

The Apostles Whom He Had Chosen

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The video version is at: <https://youtu.be/TAC-5MiBgKw>

The scripture reading is Acts 1:1-26

This is the first of a new series of teachings called the Apostles' Journey. Our primary source is, of course, the Apostolic Writings or, as they are more commonly known, the New Testament. We will be following the chronology set out in the book of Acts interweaving this with the collection of epistles written to the growing body of believers and other historical documents of that day. We will endeavor to answer the five questions- who, what, when, where, and why- about the apostles and their journey to take the gospel to the nations. Luke opens his account of the Acts of the Apostles by introducing his audience and the apostles.

Acts 1:1-3 NKJV 1 The former account I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, 2 until the day in which He was taken up, after He through the Holy Spirit had given commandments to the apostles whom He had chosen, 3 to whom He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.

In these opening verses of Acts, Luke introduces us to Theophilus, the recipient of his words, and the apostles whom Yeshua had chosen. Who is Luke and what inspired him to write this account? Who are these apostles? What were the criteria for their selection? And what is their mission?

What do we know about the author of the book of Acts? It seems clear that the author was a close traveling companion of Paul because the book of Acts focuses more on Paul's actions than on any other person in the early body of believers. Eusebius identifies the author as Luke of Antioch. Paul describes Luke as the beloved physician in Colossians 4:14. There are, also, indications in this epistle that Luke was not a Jew. If this is the case, he is the only non-Jew who has written any part of the inspired scriptures of God. We, also, know that the author of the book of Acts is the author of the gospel of Luke. He addresses both books to an unknown man named Theophilus.

Luke 1:1-4 NKJV 1 Inasmuch as many have taken in hand to set in order a narrative of those things which have been fulfilled among us, 2 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 had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write to you an orderly account, most excellent Theophilus, 4 that you may know the certainty of those things in which you were instructed.

Luke's stated goal was to deliver an orderly account of the events involving Yeshua so that Theophilus would be fully convinced of those things he had been taught about Yeshua. When we read the gospel of Luke, we see that it is organized chronologically and reads as a series of journeys beginning with the journey of Zacharias to and from the temple of God for his period of service and ending with Yeshua's journey to the Father as He ascended from the Mount of Olives.

In Luke's day, it was common practice for a wealthy person to commission a historical account of events of interest. In this case, Theophilus was interested in all he could learn about Yeshua and His followers. The name "Theophilus," number 2321 in Strong's Greek Concordance, means "friend of God." Because of this meaning,

some people think that Theophilus wasn't a real person, but was instead merely a title for anyone who considered himself a friend of God and wanted to know about the certainty of the events about Yeshua.

When reading scripture, Dan and I adhere to a hierarchy of understanding scripture. This hierarchy is summarized in the acronym "PARDAS." The first level of understanding scripture is the "Pashat" or literal meaning of the text. Unless the context indicates otherwise, the literal meaning of the text is to be accepted as truth. Any deeper or metaphorical understanding gleaned from scripture cannot contradict the literal meaning of the text. The second level is the "remez" which is a hint or clue at a deeper meaning. The meaning of Theophilus as a friend of God is a hint that Luke's intended recipient is not just the person Theophilus but all those who consider themselves a friend of God. The next level of understanding is the "drash" or metaphorical meaning which is the basis of most of our modern sermons. The last level of understanding is the "sod" which is a hidden or secret meaning. As we progress through the layers of meaning, any deeper understanding cannot contradict the previous layers of meaning. With this basis, we accept Theophilus as a real person whose name leads us to an understanding that Luke's gospel and recounting of the Acts of the Apostles were written first to Theophilus and then to all who are friends of God.

Luke introduces the book of Acts at the point of Yeshua's ascension from the Mount of Olives. He refers to those events that took place after Yeshua's resurrection, and as he does so, Luke identifies the apostles. The word "apostle" is the Greek word "apostolos," number 652 in Strong's concordance. It means a delegate, messenger, or one that is sent out. It corresponds to the Hebrew word "shaliach" meaning one sent out on a specific mission. First Fruits of Zion in [The Chronicles of the Apostles](#) explains:

"In Judaism, the term *shaliach* (sent one/apostle) referred to a legal agent or representative that a man dispatched on a mission to represent him or his interests.... A man's shaliach has the same legal authority as the man himself."ⁱ

In ancient times this legal authority would be represented by a signet ring or sealed documents. In our modern times, this authority would be represented by a power of attorney. This means that the apostles had the legal authority to act in Yeshua's place. Yeshua referred to this authority when He compared His absence to a man going on a journey.

Mark 13:33-34 NKJV 33 "Take heed, watch and pray; for you do not know when the time is. 34 "It is like a man going to a far country, who left his house and gave authority to his servants, and to each his work, and commanded the doorkeeper to watch.

