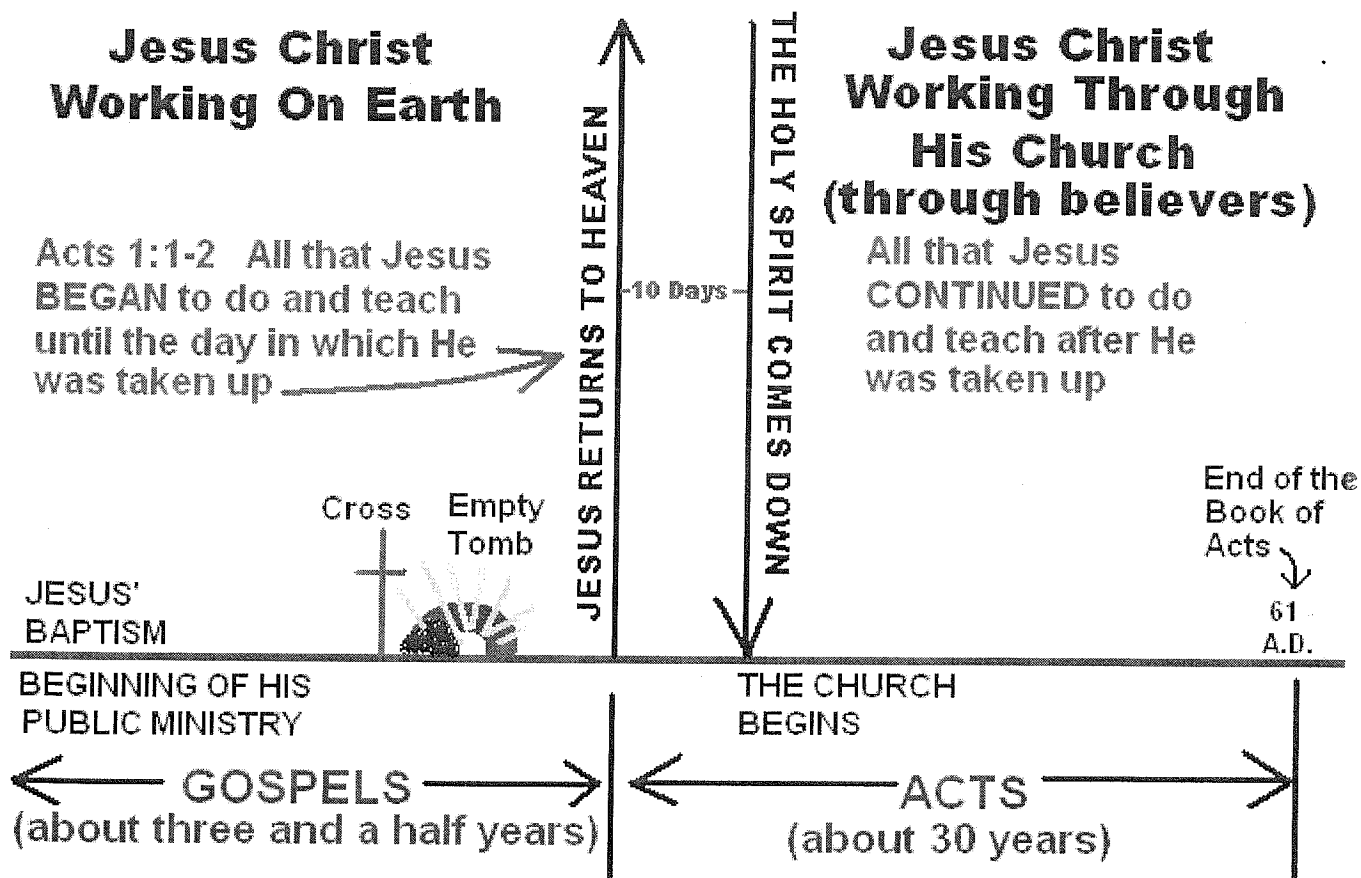


CHAPTER 1

The Birthday Of The Church (Acts 1-2)

The New Testament begins with the FOUR GOSPELS (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John). What is the fifth book of the New Testament? _____ The four gospels tell us about the life of Christ until the day when He was taken up into heaven. The book of Acts tells us about the life of the early Church, when the risen Christ was doing great and mighty things in and through men such as Peter and Paul:



The ACTS OF THE APOSTLES should really be called THE ACTS OF JESUS CHRIST because as we read the book of Acts we see the Lord Jesus Christ working and acting in and through His chosen apostles (men such as Peter, John and Paul).

