



THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

The Record of the Beginning of Jesus' Reign

Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

QUESTION: Is it possible that people who believe that Jesus must return to set up a kingdom sometime in the future are actually rejecting Him and His present Kingdom?

QUESTION: Is the kind of kingdom scenario projected by the Futurists (lions eating straw; children playing with vipers; no pain or trouble; only pleasure), a realistic hope? Or is it a paganized, religious fantasy?

THIS series of lessons on *The Acts of the Apostles* is a tribute to those first disciples through whom God planted the seed of liberty in the hearts of men. This will not be another rehash of established church doctrine, but a refreshing new look at an old book. In these lessons you will discover how the churches, and the King James Version translators, have led you astray through bad translation and interpretation. You will discover startling information that has been overlooked or avoided by the churches.

The Church Establishment has constructed a whole religious industry upon fabricated, false doctrines devised for one thing only: to secure and expand its conquests and holdings. Since the churches have usurped and misrepresented Christ's heritage, they have taught churchgoers that Jesus abdicated and retreated to outer space after the Jews rejected Him as their king. They teach that He abandoned His earthly heritage. They jettisoned Christ "beyond the blue" to await a "second advent" ... and they have the audacity to teach that He failed His first attempt to set up his Kingdom.

However, there is a remnant today who believe that Jesus succeeded and is actively reigning over His kingdom notwithstanding those who are waiting for a "second advent." Futurists would have Jesus detained from kingship until their mythical, utopian "millennium" appears in the distant future.

This is man's traditional response to the reign of Jesus Christ. Thus, Jesus has been rejected because men won't accept his Kingship.

The truth is that *Acts* is not about disciples who were left to go it alone and wait for their king to return. Rather, the book of *Acts* is an early record of Jesus' Kingship – showing that He ascended his throne and began reigning! It shows how Jesus **PROVED** He was King. It tells of Him receiving His inheritance (all creation) and claiming His kingdom. By understanding these vital points in *Acts* you will see that Jesus does reign over us ... even though the churches have kept Him a mystery.

Churches have misrepresented the Kingdom, making it seem like either an occult myth, or a supernatural Disney World. That nonsense is not the good news of Christ's Kingdom, as you will learn in this series of lessons.

Acts explains that Jesus never left us. He never floated away to outer space. However He was changed in form. He became invisible ... but remained present, not unlike His Father (YHWH) who is both invisible and present. Therefore, it is nonsense to talk of Jesus "returning someday." He never left!

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

NOTE ...

As you begin this verse-by-verse expository of Acts, remember to read the passages in context. Read ahead in your Bible, or preferably an interlinear, then go back and reexamine the verses, one at a time, in light of this study.

We have used a corrected rendering of the *King James Version* for our common text because it is the most commonly read version. Plus, most study helps are keyed to it.

As you read, remember that the *KJV* is only one of many VERSIONS in English, not to mention all the versions in other languages. The Greek text, from which all these versions come, is a compilation of many older, smaller Greek texts that have been discovered and compiled into one large text. The partial Greek texts are copies of older texts, which were copies of older ones that are no longer extant. Somewhere, back in time, these copies were made from originals - called *autographs*. None of the originals (*autographs*) are extant.

Needless to say, the *KJV* is not the ORIGINAL text. The *KJV* is ONLY A VERSION. Look at the title page of your Bible. It will tell you it is a version. A "version" is NOT an original. It is a version ... of a translation ... of copies ... of the originals.

Obviously, VERSIONS are necessary for modern readers. However, VERSIONS cannot be taken for granted. We must always research, test, and critique the versions ... lest the slant and prejudices of one group of translators become the unquestioned creed of all the readers in a particular tongue.

Clearly, the *KJV* (the most popular version for the past few centuries) carries the prejudices of the English Monarchy of the 1600s, along with the Anglican Church of that time.

The *KJV*'s theme of The Church of England still influences today's churches. They continue to prefer the slanted meanings of words to coincide with their lust for central control and indoctrination. As a result, the original meaning of the Scriptures is missed and often completely lost.

Keeping this in mind, you will notice many instances where we have made translational corrections to the *KJV* by using the correct words or by rephrasing certain verses to better express the Greek text. These corrections are not arbitrary or capricious, but are based upon careful research of word meanings.

You should, by all means, have your own word-study tools to verify these corrections.

If you have a *KJV* Bible, you will see the comparisons of the verses. Please take notice of these editions. The reasons for using these words will be discussed in the lesson, so continue to compare the *KJV* to the translation corrections throughout the lessons.

Question boxes and "points to ponder" are dispersed throughout the lessons. Answers for these questions, and comments, are provided in the answer section at the end.

God bless your studies!

Ben Williams

ACTS 1:1 LUKE'S SALUTATION

"The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach"

“THE former treatise” apparently, refers back to the book of *Luke (The Gospel of Luke)* which had been written earlier. Luke is also the writer of *Acts*.

Theophilus was apparently a man of authority. In other verses

of scripture, Theophilus is called “most excellent *Theophilus*.” “Most excellent” indicated that Luke was addressing someone important. In several other scripture passages we see this phrase used to address someone of public office. So, Theophilus, apparently,

was a Roman official – and that’s about all we know of him.

The word, “Theophilus,” means “friend of God” or “lover of God.” “Theo” means “God,” and “philo” means “affection or love.” So, this name carries a definite connotation of piety.

ACTS 1:2a TAKEN, BUT NOT “UP”

“Until the day in which He was taken, ...”

