

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes

Third Quarter 2018: *The Book of Acts*

Lesson 1 You Will Be My Witnesses

Read for this week's study

Acts 1:6–8; Luke 24:25; Luke 24:44–48; Deuteronomy 19:15; Acts 1:9–26; Proverbs 16:33.

Memory Text

“You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8, NRSV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. The Restoration of Israel
- III. The Disciples' Mission
- IV. He Will Come Again
- V. Preparing for Pentecost
- VI. The Twelfth Apostle
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Daniel Duda

1. “The Holy Spirit would empower and lead the disciples on a mission that would reach the ends of the earth. [...] Until Jesus' resurrection, however, the disciples did not clearly know these things. When they left everything to follow Him, they believed that He was a political liberator who would one day drive the Romans out of the land, reinstate David's dynasty, and restore Israel to its past glory. It was not easy for them to think otherwise.” (Sabbath afternoon)
2. In what ways are we also bound by our own models of thinking, finding it difficult to think otherwise? “Why is it easy to believe what we want to believe, as opposed to what the Bible really teaches? How can we avoid this trap?” (Sunday's lesson)
3. What is the purpose of the book of Acts? Why did Luke write it? What insights do we get from the introduction and structure of the book?
4. “The disciples were to witness first in Jerusalem, then in Judea and Samaria, and finally to the ends of the earth. It was a progressive plan. Jerusalem was the center of Jewish religious life, the place where Jesus had been condemned and crucified. Judea and Samaria were neighboring areas where Jesus also had ministered. The

disciples, however, were not to limit themselves to this locale alone. The scope of their mission was worldwide.” (Monday’s lesson) This is certainly beyond the disciples’ comfort zones! Besides, Jesus is not specific about how this will be accomplished.

5. In Old Testament times, Israel would not “take” God to the nations. Now the strategy was different. Jerusalem was still the center, but rather than staying and building roots there, the disciples were expected to move out to the uttermost ends of the earth.” (Monday’s lesson) The story of what happened in Jerusalem must travel away from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth.
6. “The passive form *epērhē* (‘He was taken up,’ Acts 1:9, NKJV) is used only here in the New Testament. But this verbal form is found several times in the Greek version of the Old Testament (the Septuagint), all of them describing actions of God, which suggests that God Himself was the One who took Jesus up to heaven, as He was the One who raised Him from the dead (Acts 2:24, 32; Romans 6:4; 10:9).” (Tuesday’s lesson)
7. What is the theological significance of Jesus’ ascension? How are His ascension and second coming connected?
8. “The first administrative action of the early Christian community, which numbered about 120 believers (Acts 1:15), was to choose a successor to Judas. [...] The method the disciples used to choose Matthias may seem strange [to us], but the casting of lots was a long-established way of making decisions (for example, Leviticus 16:5–10, Numbers 26:55). In addition, the choice was between two previously recognized candidates of equal qualifications, not a step into the unknown. The believers also prayed to God, believing that the result would reflect His will (compare with Proverbs 16:33). There is no evidence that the decision was ever challenged. After Pentecost, the casting of lots became no longer necessary due to the direct guidance of the Spirit (Acts 5:3, 11:15–18, 13:2, 16:6–9).” (Thursday’s lesson)
9. What if the ‘direct guidance of the Spirit’ is not so direct and obvious? Would it be helpful to use lots or other forms of ‘holy lottery’? If someone were to come to you and ask, “How can I know what God’s will is for my life?” how would you answer, and why?
10. The prophets had spoken of the “ends of the earth” (Isaiah 5:26; 24:16; 45:22; 48:20; 49:6) to indicate just how global and powerful the message would be. If it is liberation for all of humanity, all of creation, how could something that massive, that true, that good, that compelling stay in Jerusalem?

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

Well, what did they hope the Messiah would do for them? Do we have any records as to the beliefs and hopes of God's people in the Promised Land at that time? And of the Jews who were scattered around the rest of the Mediterranean world? Are there documents? I'll have to have a very large briefcase or two next time, to bring them. The writings called the *Apocrypha*, and the *Pseudepigrapha*, recall, recount, and record, their beliefs and hopes. Many of them looked for a warrior to come, who'd lead them to victory against their enemies, and establish Jerusalem the headquarters of the world. And we have these records, and we can look them up and read them.