When Yeshua was praying to His Father in the Garden of Gethsemane, He referred to sending out His disciples as being like His Father sending Him.

John 17:18-19 NKJV 18 "As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. 19 "And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth.

The Father trusted Yeshua with His authority to act! Likewise, Yeshua entrusted His apostles with incredible power and authority! In Acts one, verse two, Luke says that Yeshua gave them His commandments.

The word "commandments," in this verse is the Greek word "en-tel'-lom-ahee," number 1781, meaning to enjoin, to give charge or commandments. To further understand what Luke is saying, we need to understand the English words "enjoin" and "charge." Enjoin means to prescribe a course of acting with authority or emphasis. "Charge" means to entrust someone with a task, duty or responsibility. Yeshua, through the Holy Spirit, entrusted His apostles with a task and responsibility which required that they follow a course of action empowered by His authority.

They were the ones who would determine how Yeshua's coming as the suffering servant Messiah would change the Jewish understanding of the Messiah. They would be the ones who would take His message of salvation to the Jews, and ultimately to the Gentiles around the world.

How did Yeshua select His apostles and how many apostles were there? In verse three, Luke tells us that Yeshua had chosen the apostles. The apostles that He had chosen were those to whom He personally appeared in the days between His resurrection and His ascension. In other words, an apostle had to have seen Yeshua after His resurrection and be able to provide "infallible proofs" of His resurrection. Second, an apostle was one to whom Yeshua personally gave instruction during the forty days between His resurrection and His ascension.

We have a sample of Yeshua's proof of His resurrection as well as His personal instruction when He appeared before the two disciples on the road to Emmaus on the day of His resurrection.

Luke 24:30-32 NKJV 30 Now it came to pass, as He sat at the table with them, that He took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. 31 Then their eyes were opened and they knew Him; and He vanished from their sight. 32 And they said to one another, "Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us on the road, and while He opened the Scriptures to us?"

Luke goes on to relate the words of Yeshua to His disciples about their task.

Luke 24:46-48 NKJV 46 Then He said to them, "Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, 47 "and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. 48 "And you are witnesses of these things.

The task of the apostles was to bear witness that Yeshua, by His death and resurrection, fulfilled the words written about Him by Moses and all the prophets. They were to spread the news of this fulfillment to all nations beginning at Jerusalem. They were to invite everyone to participate in this opportunity to enter into covenant with God through Yeshua by repentance. Peter would later explain their task to Cornelius' household.

Acts 10:42-43 NKJV 42 "And He commanded us to preach to the people, and to testify that it is He who was ordained by God to be Judge of the living and the dead. 43 "To Him all the prophets witness that, through His name, whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins."

Paul explains both the commission and the identity of the apostles as well as why he considers himself to be an apostle even though he didn't witness Yeshua's resurrection.

1 Corinthians 15:3-9 NKJV 3 For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, 5 and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve. 6 After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep. 7 After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles. 8 Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time. 9 For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

Yeshua gave those He sent out a huge task! They needed help in order to accomplish Yeshua's charge. With that in mind, Yeshua told them not to start on their task until they received both the power and the guidance they needed. Before His death, Yeshua explained about the coming of the Helper.

John 15:26-27 NKJV 26 "But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me. 27 "And you also will bear witness, because you have been with Me from the beginning.

Yeshua goes on to explain that His disciples can't understand everything they need to know before His death, but the Helper will come to guide them into all truth.

John 16:12-15 NKJV 12 "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. 13 "However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. 14 "He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you. 15 "All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare it to you.

One of the things the disciples didn't understand was the delay between Yeshua's resurrection and the re-establishment of the kingdom of Israel. They questioned Yeshua about this as they were gathered together on the Mount of Olives for His ascension.

Acts 1:6 NKJV 6 Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, "Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?"

We are still waiting for Yeshua's return and the establishment of the kingdom of Israel with Yeshua as the king. As Yeshua ascended into heaven in a cloud, the disciples were assured that Yeshua would come and establish His kingdom.

Acts 1:10-11 NKJV 10 And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, 11 who also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven."

In the meantime, the disciples were to carry out Yeshua's instructions starting with those He gave them just before His ascension.

Acts 1:4 NKJV 4 And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, "which," He said, "you have heard from Me;

The first thing they were to do was to wait. Waiting is so hard for us, and I imagine it was hard for the disciples. However, while they were waiting, they gathered together in the upper room to support each other in prayers and encouragement.

Acts 1:13-14 NKJV 13 And when they had entered, they went up into the upper room where they were staying: Peter, James, John, and Andrew; Philip and Thomas; Bartholomew and Matthew; James the son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot; and Judas the son of James. 14 These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.