THIS verse is of particular interest because it is evident from scripture that Jesus Christ isn’t in outer space somewhere. Rather, He is here reigning among us. It is evident because He declared it ... He said He wouldn’t leave us:

...and, lo, I AM WITH YOU ALWAYS, even unto the end of the age.

Matthew 28:20b

And yet the question arises, if Jesus didn’t go up into outer space, why does the Bible say He went UP?

The concept that Jesus is present with us has been hard for people to grasp because the King James Version says “he was taken up.” However, the correct reading is:

Until the day in which he was taken ...

Acts 1:2a

He wasn’t “taken upward.” He was simply “taken” (received) by God. The word “up” is not in the Greek text.

The Greek word is “analambano” which is comprised of two root words: “ana” and

“lambano.” “Lambano” means “take.” “Ana” is a generic preposition which can mean a number of things, depending on the context in which it is used. In various contexts “ana” can mean “in,” “by,” “through,” “again,” “each,” “per,” etc. However, because of the church’s preconceived mythical notion that the home of the gods must be in the sky, they elected to insert the meaning of “directionally upward,” and to ignore simple rules of translation and the fact that the Greek text does not support it.

To add to the confusion, dictionaries often bend to popular usage rather than sticking to the original definitions. That is why you need an Etymological Dictionary to get the original meanings. Strong’s Dictionary is no exception in that it sometimes lists popular usage instead of original meanings. For instance, Strong’s defines “analambano” as: *to take up*. This definition works only if it is understood to mean “to take up a cause” (i.e., to accept it).

Let’s look at some of the ways “analambano” was rendered by the King James translators. I think you will see what I mean.

“ANALAMBANO” (misinterpreted)

The reason we know that the addition of “up” is the result of preconception with James Strong and the King James Translators is that there’s an inconsistency to the translation of “analambano” in other passages. The word appears in several places in the New Testament, and in some of those places “up” is not included in the meaning. First, let’s look at a few places where the word, “analambano,” is used in reference to Jesus. In these cases the KJV almost always infers “directionally upward.”

“So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was RECEIVED UP (analambano) into heaven...”

Mark 16:19

“... this same Jesus, which is TAKEN UP (analambano) from you...”

Acts 1:11

“Beginning from the baptism of John unto that same day that he (Jesus) was TAKEN UP (analambano) from us, ...”

Acts 1:22a

“ANALAMBANO” (the other usage)

On the previous page were three examples of how the KJV translators rendered “analambano” in reference to upward movement. But, notice in the following examples, when referring to someone or something other than Jesus, the very same word is used quite differently.

*Yea, you **TOOK UP** (analambano) the tabernacle of Moloch, and the star of your god Remphan, figures which you made to worship them: and I will carry you away beyond Babylon.*

Acts 7:43.

(In this case “analambano” is translated “took up,” but obviously they were not lifting the idol up. They “took up” the tabernacle of Moloch, not in the sense of upward movement, but rather that they ACCEPTED it. They “took it up,” meaning they accepted it unto themselves; they received it. This is quite different from “floating or lifting upwards.”)

*And we went before to ship, and sailed to Assos, there intending to **TAKE IN** (analambano) Paul: ...*

Acts 20:13

*Then the soldiers, as it was commanded them, **TOOK** (analambano) Paul ...*

Acts 23:31a

*Wherefore **TAKE UNTO YOU** (analambano) the whole armour of God, ...*

*Above all, **TAKING** (analambano) the shield of faith ...*

Ephesians 6:13,16

*Only Luke is with me. **TAKE** (analambano) Mark, and bring him with you ...*

II Timothy 4:11

Thus, analambano is translated “take in” (i.e., “to ACCEPT” or “to RECEIVE”), “took,” “take unto,” “taking,” and “take.” These reflect the correct meaning of the word ... with no upward movement indicated.

More examples could be cited, but these adequately demonstrate that the KJV translators relied upon mythical prejudice to formulate their rendering of “analambano” when it came to Christ being “taken,” and then in all other cases they rendered it correctly. Clearly the Greek word for “taken,” “take” or “taking,” etc., means “received,” or “accepted” – not “lifted in an upward direction.”

THUS, SINCE ANALAMBANO DID NOT MEAN “TO FLOAT UPWARD” WHEN USED IN REFERENCE TO MARK, PAUL, OR THE TABERNACLE OF MOLOCH... AND IF NONE OF THESE EVER FLOATED UPWARD INTO THE SKY ... WHY THEN SHOULD WE ASSUME THAT THE SAME WORD MEANT “TO FLOAT UPWARD” WHEN IT REFERS TO JESUS?

It is obvious that Acts 1:2 does not indicate that Jesus floated upward and went out of sight into and through the stratosphere.

Rather, it indicates that He was “taken” (i.e., accepted) by His Father to sit upon his throne as King and Heir of Heaven and Earth ... which was so stated by God Himself in Mtt. 17:5, II Pet. 1:17. Jesus was “accepted into glory,” not lifted away from Earth.

Jesus was changed in form – to a state of existence that we mortals have not yet experienced.

Men often have difficulty dealing with things beyond their sphere of experience, and that’s when superstition usually sets in. It seems to be easier for men to imagine Jesus existing in outer space, away from Earth, than to accept the idea

that He is present with us even though we cannot see Him.

Churchgoers come to these verses pre-programmed to assume Jesus lives in the sky ... as do most mythical gods. They read it into the text ... that Jesus floated upward into the sky. But, if they hadn’t started with that preconceived notion, and if they had read it in the Greek, they would have known better.

