roman government employee or former employee.

### **Acts 1:2: *After giving instruction through the Holy Spirit...***

Please note that Luke referred to the Holy Spirit in the life of Jesus prior to the Day of Pentecost. The Holy Spirit did not come into the existence at that time; the Holy Spirit is eternal.

### **Acts 1:3: *After his suffering, he showed himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive.***

Eleven different appearances of the resurrected Jesus are recorded in the New Testament. Apparently the ones mentioned in Scripture are not the only times that the risen Jesus interacted with His followers. Luke emphasized that the disciples were very confident of the reality of the resurrection. Luke mentioned that Jesus taught about “the kingdom of God”, which is living within the reign and rule of God. During Jesus’ earthly ministry, He taught and preached about the kingdom of God.

### **Acts 1:4-5: *“Do not leave Jerusalem but wait for the gift...”***

Jesus spoke of the Holy Spirit as a gift. God’s unmerited favor, or grace, is one of the continual themes of the Bible. A gift is something that is not earned or deserved. The disciples did not deserve the Holy Spirit. Everything God does for us is grace. A possible paraphrase of verse 5 is: “As John immersed in water you will be immersed with the Holy Spirit.” The presence of God in the incarnation was a gift to the world, the presence of God through the Holy Spirit is a gift to the church, and the presence of God in the life of a believer is a gift to the believer.

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## **Acts 1:6: *Lord, Are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?***

Having heard the word, “kingdom”, the disciples thought about a political entity or government. They asked if they were now going to be placed in positions of power and authority.

## **Acts 1:7-8: *“It is not for you to know....But you will receive power...and you will be my witnesses...”***

Jesus basically said, “It is not any of your business to know about the timing and exchange of political power. You will receive power to be witnesses throughout the world.” This verse is a great promise to the disciples, but they may have been disappointed. They were not so much interested in being witnesses as having political authority. A witness is a person who establishes facts objectively rather than through subjective opinion. A witness of Jesus has experienced the resurrected Christ, not just learned about Him. The power we receive is not for our personal benefit; it is so we can be the evidence that the presence of God is real and present through Jesus, the Christ. This is not a command to “do witnessing”; it is a promise that through the Holy Spirit, we can be witnesses (or evidence).

## **Acts 1:9: *He was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid Him...***

Clouds were often used in the Bible in relationship to a deity. (see Exodus 13:21; Numbers 11:25; and Psalm 18:9)

## **Acts 1:10-11: *“This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back...”***

This is a promise, not a threat. The disciples were feeling overwhelmed and underequipped to continue His ministry. Jesus told them they would not only receive power, but also that He would return. He promised they were not being abandoned; therefore, they could live out the rule of the kingdom with confidence. The feelings of abandonment would have been both natural and present. John 14 gives evidence of this fear.

## **What Do These Verses Mean, and How Can I Apply Them?**

- Many people verified the resurrected Jesus; therefore, I can trust the story of the resurrection.
- The Holy Spirit is a gift that empowers us to be witnesses; therefore, I do not have to “earn” God’s gift and am always empowered to be His witness.
- The ascension is a symbol of the promise of Jesus to return and never abandon us.