But when Christ came, and did not choose to fight, they were disappointed. Even his closest associates were disappointed. His own brothers were disappointed. You remember the two men on the way to Emmaus said, "We had hoped that he would be the one to establish the Kingdom, and he didn't." So they did have a different picture of God. And that would become vividly clear in the Gospels, when here is the clearest revelation of the truth about God the universe will ever see. And yet God's own people are rejecting it, because they preferred another kind of Messiah and another kind of God. And the further Jesus went in his explanations of the truth about God, the more they were moved to reject him, until in John 8 they said, "Do we not say correctly, you have a devil, to be teaching what You are about God and his kingdom?"

How could they make such a serious mistake? Is it that they were deep into idolatry, and they'd given up Sabbath keeping, and all the rest? On the contrary. After Ezra, no more idols. And they became scrupulous Sabbath observers. And Jesus comments on how careful they were. Yet they still rejected him. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *The Picture of God in All 66 – Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi*, recorded 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

*Audio links to the West Covina series recorded in 1984:

<http://pkp.cc/49MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/50MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

But most of all, it's the picture of God that's reflected in the Apocrypha and in the Pseudepigrapha, that helps us understand why Jesus, when he came, was not the Messiah they wanted. He did not present the picture of God that they believed in. And he refused to use force, but rather just to be persuasive and teach the truth in love. He wouldn't even perform miracles to attract their attention. That was not his purpose. The miracles always had a meaning. This disappointed even his closest followers. Well, then when you turn to the New Testament Apocrypha, you can see how some of these same ideas that Jesus sought to correct were perpetuated right on through the early Christian centuries, and do right down to the

present time. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in all 66 – Intertestament Period and Matthew, recorded March, 1982, Riverside, California} To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:

<http://pkp.cc/51MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/52MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

During the last three conversations we have talked about when the conflict will be over. We discussed how it would be over when God’s children on this planet have fully responded “yes” or “no” to his final pleading. The conflict will be over when his loyal children on this planet have become so settled into the truth that they will be ready to resist Satan’s final efforts to deceive. The conflict will be over when, like grown up believers, they not only know the truth well enough to survive themselves, but like Job, they know it well enough to speak well and truly of their heavenly Father. So the question for tonight is not when will the conflict be over, but rather how soon will it be over?

Do you think the end will come, the conflict will be over, Christ will return—in our own lifetime? The disciples wondered about this, you remember, and they asked Jesus, as in the first of the texts on our Bible Reference Sheet, Matthew 24:3: “Tell us [they said], when will this be and how can we tell when you’re coming back and the world will come to an end?” (Beck)

And Jesus replied that even the angels do not know. In fact, he added, that while he was still in his humble, human form on this planet, that even he did not know himself, only the Father. Look again at Matthew 24:36, next on the sheet. Jesus’ own words: “But about that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, not even the Son; only the Father.” (NEB)

But Jesus went on to indicate that there was something much more important than knowing the exact time. He indicated that it was far more important to trust him enough to be willing to wait. You recall our conversation, “All God Asks of Us Is Trust?” For if only we trust him enough to be ready for his coming, whenever that should be, we really don’t need to know the exact time. If we trust him, all will be well. Jesus indicated this in the next verse, in John 14:1, 3: “Set your troubled hearts at rest [on the subject, he said]. Trust in God always; trust also in me . . . I shall come again and receive you to myself, so that where I am you may be also.” (NEB)

But he did give them some details by which they could tell the approximate time. As they sat together one day on the Mount of Olives, Jesus spoke of many signs by which the disciples could tell when the end was getting nearer—very familiar passages to all those who believe in the advent; he spoke of alarming disturbances in earth and sky. He spoke of growing distrust between the nations. He spoke of the rise of false religious leaders; a subject we have discussed before. He particularly warned of those who would arise and teach that his second coming was to be in secret. “Don’t believe that,” Jesus said. As in the next passage, Matthew 24:26, 27, 30, and 31:

Don't believe it [that is, don't believe that I will be coming in secret]. For the Son of Man will come like the lightning that flashes across the whole sky from the east to the west. . . . And all the peoples of earth will weep as they see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. The great trumpet will sound, and he will send out his angels to the four corners of the earth, and they will gather his chosen people from one end of the world to the other. (GNB)

Now that is hardly the description of an invisible event. Quite on the contrary, John affirmed very clearly in the last book in the Bible, that every eye will see him come. And you remember that passage in Revelation 1:7: "Every eye will see him." (RSV) {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #19, "How Soon Will the Conflict Be Over?" recorded June, 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/19MMCAG>*

Lou: We talked about praying in Jesus' name, wondering what that might mean? Is it that God is too holy and we need Jesus to kind of run interference—not against his anger, but in relationship to his holiness?