Beware of preconceived notions.

With all the religious chicanery in the world, you can’t afford to take anything for granted – especially if you hear it in a church!

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT: If Strong’s Concordance is insufficient on the definition of “analambano,” how can we trust his definition on other Greek and Hebrew words? Are people likely to just pick and choose the word definitions that fit their preconceived notions?

ACTS 1:2b THE COMMANDER IN CHIEF

“... after that He through holy spirit had given COMMANDMENTS to the apostles whom He had chosen:”

JESUS was Commander in Chief. As King He gave the apostles commandments. This is strong evidence of Jesus’ Kingship.

And Jesus came and spake to them (the eleven disciples) saying, “All authority is given to me in heaven and upon the earth.

“Go you therefore, and teach all nations, immersing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy spirit:”

Matthew 28:18-19

Only someone with authority could have given these commands.

Also, it is clear, according to verse 20, that His plans did NOT include a couple-thousand-year extended leave from Earth:

“Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have COMMANDED you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the age.”

Matthew 28:20

QUESTION: When Yahweh raised Jesus from the tomb, what was proven beyond the fact that He was alive again?

ACTS 1:3 MANY PROOFS

“To whom also He showed himself, through many proofs, to be living after his passion (His trial, torture and death), being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God:”

WHEN Yahweh raised Jesus from the dead, He showed many proofs (evidence) that Jesus was alive. By the context of this passage, He also proved that Jesus was King of New Jerusalem!

As King, Jesus’ first concern was for His kingdom. He spent forty precious days with His disciples teaching about His Reign – His Kingship. He gave them “the good news” (the “gospel”) of the Kingdom, and sent them, as

apostles and ambassadors, into the nations with this message of hope.

They witnessed that Jesus was King. The promises of old were being fulfilled. Jesus was showing Himself as the Messiah/King with many proofs.

ACTS 1:4 THE PROMISE OF THE FATHER

“And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not withdraw from Jerusalem, but remain there for THE PROMISE OF THE FATHER, of which He had told them.”

THIS is repeated in Luke 24, in more detail:

And He (Jesus) said to them “These are the words which I spoke to you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me.”

Then opened He their understanding,

that they might understand the scriptures.

And said to them, “Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer,...

“And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

‘And you all are witnesses of these things.

‘And behold, I send THE PROMISE OF MY FATHER upon you: but WAIT IN THE CITY OF JERUSALEM, until you are endued (endowed) with power from on high.”

Luke 24:44-49

REMEMBER: Jesus told His disciples to tarry in Jerusalem. He reminded them of the promise that they were to receive there – namely, “eonian life” (i.e., holy inspiration, repentance and remission of sins). This phenomenon was equated with the New Covenant and Christ’s Reign. And it began in Jerusalem after He was raised from the tomb. This, in itself, was powerful proof of Jesus’ New Covenant reign.

ACTS 1:5 HOLY SPIRIT

“For John truly immersed (baptized) in water; but you shall be immersed in holy spirit not many days hence.”

THIS refers to an event recorded in Chapter Two of Acts, when holy spirit spread among them because of Christ’s Presence. They were being “immersed” in the spirit of his Kingship.

“Holy spirit” is a term that simply means “*motivation or intent to be separate.*” It is not a “ghost” personage that “possesses” men as the churches teach. “Holy spirit” is motivation from God. Thus, the term “holy spirit” should not be capitalized as a proper name.

QUESTION: In Strong’s Greek Dictionary “spirit” is defined in many ways, including “**air in motion,**” “**a human soul that has left the body,**” and “**angels and demons.**” So how do you determine which of these definitions is correct?

ACTS 1:6, 7 NO HUMAN KINGS

“When they therefore were come together, they were questioning Him, saying, Lord, are you at this time restoring the reign to Israel?”

“And He (Jesus) said to them, It is not for you to know the times or the determined schedules which the Father has put in His own authority.”

QUESTION: When the apostles asked Jesus if He was going to restore the reign to Israel (to men) again, were they of the opinion that He had failed to become King?

FUTURISTS teach that the apostles were asking Jesus whether or not He intended to start His kingdom at that time. But that was not the case.

Actually, in verse 6, the disciples were asking, “*Are you going to restore the reign to Israel with human kings?*” In other words, was He going to reinstate the monarchy in Israel like in the days of King David, King Solomon, etc., when men ruled over Israel.” They were still looking to patterns of the past with central government. They thought that a new gov-

ernment would make things right. They still assumed they needed mortal rulers ... as in I Samuel 8.

Thus, the question in verse 6 was about men ruling over men – not about the Kingship of Jesus.

In verse 7, Jesus told them, in essence, that they were asking the wrong question and that the Father had put the Reign “in his own authority.” In other words, Yahweh had authorized his raised, immortal Son (not mortal men) to reign over Israel.

So Jesus told them that times and objectives are determined by God, not

by man. Furthermore, He (Jesus) had been authorized to oversee and administer the Father's agenda. The "times" and "seasons" (events) are under God's authority ... and He has delegated that authority to Jesus (see Mtt. 28:18).

QUESTION: What is the difference between "kingdom" and "reign"?

ACTS 1:8 "THE GREAT COMMISSION" ACCOMPLISHED

"But you will receive power when the holy spirit has come upon you: and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and Samaria, and to the farthest reaches of the land."

