

=THE BOOK OF ACTS=
Lesson 1
The Mistakes of the Apostles - Acts 1

AIM: to teach my pupils the teachings of the first chapter of Acts.

POINT OF CONTACT: The lesson will deal basically with the mistakes of the disciples in Acts 1. Ask the pupils to share with you any mistakes they have made. Maybe each could tell some mistake of his life or maybe some stupid little blunder. Try to create some kind of conversation concerning their mistakes.

INTRODUCTION: We now start a new series of Bible lessons. We will study one chapter of Acts each week. Probably we will not cover the entire chapter but simply an interesting story or two from each chapter. At least, we will confine ourselves each Sunday to a different chapter of Acts, starting for this week's lesson with chapter one. Let us notice this chapter, dealing with the subject, "The Mistakes of the Apostles."

I. INTERESTING FACTS ABOUT THE BOOK OF ACTS.

1. The author of the book of Acts is Luke. Luke was a friend and companion of the Apostle Paul.
 - 1) Luke joined Paul on his second missionary journey at Troas and went with him to Philippi. In Acts 16:10-17, you will notice the use of the word, "we" and "us" in the story, which means that Luke joined Paul at this point.
 - 2) In Colossians 4:14, Luke is called "the beloved physician;" hence, he was a doctor.
 - 3) In Colossians 4:14, he also joins Paul in sending from Rome salutations to the church at Colosse. Also, he joins Paul in giving salutations to Philemon in Philemon 24.
 - 4) Luke was also with Paul in Rome at a later time when II Timothy was written. Read II Timothy 4:11.
 - 5) Paul paid a tremendous tribute to Luke's friendship when he said in II Timothy 4:11, "Only Luke is with me..." Luke stayed with him to the end.
2. The book of Acts is a continuation of the book of Luke. Acts 1:1a says, "The former treatise have I made." Actually he is talking about the book of Luke. If one would read the last chapter of Luke and then start reading the first chapter of Acts, he would find the subject is hardly changed at all. Luke especially deals in his Gospel with the power of the Holy Spirit. This prepares the reader for his next book, which is the book of Acts. In the book of Luke, emphasis is placed on the power of the Holy Spirit. Luke 1:15-17 records the fact that John the Baptist was to be filled with the Holy Ghost even from his mother's womb. It was Luke who said in Luke 1:41 concerning Elisabeth that she was filled with the Holy Ghost. In Luke 1:67, he mentions that Zacharias was filled with the Holy Ghost, and in Luke 2:25, 26, he mentions that the Holy Ghost was upon Simeon. At the baptism of Jesus, Luke mentions more about the Holy Spirit than any of the others do. (See Luke 3.) In Luke 4:14, he mentions that Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit. Luke was the only one of the four writers of the Gospels who quoted Isaiah 61:1, concerning Jesus in the synagogue when He said, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me..." (See Luke 4:16-21.) Luke gives the great chapter in his Gospel concerning the begging for the power of the Holy Spirit. See Luke 11:13. Consequently, in the Gospel of Luke, Luke is preparing us for the great workings of the Holy Spirit that will come in the book of Acts.
3. The Gospel of Luke is the beginning of what the book of Acts continues. Notice Acts 1:1b, "...Jesus began both to do and teach." Only the beginning of Christ's work is found in the Gospels. His work did not finish upon His ascension. The beginning of His work was finished; then His work continued even in greater power. The Gospel of Luke shows the beginning of this work and teaching; the book of Acts shows in accelerated power the continuation of the work and teachings of Christ. Perhaps this is what He meant in John 14:12, when he said, "...the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father."

4. In other words, the book of Luke and the book of Acts have in common three great things. They have the same writer—Luke; they have the same subject—Jesus; they have the same reader—Theophilus. Now let us notice this person, Theophilus. He was perhaps a real person. We do not know anything about him; however, his name is very interesting. His name means “lover of God.” So Luke is writing to the lover of God. One who truly loves God should read the book of Acts and follow its teachings.

II. THE REAL WORK THAT THE APOSTLES WERE TO DO AFTER JESUS’ RESURRECTION WAS TO OBEY THE GREAT COMMISSION. This is, of course, fulfilling John 14:12. We find the Great Commission given by the resurrected Christ in Matthew 28:19, 20; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:46-48; and John 20:21. These are the plain, simple commissions of Christ. We are to do His work in the energy of His Spirit. Jesus wanted the Apostles to have a prayer meeting, pray down the power of God, have revival, and spread the Gospel. However, in the first chapter of Acts we find three things that the Apostles did that were not in the Lord’s plans for them and which could have thwarted the spreading of the Gospel and even today are great hindrances to evangelism, soul winning, and the carrying out of the Great Commission.