Graham: Ah, you said two things there of consequence. Sometimes we do hear, "the Father is too holy to look on sin, so the Son came." Are we implying the Son is not as holy as the Father? Forbid the thought! The Son is just as holy as the Father. I believe that to pray in Jesus' name is a grateful recognition that if the Son had not come to reveal the truth, we wouldn't know the Father. We wouldn't know he is just as approachable as the Son. We wouldn't be "bold to approach him with confidence to the throne of grace," as Hebrews 2 and 4 say. We would be afraid to do it. So we pray in Jesus' name, saying, "Thank you for the whole costly revelation and demonstration." And it certainly doesn't mean: "Lord, I'm near the end of my prayer. In one minute when I say, 'Amen,' you'll know I'm through." That's sad. Amen means: "I mean everything I've said, Dear God. I mean it!"

Lou: So "in Jesus' name", really means celebrating God's gift. That's beautiful.

Graham: I can approach you, God. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #11 with Lou Venden, "God's Emergency Measures" recorded April, 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/11MMCAG>*

Further Study with Ellen White

The Jews had been scattered to almost every nation, and spoke various languages. They had come long distances to Jerusalem, and had temporarily taken up their abode there, to remain through the religious festivals then in progress and to observe their requirements. When assembled, they were of every known tongue. This diversity of languages was a great obstacle to the labors of God's servants in publishing the doctrine of Christ to the uttermost parts of the earth. That God should supply the deficiency of the apostles in a miraculous manner was to the people the most perfect confirmation of the testimony of these witnesses for Christ. The Holy Spirit had done for them that which they could not have accomplished for themselves in a lifetime; they could now spread the truth of the gospel abroad, speaking with accuracy the language of those for whom they were laboring. This miraculous gift was the highest evidence they could present to the world that their commission bore the signet of Heaven. {SR 242.3}

To us also the promise of Christ's abiding presence is given. The lapse of time has wrought no change in His parting promise. He is with us today as truly as He was with the disciplines, and He will be with us "even unto the end." {8T 17.1}

Thus Christ gave His disciples their commission. He made full provision for the prosecution of the work, and took upon Himself the responsibility for its success. So long as they obeyed His word, and worked in connection with Him, they could not fail. Go to all nations, He bade them. Go to the farthest part of the habitable globe, but know that My presence will be there. Labor in faith and confidence, for the time will never come when I will forsake you. {DA 822.1}

All who consecrate soul, body, and spirit to God will be constantly receiving a new endowment of physical and mental power. The inexhaustible supplies of heaven are at their command. Christ gives them the breath of His own spirit, the life of His own life. The Holy Spirit puts forth its highest energies to work in heart and mind. The grace of God enlarges and multiplies their faculties, and every perfection of the divine nature comes to their assistance in the work of saving souls. Through co-operation with Christ they are complete in Him, and in their human weakness they are enabled to do the deeds of Omnipotence. {DA 827.3}

The Lord Jesus is our efficiency in all things; His Spirit is to be our inspiration; and as we place ourselves in His hands to be channels of light, our means of doing good will never be exhausted, for the resources of the power of Jesus Christ are to be at our command. We may draw upon His fullness and receive of that grace which has no limit. The Captain of our salvation at every step would teach us that almighty power is at the demand of living faith. He says, "Without me ye can do nothing;" but again declares that "greater works than these shall ye do; because I go unto my Father." {HP 319.4}

He who beholds the Saviour's matchless love will be elevated in thought, purified in heart, transformed in character. He will go forth to be a light to the world, to reflect in some degree this mysterious love. {GW 29.2}

The Holy Spirit is the breath of spiritual life in the soul. The impartation of the Spirit is the impartation of the life of Christ. It imbues the receiver with the attributes of Christ. {DA 805.3}

Upon reaching the Mount of Olives, Jesus led the way across the summit, to the vicinity of Bethany. Here He paused, and the disciples gathered about Him. Beams of light seemed to radiate from His countenance as He looked lovingly upon them. He upbraided them not for their faults and failures; words of the deepest tenderness were the last that fell upon their ears from the lips of their Lord. With hands outstretched in blessing, and as if in assurance of His protecting care, He slowly ascended from among them, drawn heavenward by a power stronger than any earthly attraction. As He passed upward, the awe-stricken disciples looked with straining eyes for the last glimpse of their ascending Lord. A cloud of glory hid Him from their sight; and the words came back to them as the cloudy chariot of angels received Him, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." At the same time there floated down to them the sweetest and most joyous music from the angel choir. {DA 830.3}