JERUSALEM is where the apostles were told to wait until they received the gift of holy spirit (a spirit of separation and service to Christ). Thus, the promise of the Father was being fulfilled through them. The gospel message began spreading from Jerusalem and eventually to the farthest reaches of the land ("land" meant "the known lands of their day" ... in essence, the Roman world). These apostles, and others of their generation, carried the gospel (the good news of Christ's Reign), according to prophecy, to the lands where Israel had migrated.

Of course, this verse is often used to coerce people today to go into foreign and strange lands to proselytize people for the churches. But, the fact is that this commission, given to the disciples at that time, was completed in their generation. The good news of Christ's reign went to those nations in that generation. (For a more in-depth study of this point read "*The Hoax of the Great Commission*," available from ACM).

QUESTION: Aren't we supposed to convert all people of the world to Christianity? Won't they be damned and condemned if we don't? Don't we have to keep doing this? How could that mission have been completed in the apostles' lifetimes?

ACTS 1:9,10 JESUS BECOMES INVISIBLE

"And in saying these things He was exalted, and a cloud received Him from their sight.

"And as they were gazing into the air where He departed, behold, two men in white clothing stood by them"

THIS passage has been greatly misunderstood, mostly because of church tradition which teaches that Jesus was air-lifted upward into the sky - riding upon a cloud ... onward and upward until He was out of sight ... heading to outer space.

But, as you can see, the KJV translators inserted their own interpretation into it. Jesus didn't go upward - He simply was taken from sight in a bright cloud. Furthermore, the context in this chapter indicates that this cloud was not "over" them in the sense of a weather cloud up in the sky. Rather, this special cloud ENVELOPED them on the ground.

It was a particular kind of cloud ... like the one described in Matthew 17 as Jesus and His disciples were on a mountain. There, Jesus was transfigured before them, and a vision of Moses and Elijah appeared to them:

While He yet spoke, behold, A BRIGHT CLOUD OVERSHADOWED THEM: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear you Him."

And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their faces, and were afraid.

And Jesus came and touched them, and said, "Arise, and be not afraid."

And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus.

Matthew 17:5-8

Thus we see a comparable situation where a cloud (“a bright cloud”) covered them (“overshadowed them”) causing two messengers to appear and then disappear. These messengers neither floated down from the sky, nor departed upward into the sky. In essence, they came and went in a cloud ... just as Jesus “went” in a cloud.

A cloud covered them and took Jesus from sight. He was TAKEN. NO VERTICAL MOVEMENT IS INSINUATED. Jesus was seen by a group of men ... a cloud overshadowed them, and Jesus disappeared. Churchgoers assume upward movement because of preconditioning of their minds by pagan myth. They assume that Jesus HAD to go UP into outer space – to a mythological outer-space “heaven.”

The KJV wrongly indicates He went upward. But the Greek word for “taken” is EPAIRTHAY. This Greek word means to “exalt, or accept.” EPAINOS (the noun form) means “praise; exaltation.” EPAINEO (verb form) means “give praise; exalt.” Thus, EPAIRTHAY means “to take, accept, exalt.”

So, why have people theorized that Jesus blasted off into outer space? It is rather strange when you stop and think about it. Why would He suddenly abandon His

mission, travel to an obscure place far away, and remain there for many centuries away from us?

While this scenario stretches the imagination, the typical Christian, today, finds it easier to accept than the truth ... that Jesus is the reigning King who did not abandon His Kingdom here on Earth. While this is perfectly logical, it remains a new and amazing concept in a world that has been saturated with the church version.

QUESTION: Churchgoers claim that Jesus did float UP to “heaven,” and that He lives “in our hearts.” But if Jesus is omnipresent, how can He be “away”? And how can He “return”?

You may need to think deeply on this for some time before the obvious sensibility of it sinks in.

Now read Acts 1:10 again, noticing the word, “toward” in the KJV. The Greek word is EIS which means “into.” Also, the Greek word for “heaven” is OURANOS which means “air, atmosphere, or sky” (i.e., air above the ground).

The KJV suggests that the disciples were gazing upward into the sky. However, the actual text says these men were gazing into the

“air.” If we stand outside and look toward the horizon, we’re not just looking at mountains and trees. We’re looking INTO air.

“Ouranos” means “air above the ground” – including the atmosphere in which we walk and live. It doesn’t say the apostles had their faces turned upward. Rather, it says they were gazing “into the air” ... undoubtedly in the direction where Jesus had just been standing before He disappeared.

The disciples were gazing at the spot where Jesus had just been standing. A cloud had suddenly enveloped them, and Jesus was “taken” from their sight ... leaving them to wonder where He went.

The KJV translators also mishandled the Greek word POREUOMENOU in verse 10, which they rendered “as he went up.” In fact, it means, “where He departed” (i.e., “the area where He had been standing” or “the portion of air where He vanished”). “Up” is not implied at all. It was supplied by the KJV translators in accordance to their prejudiced mythical view.

Also, the Greek word for “went” is that same word we encountered earlier: “analambano.” Remember, it means He was TAKEN ... but not up.

ACTS 1:11 JESUS’ PRESENCE - INVISIBLE TO MEN

“Who also said, Men, Galileans, why do you stand gazing into the air? This same Jesus, having been received from you into the air, will come in like manner as you saw him go into the air.” (i.e., invisibly)

NOW let’s look at the phrase, “will come in like manner.” Be careful that you do not read it wrongly. “In like manner” does NOT mean “in reverse order.” The messengers said that Christ’s PRESENCE would be “in like manner as He went into the air.” In other words, his presence would be invisible to mortal eyes.