The Lord Jesus Christ is still working and "acting" today. To do His work, He uses willing hands, mouths, tongues, feet and minds because HE WORKS THROUGH PEOPLE (He works through His Church). Just as He worked through Peter, John, Stephen and Paul, so He can work through **you!** Are you allowing the living Lord to work in and through you (Hebrews 13:21; Philippians 2:13)?

In the first twelve chapters of this book (ACTS 1-12) the Apostle Peter is the main actor, or the main character, that you read about. In the remaining part of the book (ACTS 13-28) the Apostle

Paul is the main actor or character that you read about:

ACTS 1-12	ACTS 13-28
Mostly about Peter	Mostly About Paul

Peter and Paul were not "SUPER MEN", but they were people just like we are, and God used them in a wonderful way. Both Peter and Paul demonstrated the outworking of the life of the Lord Jesus Christ. The same God who used Peter and Paul and worked through in and through their lives is the same God who is willing to use us today.

God's Wonderful Promise

In Acts 1:4 we read about a wonderful promise which God gave. God promised that there would come a day when He would send the Holy Spirit (who is also called THE COMFORTER). In John's gospel, quickly look through chapters 14, 15 and 16 and see if you can find verses where God promises to send the Holy Spirit (the Comforter):

John 14, verses _____
 John 15, verses _____
 John 16, verses _____

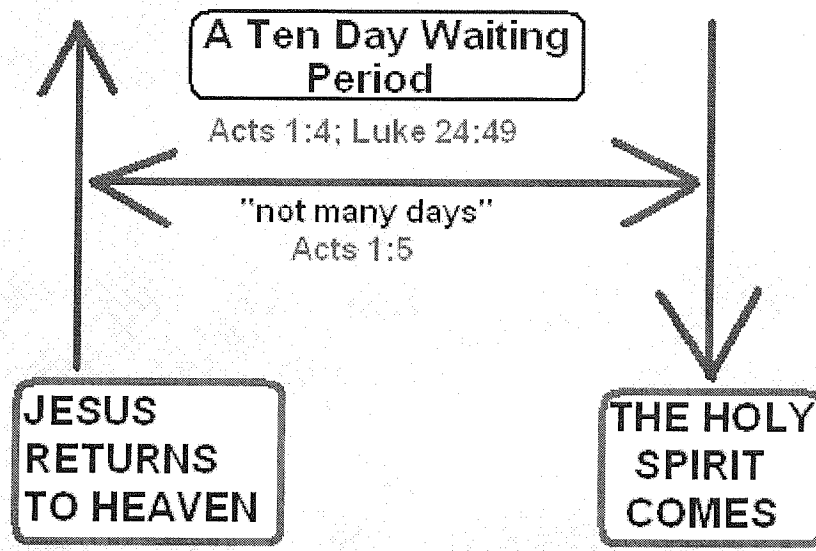
The Lord Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would come to live in them. The Spirit would also TEACH them and COMFORT them, and GUIDE them into all truth. Christ would leave the disciples, but the Holy Spirit would come to them. Christ would **go up** (go back to heaven) but the Holy Spirit would **come down**.

The Waiting Period

Many times we need to wait for God's promises to come to pass. In Acts 1:4 the disciples were told to _____ for the promise of the Father (they were to sit still and wait!). In Luke 24:49 they were told the same thing (the word "tarry" also means to wait).

Have you ever had to WAIT for a person to come? Perhaps you have gone to an airport or a bus station, and you had to wait until someone arrived. There is often a waiting period (sometimes five minutes, sometimes an hour, sometimes an even longer time). When the person arrived, did you have to wait any longer? _____

Before the Lord Jesus returned to heaven, He told the disciples that they would have to wait for a PERSON (the Holy Spirit) and that this WAITING PERIOD would be for several days (see Acts 1:5). This is illustrated as follows:



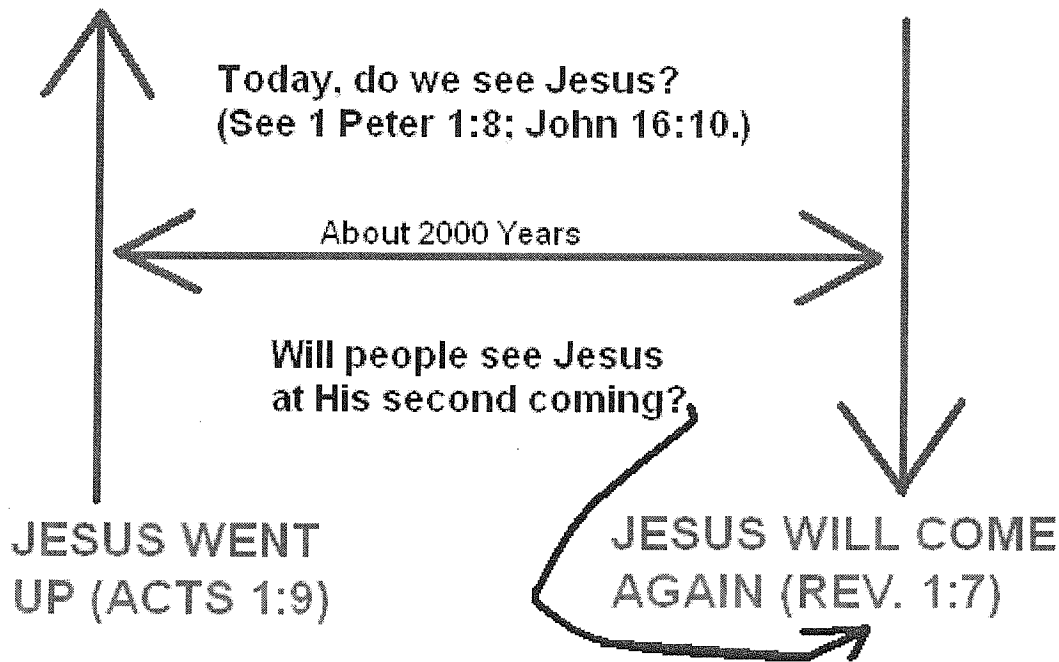
The Mighty Power

In Luke 24:49 the disciples were told to WAIT (tarry) until they were endued with _____ from on high. The Holy Spirit is God and He is Almighty. He possesses the mighty power of God (compare Acts 1:8). Without the Holy Spirit there would be no power to live for Jesus and to be His witnesses. Trying to do the work of God without the Holy Spirit is like trying to drive a car without gas or trying to run a battery operated toy or game without the batteries! It's impossible! It just will not work! You must have the energy and power or you will go nowhere and accomplish nothing! Jesus said, "Without ME, ye can do _____" (John 15:5). Without God's enabling power, we can do nothing.

There used to be a cartoon program about "Popeye the Sailor." Whenever he would eat SPINACH, he would become very strong and powerful and he would do amazing things! Without the spinach he was very weak! He got his power and strength from the spinach. Believers receive power only from God. Believers are very powerful with the Holy Spirit working in them. Without the Spirit's working, THEY CAN DO NOTHING!

The Promise of Christ's Coming

There is another great promise given in Acts chapter 1. It is found in verse 11. Jesus had just ascended (gone up) into heaven. As the disciples were looking up into heaven, two angels spoke to them and gave them a wonderful promise. The same Jesus who went up is going to come again. In the same way that He went up, so He will come down. This is illustrated as follows:



The Day of Pentecost

God promised that there would come a day when He would send His Holy Spirit. This great event happened on the DAY OF P_____ (Acts 2:1). For the Jewish people, there were three great feasts held every year (the Passover, the feast of Tabernacles and Pentecost). There were other feasts too, but these were the most important ones. Pentecost was one of these great feast days, and Jews from all over the Roman empire would gather to the city of Jerusalem to celebrate this important feast (see Acts 2:5). This important day is described in Leviticus 23:15-22. It was a special day in Old Testament times, but as we read Acts chapter 2 we see that this day became even more special. Fifty days after Jesus rose again from the dead and ten days after Jesus went back to heaven, God did something wonderful. He sent the Holy Spirit to live in the hearts of believers and to form something brand new: THE CHURCH.