Notice that Yeshua's natural brothers were among those united with one accord in the upper room! Also, contrary to popular opinion among Christian believers, the disciples were not hiding out in this upper room. Luke tells us that they fully participated in temple events during this time continually praising and blessing God!

Luke 24:52-53 NKJV 52 And they worshiped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, 53 and were continually in the temple praising and blessing God. Amen.

One of the most obvious events in the temple at this time was the daily counting of the Omer or the days from the Feast of First Fruits up to the Feast of Shavuot. The second instruction Yeshua gave them was to be His witnesses.

Acts 1:8 NKJV 8 "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

The apostles would be Yeshua's witnesses in three stages. First, they were to go to Jerusalem. Luke describes this phase of their mission in Acts chapters one through seven. Next, they were to go to Judah and Samaria which Luke relates in chapters eight and nine. Finally, they were to go to the ends of the earth. Chapters eight through twenty-eight relate this last phase of the mission. We see the message as radiating out from the center.

As the disciples were waiting for the promise of the Holy Spirit, they were preparing to witness to the things they had seen. They were getting ready to present infallible proofs to thoroughly convince those who heard them that Yeshua fulfilled the words of Moses and the prophets. As part of their preparation, Peter urged that they fill the office that Judas Iscariot had held before his betrayal of Yeshua.

Acts 1:20-22 NKJV 20 "For it is written in the book of Psalms: 'Let his dwelling place be desolate, And let no one live in it'; and, 'Let another take his office.' 21 "Therefore, of these men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, 22 "beginning from the baptism of John to that day when He was taken up from us, one of these must become a witness with us of His resurrection."

This seems to say that to be included as one of the twelve, a candidate had to have been with Yeshua since Yeshua's baptism. First Fruits of Zion in [The Chronicles of the Apostles](#) explains:

Acts 1:21 cannot mean that the new disciple needed to have been a follower since the time of the Master's immersion. None of the Twelve qualified under that criterion except, perhaps, John and Andrew (John 1:40).ⁱⁱ

Instead, we understand that in order to be included in the Twelve, a candidate had to have undergone the baptism of John, and, thus, fulfilling the words that John was to be the forerunner of Messiah. John was to baptize with water after which Messiah would baptize with fire. The disciples chose two candidates, Joseph Bar Sabbas called Justus, and Matthias who both fit the criteria. They presented the names to the LORD and Matthias' name was chosen by lot to fulfill Judas Iscariot's position.

Acts 1:24-26 NKJV 24 And they prayed and said, "You, O Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which of these two You have chosen 25 "to take part in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place." 26 And they cast their lots, and the lot fell on Matthias. And he was numbered with the eleven apostles.

As the day approached when the promised Holy Spirit would come, the disciples continued to participate in temple events. From the day of Yeshua's resurrection on the Feast of First Fruits, the priests would be counting the days of the Omer up to the next of God's appointed times, the Feast of Shavuot, which many know as the Day of Pentecost. All of the momentous events of that spring had occurred on God's feast days. Yeshua was crucified on Passover and laid in the grave as the Feast of Unleavened Bread began. He rose from

the grave on the Feast of First Fruits. As the days of the Omer progressed toward the Feast of Shavuot, surely something momentous would happen on this next appointed time of God!

As Luke recorded, all was, now, in readiness. Those whom Yeshua had called to be apostles included more than the twelve closest disciples. Yeshua's apostles were those who had witnessed that He was alive after His crucifixion and on whom the Holy Spirit would empower at the Feast of Shavuot. Yeshua had given all of these personal instructions about their mission and the kingdom of God. They were all excited about their mission and only waited for the coming of the Holy Spirit! The apostles' journey was about to begin!

Study Questions:

1. FFOZ promotes the position that an apostle was one who was with Yeshua throughout His ministry and to whom He appeared after His resurrection. Why were these criteria essential? Who are some of the people that the Bible names that would be considered apostles? Do you agree with this position?
2. John relates Yeshua's instructions about the coming of the Helper. What are some of the tasks of the Helper?
3. Luke writes his books for the purpose of convincing Theophilus of the certainty of the things that he was taught. Why is this important for Theophilus and all who are friends of God?
4. Peter presents the gospel message to Cornelius' household in Acts 10. What is Peter's message? How does his message show the fulfillment of Moses and the prophets?
5. How is the message going out to Jerusalem, Judah and Samaria, and, then, the ends of the Earth in ever widening circles like the organization of the camp in the wilderness? What other analogies can be made from this expansion of the gospel?
6. What new insight did you gain from this teaching? How do you respond to this new insight? How will you realign your life based on this new understanding?

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ⁱD.T. Lancaster. *The Chronicles of the Apostles*. First Fruits of Zion. ©2011, 2016. Page 3.

ⁱⁱ.T. Lancaster. *The Chronicles of the Apostles*. First Fruits of Zion. ©2011, 2016. Page 29.