Remember, in Matthew 28:20 Jesus promised He would never leave! Therefore, these messen-

gers were NOT explaining a “going” and then a “return.” Jesus cannot “return,” since He didn’t leave. He only transformed from visibly-present to invisibly-present. Most people read this phrase wrongly. They assume it says that Jesus will “return” in REVERSE order (i.e., floating back down through the clouds which they believe He floated up through). But, the Bible says Jesus would be present in the SAME MANNER – not in REVERSE ORDER.

When Jesus disappeared before their eyes, the disciples stood staring into the air as if they were expecting Him to reappear (i.e., in reverse order). But, the messengers scolded the disciples, and told them to not expect a reversal of the occurrence. They told the disciples that Jesus' presence would be in like manner as they saw Him go from their sight (i.e., invisible). Thus, Jesus became invisible ... but not absent.

This analysis is the only sensible answer. It is absurd to imagine that the messengers were saying that Jesus would someday return to earth by coming down through the clouds. If this is what they meant, then they certainly would NOT have scolded the disciples for watching the sky – for, indeed, that would have been precisely the correct thing to do.

The messengers' were telling the disciples that Christ's Immortal Presence is upon the earth.

Some people insist upon a worldly, visible King. To these people Jesus has said:

20. ...The kingdom of God DOES NOT COME WITH OBSERVATION (visibly).

Luke 17:20

The Kingdom Of God is established by men accepting Jesus as King. "Not with observation" means the same as "invisible." Christ reigns invisibly. He is present and invisible.

Put that together with Matthew 28:18 where Jesus said "I am with you always, even till the end of the age," and we know that Jesus' "departure" was ONLY from sight – not from the Earth. He didn't depart into outer space. He simply assumed His new Invisible, Immortal Presence as King – here on Earth.

While Futurists may rebel at this concept, they cannot dispute it. Fools prefer to have Jesus at a distance away from earth. But, fortunately, it is not up to them to pick Jesus' location.

Futurists think Christ's reign will come like that of a mortal human king, but it is not logical to expect Jesus to reign like a mere mortal.

The following verse should start you thinking, if the previous verses haven't. It was written after Jesus died, after He was raised from the tomb, and after He had become invisible. Also, it was written long before our day, and long before the projected so-called "second advent" of the Futurists:

10. But (grace) is NOW made manifest by the APPEARING of our Saviour Jesus Christ...

II Timothy 1:10a

This was in Paul's day ... many centuries ago! Paul stated clearly that Jesus was APPEARING! What did he mean? Did he mean that Jesus had reappeared physically? Or did he mean something else?

But is NOW made manifest by the APPEARING of our Savior Jesus the Christ, who has abolished death, and has (past tense) brought life and immortality to light through the gospel:

II Timothy 1:10

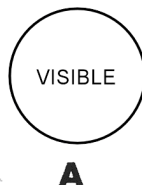
Jesus was "appearing," but not visually. Jesus had allowed the disciples to see Him transition into an invisible state in order to demonstrate His continued PRESENCE – NOT HIS ABSENCE. Remember, the focus of Acts is on Jesus' Kingship – NOT that He had left the Earth.

As King, Jesus' presence was powerfully manifest about ten days later at the Pentecost gathering. His invisible Presence "appeared" through His disciples. We'll study that in the next chapter.

Since that day, Jesus' presence has been demonstrated in many ways, overseeing the affairs of His Kingdom. His superintending presence is felt in miracles, judgments, life-changing historical events, and personal experiences. For example, Jesus made his presence known by causing the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. Rome fell in 476, and British Imperialism was turned back in the 18th century. American imperialism, along with the Beast System itself, will soon pass as well.

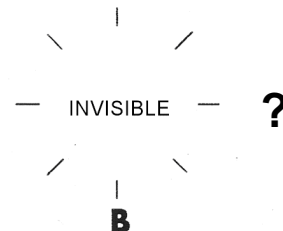
Yes, Jesus is alive and reigning over us! The Great Shepherd assures us He will never leave us – the sheep of his pasture.

IN WHAT MANNER WAS JESUS "RECEIVED INTO THE AIR?"



?

A



?

B

Christ became invisible as he was received into the air.
The Bible says He would "come" (be present) IN LIKE MANNER.

Thus, He is present in "LIKE MANNER" (invisible) - not in reverse manner (visible).

ACTS 1:12-14 WAITING FOR FURTHER INSTRUCTIONS

“Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a sabbath day’s journey.

“And when they entered, they went up into an upper room, where abode Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, Phillip, and Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew, James the son of Alphæus, and Simon the zealot, and Judas the brother of James.

These all continued with one accord in prayer, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren.”

THE eleven apostles returned from Mount Olivet to Jerusalem to “tarry” (wait), as Jesus had instructed them. Here, Luke lists the disciples by name. Apparently, along with the apostles, those present were Mary, the mother of Jesus, Jesus’ brothers, and a number of disciples – 120 in total ... both male and female.

There had been two named Judas – one was a half-brother to Jesus. The other, Judas Iscariot, one of the original 12 disciples, was no longer with them.

ACTS 1:15-20 JUDAS

“In those days the number of names together were about an hundred and twenty. And Peter stood up in the midst of the brethren, and said,

“Men, brothers, it was necessary for the scripture to be fulfilled which was foretold through the holy spirit by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became an informer to them that took Jesus.