Christ had ascended to heaven in the form of humanity. The disciples had beheld the cloud receive Him. The same Jesus who had walked and talked and prayed with them; who had broken bread with them; who had been with them in their boats on the lake; and who had that very day toiled with them up the ascent of Olivet,—the same Jesus had now gone to share His Father's throne. And the angels had assured them that the very One whom they had seen go up into heaven, would come again even as He had ascended. He will come "with clouds; and every eye shall see Him." "The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the Archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise." "The Son of man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory." Revelation 1:7; 1 Thessalonians 4:16; Matthew 25:31. Thus will be fulfilled the Lord's own promise to His disciples: "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." John 14:3. Well might the disciples rejoice in the hope of their Lord's return. {DA 832.2}

In the secret place of prayer, where no eye but God's can see, no ear but His can hear, we may pour out our most hidden desires and longings to the Father of infinite pity, and in the hush and silence of the soul that voice which never fails to answer the cry of human need will speak to our hearts. {Pr 182.6}

Those who seek God in secret telling the Lord their needs and pleading for help, will not plead in vain. "Thy Father which seeth in secret Himself shall reward thee openly." As we make Christ our daily companion we shall feel that the powers of an unseen world are all around us; and by

looking unto Jesus we shall become assimilated to His image. By beholding we become changed. The character is softened, refined, and ennobled for the heavenly kingdom. The sure result of our intercourse and fellowship with our Lord will be to increase piety, purity, and fervor. There will be a growing intelligence in prayer. We are receiving a divine education, and this is illustrated in a life of diligence and zeal. {Pr 183.2}

Prayer is the opening of the heart to God as to a friend. Not that it is necessary in order to make known to God what we are, but in order to enable us to receive Him. Prayer does not bring God down to us, but brings us up to Him. {Pr 8.4}

When Jesus was upon the earth, He taught His disciples how to pray. He directed them to present their daily needs before God, and to cast all their care upon Him. And the assurance He gave them that their petitions should be heard, is assurance also to us.—(*Steps to Christ*, 93.) {Pr 8.5}

Keep your wants, your joys, your sorrows, your cares, and your fears before God. You cannot burden Him; you cannot weary Him. He who numbers the hairs of your head is not indifferent to the wants of His children. “The Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.” James 5:11. His heart of love is touched by our sorrows and even by our utterances of them. Take to Him everything that perplexes the mind. Nothing is too great for Him to bear, for He holds up worlds, He rules over all the affairs of the universe. Nothing that in any way concerns our peace is too small for Him to notice. There is no chapter in our experience too dark for Him to read; there is no perplexity too difficult for Him to unravel. No calamity can befall the least of His children, no anxiety harass the soul, no joy cheer, no sincere prayer escape the lips, of which our heavenly Father is unobservant, or in which He takes no immediate interest. “He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds.” Psalm 147:3. The relations between God and each soul are as distinct and full as though there were not another soul upon the earth to share His watchcare, not another soul for whom He gave His beloved Son. {SC 100.1}

Jesus said, “Ye shall ask in My name: and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you: for the Father Himself loveth you.” “I have chosen you: . . . that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in My name, He may give it you.” John 16:26, 27; 15:16. But to pray in the name of Jesus is something more than a mere mention of that name at the beginning and the ending of a prayer. It is to pray in the mind and spirit of Jesus, while we believe His promises, rely upon His grace, and work His works. {SC 100.2}

Communion with God encourages good thoughts, noble aspirations, clear perceptions of truth, and lofty purposes of action. Those who thus connect themselves with God are acknowledged by Him as His sons and daughters. They are constantly reaching higher and still higher, obtaining clearer views of God and of eternity, until the Lord makes them channels of light and wisdom to the world. {MYP 247.1}

Jesus says, "My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." The peace spoken of by the great Teacher is larger and fuller than we have imagined. Christ is ready to do large things for us, to restore our natures by making us partakers of His divine nature. He waits to link our hearts with His heart of infinite love, in order that we may be fully reconciled to God; but it is our privilege to understand that God loves us as He loves His Son. When we believe in Christ as our personal Saviour, the peace of Christ is ours.... {LHU 332.2}

Prayer is heaven's ordained means of success in the conflict with sin and the development of Christian character. The divine influences that come in answer to the prayer of faith will accomplish in the soul of the suppliant all for which he pleads. For the pardon of sin, for the Holy Spirit, for a Christlike temper, for wisdom and strength to do His work, for any gift He has promised, we may ask; and the promise is, "Ye shall receive." {AA 564.1}

In all ages, through the medium of communion with heaven, God has worked out His purpose for His children, by unfolding gradually to their minds the doctrines of grace. His manner of imparting truth is illustrated in the words, "His going forth is prepared as the morning." Hosea 6:3. He who places himself where God can enlighten him, advances, as it were, from the partial obscurity of dawn to the full radiance of noonday. {AA 564.2}