III. THE APOSTLES’ FIRST MISTAKE WAS HAVING TOO MUCH CONCERN ABOUT THE LETTER OF THE LAW, THE PHYSICAL KINGDOM, AND NOT ENOUGH CONCERN ABOUT THE SOULS OF MEN. (Acts 1:6, 7) The Apostles, like all Jews, had longed for the coming kingdom. They had their hopes in an earthly kingdom. No doubt they were hoping that Jesus would, upon His resurrection, become the king and restore the kingdom to Israel immediately. This was their immediate concern. Jesus rebuked them and said, “...It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power.” He was simply saying that though we ought to be concerned about the kingdom, our main concern should be carrying out the Great Commission. This is not to say that we should not study prophecy; it is not to say that we should omit the teachings of the kingdom. It is to say that we should not do thusly at the expense of carrying out the Great Commission. The great work that God has called us to do in this age is to pray down the power of God and win souls to Jesus Christ. There are countless thousands of Christians and hundreds of churches who spend their time using the Bible like a math book rather than a love story, and they do little or nothing to carry out the Great Commission. Oh, such Christians and churches may send a few missionaries to carry out the Great Commission in their places. You will notice in Acts 1:8 that Jesus immediately reminded them of the Commission again. Their basic job and big job and primary job was to receive the power of the Holy Spirit and be witnesses. Notice the places for witnessing.

1. Jerusalem. Start at home. So many people spend thousands of dollars sending missionaries and never witness to the neighbor or the people in their own hometown. The kind of mission vision that does not win souls constantly at home is not the Great Commission.
2. All Judæa. In other words, they are to be concerned not only about their city, but also the cities around them, the area around them. For us, that would be the entire Calumet Region, Chicagoland, the state of Indiana, etc.
3. Samaria. Samaria was the next-door neighbor race-wise. Samaritans were a hated people, and yet Jesus was saying, “Go to those who hate you. Go to the underprivileged. Go to the downcast. Go to the poor. Go to all races. Tell them how to be saved.”
4. The uttermost part of the earth. This refers to foreign missions. If you will notice, it is listed fourth. “The lights that shine the farthest, shine the brightest at home,” someone has said. Let us be careful, as we learn the Bible, that we learn it for the purpose of carrying out the Great Commission.

IV. THE APOSTLES’ SECOND MISTAKE WAS CONTINUING THEIR LOOK INTO HEAVEN. In Acts 1:10, 11, notice the words, “...they looked stedfastly toward heaven...” This implies that even after Jesus was visible no more, they kept looking up into Heaven. He had plainly told them what to do after He had been taken away. He had given them the Great Commission in several different forms; just before leaving, He had reminded them what they were to do; and yet there they stood, gazing up into Heaven. It is not enough to live the heavenly life alone. It is not enough just to look for Jesus to come. It is not enough to live in the clouds. There are people who need Christ. In Matthew 17, there is an interesting story of the Transfiguration. Christ was transfigured. It was so wonderful that Peter wanted to stay there. Jesus

realized, however, that at the foot of the mountain there was a man foaming at the mouth, possessed by a demon, who needed help. This is the same type story. The disciples wanted to stay on the mountain and look up. They were reminded by the two men in white apparel that Jesus would come again, and then they remembered the words of Christ that they were to be witnesses after they received the power of God. This is certainly a prevalent mistake. Let us never substitute aestheticism for spirituality. Let us never substitute phony spiritual talk for soul winning. Let us never be fooled by mystics who claim they have some spiritual power apart from carrying out the Great Commission. This is a mistake of every generation. Someone has said that the thermometer of a person's spiritual temperature is the thermometer of obedience. Good Christians carry out the Great Commission. This is what Jesus commanded us to do.

- V. THE APOSTLES' THIRD MISTAKE WAS TAKING CARE OF BUSINESS WHEN THEY SHOULD HAVE BEEN TAKING CARE OF SOUL WINNING. Notice Acts 1:15-26. Judas had betrayed Jesus, leaving only 11 Apostles. The disciples met and elected someone to take his place. There is much difference of opinion concerning this, but Brother Hyles personally believed that the selection of Matthias was wrong. Their idea of what was necessary to be a witness to the resurrection of Christ was wrong. They thought that a witness must be one who had seen Jesus before His ascension. We know and find later to be true that the most powerful incentive to witnessing for Christ was seeing the resurrected Christ, not the Christ before His ascension. This is why God chose Saul of Tarsus on his way to Damascus to be the replacement for Judas. He is called "the apostle out of due season." (See I Corinthians 15:3-10.) No doubt Matthias was a good man, but he was the wrong man, and he passed out of sight on the pages of the Scriptures. I am convinced that when we go to Heaven and we see the 12 foundation stones and the 12 Apostles' names that Paul will be one of the 12. I believe that he was God's man for the filling of the place left vacant by Judas. Many good men do not agree with this, but I think the disciples got into a business meeting too soon. They had been given their instructions and their marching orders. It is amazing that they wanted to have an election before they fulfilled the simple commands and plain commands of Christ. Let us never substitute church work for carrying out the Great Commission. Let us never think because we are doing something of a business nature in the church that we have fulfilled our job of carrying out the Great Commission. Nothing could be farther from the truth.

CONCLUSION: Two thousand years have passed since the first chapter of Acts. The sad truth is that the mistakes of Acts 1 are the mistakes of today. It is so much easier to look for the kingdom than to look for sinners. It is so much easier to look up than to look out. It is so much easier to do church work than to carry out the Great Commission. Let us pledge ourselves now to obey the commands of Christ given to us before He went back to Heaven.