“For he was numbered with us, and had obtained part of this ministry.

“Now this man purchased a field with wages of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst in the middle, and all his bowels poured out.

“And it became known to all the dwellers at Jerusalem; insomuch as that field is called, in their tongue, Aceldama, that is to say, The field of blood.

“For it is written in the book of Psalms, Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein: and his overseership let another take.”

PETER stood up in the midst of the disciples and spoke concerning Judas – the betrayer of Jesus. He tells how prophecy was fulfilled in the actions of Judas, even down to the details of Judas being paid thirty pieces of silver.

Verse 18 is a metaphoric picture of Judas’ self-destruction. Then, verse 19 describes what the chief priests did with the silver once Judas repented of his treachery and returned the blood money by throwing it on the floor in front

of the chief priests (See Matthew 27:5-10). Since it was blood money, the chief priests couldn’t put it into the temple treasury, and since Judas immediately went out and killed himself they couldn’t give it back to him. So they conferred together and used the silver to purchase a potter’s field where strangers were buried. Everyone in Jerusalem knew about this transaction, and so the field became known as “the field of blood.”

In verse 20, Peter tells how another Bible prophecy was being fulfilled in relation to Judas:

For it is written in the book of Psalms, Let his (Judas) habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein: and his overseership let another take.

Acts 1:20.

Peter believed that this prophecy was being fulfilled in their current situation. Thus, since Jesus had chosen 12 original apostles, and one position had been vacated by the removal of Judas, Peter thought it behooved them to fill that position according to that Scripture. Thus, Matthias was appointed to fill that position (vs 26).

Verse 20 uses the term “overseer” to describe the position of the apostles. Judas, as well as the other eleven apostles were “overseers.” The King James Version calls them “bishops” – an unfortunate rendering in light of traditional church jargon. The Greek word for “bishop” more correctly means “overseer.” An overseer is not a religious title or an office in a church. Rather, an overseer is an elder leader in an ecclesia community.

ACTS 1:21-22 12 APOSTLES ONLY?

“It is necessary, therefore, of the men who were with us during the time the Lord Jesus went in and out among us,

“(From the baptism of John, until the day that He was received from us) that one should stand as a witness with us of His raising.”

DO these verses give the qualifications for an apostle of Jesus? To qualify to be an apostle, did a man need to be with that group from the beginning? Does it also mean that there could be no additional apostles after the original 12?

This is an important question because some claim that there can be no others. Some even use this argument to try to discredit the Apostle Paul, who claimed to be an apostle of Jesus but wasn't with the original 12 from the beginning.

However, if you read the verse closely, you will see that Peter was concerned about preserving twelve witness of Jesus' raising. He was not listing the qualifications of apostleship. Rather he was referring to firsthand eye witnesses of Christ's passion. There could never be any more witnesses who actually accompanied the little group with Jesus from His baptism until He was raised from the tomb and ascended the throne.

Thus, apostleship was another issue. The word “apostle” means “one who is sent.” There have been many messengers of the gospel of the kingdom who have been “sent” since the original 12 messengers (apostles), and there will be many more. But there can never be any more ORIGINAL witnesses of Christ's passion.

The unique qualities that set the original 12 apostles apart, from successive generations of messengers, were: they were personal witnesses of: a) Jesus' ministry, b) His death, c) His raising from the grave, and d) they had received

their commission by Jesus personally while He was physically visible to them. In a later lesson we will study the story of the Apostle Paul and his explanation of how he also came to be an apostle ... and actually met Jesus in person.

Matthias, the new apostle to take Judas' empty position, was, apparently, the first apostle NOT commissioned by Jesus personally while He was visible to them. But it is obvious Jesus approved him by the account of how the apostles chose him.

QUESTION: While Jesus was still visible, He “commissioned” twelve apostles to be witnesses. How does that compare to the Jesus, today, calling out people and sending them to witness for Him?

ACTS 1:23-26 “CASTING LOTS” DOES NOT MEAN GAMBLING

“And they picked out two: Joseph (called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus) and Matthias.

“And having prayed, they said, You, Lord, who knows the hearts of all men, reveal which of these two you chose,

“To receive the part of service and apostleship which Judas abandoned to follow his own part.

“And they gave to them lots, and the lot fell to Matthias, and he was reckoned with the 11 apostles.”

THE apostles asked the Lord to make known His choice of who should be appointed with the other eleven apostles. They were going to elect an apostle.

Most modern theologians tell us that the term was “casting lots,” and that it equated to gambling – throwing dice – flipping a coin to determine God's will. They suggest that the choice of an apostle was made by the same means used in Las Vegas when a gambler tosses the dice out onto a table. Whatever combination of dots on the dice turns up determines who wins. Even some Bible dictionaries echo this fallacy – like this explanation found in the Ryrie Study Bible:

"Two names were written on stones and placed in an urn. The one that fell out first was taken to be the Lord's choice.

Most theologians think the apostles resorted to throwing dice – a game of chance – to select Matthias to take Judas' place as an apostle. In fact, today, religious organizations will often "elect" someone to a church office by writing the names of the candidates on slips of paper, placing them all in a hat, and drawing one of the names out ... just as if it were a "lottery" (which explains the term they use).