Three Unusual Happenings

God wanted to make it very clear that this was an extra special day. God was doing something wonderful, and He wanted people to know about it. There were three extra-special things which God did on the day of Pentecost:

1) Noise Like Wind

As the believers were together on the day of Pentecost, suddenly there came a sound (or noise) from heaven which was like a mighty, rushing wind (see Acts 2:2). This noise did not come from a hurricane or a storm, but it came **from heaven**. God wanted every one to know that He was doing something very special, very unique.

In the Bible the Holy Spirit is compared to the wind (read John 3:8). The wind is invisible; we cannot see it. But the invisible wind is able to do amazing things: it pushes a sailboat across the lake, keeps a kite high in the air, turns a windmill, and does many other things. We cannot see

the wind, but we can see what the wind does.

The Holy Spirit is invisible. We cannot see the Holy Spirit. When God sent the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, He caused a great noise to be heard like the wind. He wanted the disciples to know that something very special was happening. If God had not done this the disciples might have said, "I wonder if the Holy Spirit really came. We didn't see anything and we didn't hear anything. Did something really happen?" God made it very clear that on this day something special was really happening!

2) Tongues Like Fire

Not only could the disciples HEAR something amazing, but they could also SEE something amazing (see Acts 2:3). They could see tongues that were like fire! These tongues separated and came to rest upon each believer that was there. God was doing something very special!

Sometimes the Holy Spirit is compared to fire (see 1 Thess. 5:19—the Holy Spirit can be quenched just as a fire can be quenched). God wants to light up each believer with the flame of His wonderful presence. According to Acts 2:3 God was doing a work in each believer and not one was left out. Every disciple had a tongue like a flame resting over him. God wanted everyone to know that He was doing something special and that every believer was included in this special work.

3) Different Languages

God did something else very special on that day. In Acts 2:4 we learn that they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with _____ (different languages). Read Acts 2:4-11. What an amazing miracle! God enabled these people of Galilee to speak in many different languages--languages which they had never learned and did not even know. God was doing something unusual on this day.

The Church Was Born

When the Holy Spirit came, the Church was born. The Holy Spirit came to live in a body of believers, and this body is called the Church. After Peter preached, how many believed and were saved (Acts 2:41)? _____ The Church was growing. After this God continued to A _____ to His church every day (Acts 2:47). Jesus once said, "I WILL _____ MY CHURCH" (Matthew 16:18). He began building the Church on the day of Pentecost and He has been building His Church ever since. Every time a person is saved, a new member is added to His Church (1 Cor. 12:13). Someday the building will be completed and He will come and take us to heaven (1 Thess. 4:13-18).

From a Coward to a Courageous Preacher

Who was the COWARD who denied the Lord three times (Luke 22:55-62)? _____ Less than two months later came the day of Pentecost. Who was the brave man who courageously stood up and preached to thousands of Jews--even to the very people who had crucified Christ (Acts 2:14)? _____ God did a great work in this man's heart! The God who changed Peter is the God who can change us too (by the power of His Holy Spirit)!

Is God Doing Something Special Today?

The day of Pentecost was a special day and there has never been a day like it. What happens when a person believes on Christ today? When you accepted Christ as your Saviour, did you hear a loud noise like a mighty wind? _____ Did fiery tongues come and sit on top of your head? _____ Did you start to speak in foreign languages? _____

Today, how do you know that the Holy Spirit is living in you? See 1 Corinthians 6:19; Romans 8:9 and 2 Timothy 1:14. I know the Holy Spirit dwells in me because _____ I KNOW SO because God SAID SO! I don't need SOUNDS and SIGHTS. I have God's sure Word that tells me so.

How do you show that the Holy Spirit is living in you? If the Spirit is really living in your life, will that make a difference? How can you SHOW others that you really have the Holy Spirit? See Galatians 5:22-23. Can you see electricity? _____ How can you tell if electricity is really working? In a light bulb? In a microwave oven? In a radio? How can you tell that the Holy Spirit is really working in a believer?

Are you a member of the Church of Jesus Christ? Does the Holy Spirit live in your heart? Have you been baptized in water to show your new life in Christ (Acts 2:42)? God is doing a wonderful thing today! God is doing something very special! ARE YOU A PART OF WHAT GOD IS DOING? IS GOD DOING A WONDERFUL THING IN YOUR HEART?

"You shall be witnesses unto me"—Acts 1:8