All things are possible to those that believe. No one coming to the Lord in sincerity of heart will be disappointed. How wonderful it is that we can pray effectually, that unworthy, erring mortals possess the power of offering their requests to God! {HP 81.5}

What higher power can man require than this—to be linked with the infinite God? Feeble, sinful man has the privilege of speaking to his Maker. We utter words that reach the throne of the Monarch of the universe. We pour out our heart's desire in our closets. Then we go forth to walk with God as did Enoch. {HP 81.6}

There is a mighty power in prayer. Our great adversary is constantly seeking to keep the troubled soul away from God. An appeal to Heaven by the humblest saint is more to be dreaded by Satan than the decrees of cabinets or the mandates of kings. {HP 82.5}

It is a part of God's plan to grant us, in answer to the prayer of faith, that which He would not bestow did we not thus ask. {ML 15.5}

Christ is ready to set us free from sin, but He does not force the will; and if by persistent transgression the will itself is wholly bent on evil, and we do not *desire* to be set free, if we *will* not accept His grace, what more can He do? We have destroyed ourselves by our determined rejection of His love. "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." "Today if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts." 2 Corinthians 6:2; Hebrews 3:7, 8. {SC 34.2}

The religion of Christ never degrades the receiver. It never makes him coarse or rough, discourteous or self-important, passionate or hardhearted. On the contrary, it refines the taste, sanctifies the judgment, and purifies and ennobles the thoughts, bringing them into captivity to Jesus Christ. {CT 365.1}

The ideal of Christian character is Christlikeness. There is opened before us a path of continual advancement. We have an object to reach, a standard to gain, which includes everything good and pure and noble and elevated. There should be continual striving and constant progress onward and upward toward perfection of character. . . . {CT 365.3}

Without the divine working, man can do no good thing. God calls every man to repentance, yet man cannot even repent unless the Holy Spirit works upon his heart. But the Lord wants no man to wait until he thinks he has repented before he takes steps toward Jesus. The Saviour is continually drawing men to repentance; they need only to submit to be drawn, and their hearts will be melted in penitence. {CT 365.4}

The lost coin, in the Saviour's parable, though lying in the dirt and rubbish, was a piece of silver still. Its owner sought it because it was of value. So every soul, however degraded by sin, is in God's sight accounted precious. As the coin bore the image and superscription of the reigning power, so man at his creation bore the image and superscription of God. Though now marred and dim through the influence of sin, the traces of this inscription remain upon every soul. God desires to recover that soul and to retrace upon it His own image in righteousness and holiness. {MH 163.1}

The love of God still yearns over the one who has chosen to separate from Him, and He sets in operation influences to bring him back to the Father's house. The prodigal son in his wretchedness "came to himself." The deceptive power that Satan had exercised over him was broken. He saw that his suffering was the result of his own folly, and he said, "How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father." Miserable as he was, the prodigal found hope in the conviction of his father's love. It was that love which was drawing him toward home. So it is the assurance of God's love that constrains the sinner to return to God. "The goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance." Romans 2:4. A golden chain, the mercy and compassion of divine love, is passed around every imperiled soul. The Lord declares, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee." Jeremiah 31:3. {COL 202.1}

Let no man present the idea that man has little or nothing to do in the great work of overcoming; for God does nothing for man without his cooperation. Neither say that after you have done all you can on your part, Jesus will help you. Christ has said, "Without me ye can do nothing" (John 15:5). From first to last man is to be a laborer together with God. Unless the Holy Spirit works upon the human heart, at every step we shall stumble and fall. Man's efforts

alone are nothing but worthlessness; but cooperation with Christ means a victory. Of ourselves we have no power to repent of sin. Unless we accept divine aid we cannot take the first step toward the Saviour. He says, "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end" (Revelation 21:6) in the salvation of every soul. {1SM 381.2}

Christ gives them the breath of His own Spirit, the life of His own life. The Holy Spirit puts forth its highest energies to work in heart and mind. The grace of God enlarges and multiplies their faculties, and every perfection of the divine nature comes to their assistance in the work of saving souls. Through cooperation with Christ they are complete in Him, and in their human weakness they are enabled to do the deeds of Omnipotence. {ML 49.4}

Recommended Reading: *Acts of the Apostles*, chapter 3 – "The Great Commission"

The Desire of Ages, chapter 86 – "Go Teach All Nations"

The Desire of Ages, chapter 87 – "To My Father, and Your Father"

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