Their error is brought on, largely, by their assumption that the "Jews" (both Asian and Sephardic) are true descendants of Israel, and therefore inheritors of true Israel tradition ... when in fact the so-called "Gentiles" (Anglo-Saxon, Celtic, and other tribes in the white European racial pool) are the true racial descendants of Israel. However, because they believe in Jewish tradition, the typical theologian tends to research the historical meaning of a particular Hebrew idiom or ritual by going to the wrong source – the local Jewish rabbi. Thus, they end up with an unscriptural, Jewish definition of tradition rather than the Israelite tradition. Instead of learning about Old Testament Israel culture, they get Jewish culture. "Giving lots" in the Jewish mentality means "gambling."

However, God's elections are not based on gambling and chance – as we can see by the meaning of the word "lot." The word "lot" is translated from the Greek word "KLAYROS."

Let's look again at verse seventeen to discover another translational inconsistency:

For he was numbered with us, and had obtained PART (klayros) of this ministry.

Acts 1:17.

And they gave to them LOTS (klayros), and the LOT (klyaros) fell to Matthias, and he was reckoned with the eleven apostles.

Acts 1:26

The Greek word, KLAYROS, translated "part" in verse 17, is the same word translated "lot" in verse 26. So, if KLAYROS means "gambling" in verse 26,

then it should also mean "gambling" in verse 17 – which would make no sense at all.

"Klayros" actually means "a portion; a part of something." Therefore, the 11 apostles were giving "their portions" – i.e., they contributed their part (their opinion) in determining the choice.

In chapter eight of Acts, Simon the Sorcerer came to the apostles and wanted to purchase a position of authority with them. Peter told him he had NO PART in Christ's ministry. He said:

You have neither part nor LOT (portion) in this matter: for your heart is not right in the sight of God.

Acts 8:21

So, "lot" simply means "part" or "portion." And, in this case, the portion that the apostles gave was their opinions – their individual input as they relied upon God to direct their minds. They took consideration of both Justus and Matthias, and after prayer for guidance from God, each one offered his evaluation. The choice, or election, was thus made. Their faith was that God had granted them clear minds with which to choose the right man. The right choice would, then, be God's choice – God's called-out elected one. This one would, then, be "sent" (i.e., be an apostle) along with the other eleven.

This bears no resemblance to the idea of gambling or resorting to superstition or chance.

QUESTION: If "casting lots" doesn't mean gambling, then how did the Roman soldiers in John 19:24 "cast lots" for Jesus' robe after His death?

END OF LESSON ONE.

FOR ANSWERS AND NOTES, SEE ENCLOSED "ANSWER SECTION."

ANSWERS & COMMENTS

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

CHAPTER ONE:

POINTS TO REMEMBER:

1. The churches have led people astray by teaching that Jesus will begin His reign sometime in the remote future at “the end of the world” or in “the millennium.” However, the real message of Acts is that Jesus’ Reign and the age (eon) of the New Covenant began when Jesus was raised and ascended the Throne! The kingdom is an established fact, but the churches have missed it!

2. Because of myth adopted by churches the meaning of Christ’s ascension to the Throne has been misread to mean that He floated up into the sky. Neither the word nor the idea of “upward movement” is in the original text.

3. Jesus proved He was reigning as King immediately following His raising by infallible proofs and commands.

4. The “promise of the Father” was that new life and hope for Israel (the good news) would be preached in Jesus’ name beginning at Jerusalem.

5. “Holy spirit” is MOTIVATION TO BE SEPARATE. It is not a “ghost” or “invisible person.”

6. With Jesus’ immortal Presence reigning, human kings are obsolete; and they have no authority outside of Jesus.

7. “The Great Commission” is already accomplished. The “uttermost parts of the land” heard the good news of Christ’s reign right away.

8. Instead of floating up into outer space, Jesus disappeared from sight, in a cloud at ground level, while He stood among his disciples. He never left the earth as the Futurists teach.

9. In Acts 1:11 the phrase “shall so come in like manner,” does NOT mean Jesus will return in reverse sequence. He didn’t float “up” into the sky, nor will He descend back down from the sky. When Jesus was “taken,” the messengers said He would “come” (be present) in the same invisible form as he “went” (from sight). This fits the definition of “in like manner.” Jesus demonstrated His PRESENCE a few days later, at a gathering in Jerusalem during Pentecost. HE WAS PRESENT, AND HAS BEEN PRESENT EVER SINCE.

10. After Matthias was chosen to fill the position vacated by Judas, there were no more original witnesses of Jesus’ ministry from His baptism through to His death, raising, and ascent to the throne. However, this DOESN’T mean there could never be any more apostles. Paul became an apostle even though he did not witness everything the original 12 apostles did.

11. “Casting lots” does not mean gambling. Selecting leaders should not be based on throwing dice or other methods of chance. The word “lot” simply means a PART or a PORTION. The apostles’ PART, which they gave, was their considered opinion based on God’s leading, experience and prayerful examination. They carefully evaluated Justus and Matthias, gave their opinions (lots) and made a choice.

ANSWERS:

pg.1

a) Yes. Jesus is reigning. If we reject the real, present Reign of Christ in favor of one that is patterned after myth, then we are rejecting the ONE AND ONLY TRUE CHRIST.

The doctrine of Jesus “returning” in the future is only an attempt to keep Him away in the mean time, at a distance and out of our lives today.

b) The typical church view of the Bible is closer to paganism than to Christianity. The Bible figure of friendly snakes, bears, wolves, and lions that eat straw, etc. (Is. 11:6-9) is not meant as a literal scenario. These only illustrate the denuding of Israel’s enemies. This example typifies the general mishandling of the Bible by the churches.

