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2 December 2020

The Acts of the Apostles

Chapter 1

Acts 1:1-11

Q: What do we learn about the author of Acts and what can we infer about him in the first verses?

n.b. v. 1 “Theophilus” (Gk. = “lover of God”)

n.b. “The day He was taken up”—the Ascension

Q: Why does the author mention his “former treatise” (v. 1)?

“...Just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word delivered them to us, ³ it seemed good to me also, having ^[b] had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write to you an orderly account, most excellent Theophilus...” (Lk. 1:2-3)

“For this reason, especially I have taken this narrative for my subject, that I may draw to it such as do not know it, and not let such a treasure as this remain hidden out of sight. For indeed it may profit us no less than even the Gospels; so replete is it with Christian wisdom and sound doctrine, especially in what is said concerning the Holy Ghost... Thus, the predictions which in the Gospels Christ utters, here we may see these actually come to pass...” (St. John Chrysostom, Homily I on Acts 1:1,2)

Q: Why does St. John Chrysostom believe that Acts is so worthy studying?

n.b. “His suffering” (v. 3)—Christ’s Passion, or suffering, refers to the mocking, spitting, striking, and torture of being nailed and hung on the cross at Golgotha until He had died.

Q: What are some of the “infallible proofs” (v. 3) of Christ’s Resurrection, which He gives to His disciples? (see also I Cor. 15:5-7)

Q: What is significant about the number 40 (v. 3)? Where else do we see the number 40 in the Scriptures?

Q: What is “the Promise of the Father” (v.4)? What does it refer to? (See also Jn 16:5-13)

Q: What does the disciples’ question (v. 6), and Christ’s response in verse 7, reveal to us?

Q: What have we learned so far about the relationship of the Scriptures to each other? What does this mean for us and all those generations that have come after these events?

“You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. ² And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.” (II Tim. 2:1-2)





1 Russian Orthodox Church of St. Mary Magdalen, Mt. of Olives, Jerusalem

n.b. “witnesses” (v. 8)= Gk. *μάρτυρες* “*martyres*” (from the root of the word, “martyr”—one who testifies)

Q: What does Christ assure the disciples will occur when the Holy Spirit descends upon them (v. 8)?

Q: How would you characterize the relationship of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as related in vv. 7-8?



The Ascension into heaven Verses 9-11

Q: What is important in the language used by the angels in verse 11 for the Ascension and the question they pose?

Q: How is the truth of this event portrayed iconographically in the icon of the Ascension? How is this passage captured through the ‘window of divine reality’ depicted in the icon?

Q: How is the angels’ proclamation (vv 9-11) also an exclamation on Christ’s response to the question re. the kingdom of Israel?

Preparation for Pentecost Verses 12-26

n.b. V. 12, “Sabbath day’s journey,” that is, about a mile, the distance that could be traveled without breaking the rules of the Sabbath rest.

Q: What do we learn about the disciples post-Ascension as they await the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost?

“See the dignity of the Church, the angelic condition!... None there had his mind full of some worldly matter, none was anxiously thinking about household concerns.” (St. John C, Homily III on Acts 1:12)

Q: What is significant in St. Peter’s application of the Psalms (68, 108 LXX) to refer to Judas?

On the road to Emmaus... “And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He ^[a]expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.” (Lk. 24:27)

Q: How would you refer to the authority being executed here by St. Peter? What stands out?

n.b. V. 20, “office” = Gk. *ἐπισκοπήν*, “*episcope*,” bishop, overseer. The Apostles were the first *bishops* of the Church and this is the first use of the word in the NT. In the Orthodox Church to this day this word, *episcope*, is used for the office of bishop as successors to the Apostles.

“Why did it not rest with Peter to make the election himself: What was the motive? That he might not seem to bestow it as a favor... He acted as expositor, not as preceptor... Mark also the consideration of James and the other Apostles, how they concede the throne to him, and no longer dispute with each other. For that Church was as it were in heaven: having nothing to do with this world’s affairs: and resplendent not with walls, no, nor with numbers, but with the zeal of those who formed the assembly.” (Ibid.)

Q: What is significant in the process of selecting an apostolic replacement for Judas?