The obvious flaw in such a Utopian “paradise” is that it presumes to rearrange Yahweh’s creation from its original “GOOD” design. Man’s fantasy of a Utopian kingdom shows that he is dissatisfied with the Creator’s handiwork; it is not good enough and the creatures require certain improvements.

pg.4

James Strong’s Concordance is one of the most useful tools available to serious Bible students. It has possibly contributed more than any other single study help. We owe Mr. Strong a debt of gratitude. However, he was not without error.

Every Christian should have a Strong’s Concordance. But, every Christian must also realize that the CORRECT use of it is THEIR OWN responsibility. In the entries where Strong was in error, it is our responsibility to detect it, correct it, and keep going. If, through laziness and lack of commitment, we fail to build upon Strong’s work, then it is we who are to blame – not James Strong who gave his best and made his contribution during his life time.

It takes only a little effort to learn how to use Strong’s Concordance correctly.

pg. 5

By uniquely fulfilling prophecy, and by many proofs which accompanied Jesus (not the least of which was His being raised to immortality), He was unmistakably declared God's Son, thus Messiah, thus King.

Jesus proved that mortal human kings had no authority over Him, and that He was mightier than they. Thus, He is King of kings, and Lord of lords.

pg. 6

a) "Spirit" (pneuma) means "air in motion" (wind). It can also mean "breath." Thus, as wind (spirit) has no visible form, pushes and causes movement of objects (gives "life" to them), we can see how the term came to be associated with "life force."

World religions changed this to accommodate their own beliefs in demons and ghosts – which were thought to be the invisible, disembodied life forces of dead men.

"Spirit" is not an invisible being. Literally it is wind. Figuratively, spirit is an animating, moving influence – a desire; a feeling or disposition which drives us to act. "Spirit" is that which spurs us into action. It can be a thought or one's mental disposition. "Holy spirit" is motivation to be separate ("holy" means "separate").

Strong's addition of "ghost" to his definition is acknowledgment of the popular belief. However, it should be noted that "ghost" is of German origin, and is closely related to "gust." (For a more in-depth study, read *Spirits On Trial*; from ACM)

b) The disciples obviously realized that Jesus was the Messiah Savior. However, at that point they were still confused as to the full nature of His reign.

pg. 7

a) The Greek word, BASILEIA, is translated both "kingdom" and "reign" in the KJV. Both are synonymous, in that both are translations of the same

Greek word. The word is best rendered "kingship" or "reign." It refers NOT to a piece of geography, but rather to a condition or state of mind. For there to be a "king," there must be "a reign; a kingship" – "a kingdom" (as the KJV renders it). There cannot be a "king" without a "reign." Thus, it is nonsense to admit that Jesus is "King" and then say He is not yet reigning.

The disciples asked if the "reign" was going to be "restored" to Israel. The word "restore" referred to the kingdom of God that had been in Israel's grasp in the past. The Futurist take the definition of "restore" to mean the church world's Utopian version of the Garden of Eden.

Churched people just can't seem to grasp the practicality of what Jesus is doing today. They always think in terms of fantasy and dreams where men do idyllic things, with no errors, no inconveniences, no wants, no pains – rather than real life. Thus, they are always missing the practical truth of Jesus' reign.

The disciples obviously knew that Jesus had kingly authority – otherwise they could not have expected Him to grant such authority to them. They were still expecting Him to give THEM the rule over Israel. (Mtt. 20: 20-28)

The disciples had been under human kings for so long that the idea of the new, immortal Christ reigning eluded them. They expected the reign to follow old, typical guidelines and patterns. When this did not immediately occur, they feared that Christ would leave the power in the hands of the ungodly rulers. But, they soon learned that Jesus reigns differently than men do. He even reigns during, and in opposition to, ungodly human governments. Christ's reign offers a spiritual alternative to man's ungodly governments.

b) The "Great Commission," so-called, was to take the news of Christ's Reign to the dispersed Israelites in the nations. This was accomplished in their lifetimes.

This had nothing to do with "saving" people from damnation. It was the fulfillment of the promise to give Israel a New King and a New

Covenant.

God's word, His law, was given to man to show us how to live IN THIS LIFE – not to show us how to get out of this life and into the next. Jesus was given to mankind to teach and lead us in ways of salvation.

"Salvation," therefore, is not a door to the next life, but rather a guide to LIFE in this age! The disciples of the first century took the good news to the nations where Israel had migrated. They informed them of what God had done through Christ in Jerusalem, and that we have a new and greater King. That fact was the fulfillment of the commission. The teaching and nurturing of succeeding generations, on the other hand, is an ongoing work of the "living."

pg. 8

Jesus can no more "return" than He can "leave." The same is true with Yahweh. It is impossible to assign a physical location to Yahweh, or to Jesus. To be omnipresent is to be all places at once. To attempt to place Jesus in one location is an attempt to limit Him to man's mortal perspective. To think of Jesus as being "away" (i.e., in a physical area somewhere in outer space) is unreasonable.

pg. 11

Jesus "sent" men (made them apostles) after He was raised from the tomb. He was King – with all authority in heaven and earth. He is still King – with all authority – and He still "sends" men. The word "apostle" means "one who is sent." Thus, the word can apply to those who are "sent" today.

pg. 12

Jn. 19:23-24: The Roman soldiers gave lots (gave a portion, or their coin) for the robe from Christ – and it went to the highest bidder. Here, "casting lots" was an auction where the bidders offered money.