

Acts Introduction Study notes from the message preached on the 19th September.

Some background:	
What happened to Judas Iscariot?	Putting together Matt 27:3-10 and Acts 1:18-19 together it would appear that Judas returned the money he had been given to betray Jesus and the priests used it to buy a field (although the disciples seemed to initially think Judas had bought it). Judas then took his own life. Acts 1 provides us with a quite gruesome account of his death.
Why was Judas replaced?	The disciples understood the significance of there being 12 of them-12 disciples, 12 tribes of Israel. So they deemed it important to find a replacement for Judas. But the replacement needed to be one who could fully bear witness to the message and resurrection of Jesus; one who had heard what Jesus had taught, had seen the miracles He performed and had physically been with Jesus after His resurrection. In the end only two possible replacements were found and, of them, Matthias was chosen to join the other 11 disciples.
What was the Jewish festival of Pentecost?	Originally it was called the Festival of Weeks (Lev. 23:15-22) and was a celebration of the wheat harvest. During Jesus' time it had also come to be associated with the giving of the Law to Moses at Mt Sinai. Jews would have gathered in Jerusalem to celebrate the harvest at the Temple and it was traditional to study the 5 books of the Torah (first five books of the Bible) and read the book of Ruth during this festival.
What was the tower of Babel?	The story of the tower of Babel is found in Genesis 11. After Noah and his family came out of the ark at the end of the flood they were instructed by God to 'fill the earth' (Gen. 9:1). But in Genesis 11 we find the people gathering together and seeking their own glory. God intervenes by confusing their languages and the different language groups then move away from each other. What happened at Pentecost, when the disciples spoke in different languages, is seen as a reversal of what happened at Babel.
Specific verses referenced during message:	
Acts 1:8	The key verse in the book of Acts. A reminder to us about who is actually the most important character in this book. The people we see showing great courage, wisdom, resilience and obedience to the call of God do so through the power of the Holy Spirit. That same power is available to us today. We are also called to be Jesus' witnesses wherever we go.
Acts 1:12-26	The disciples and the other believers (now numbering 120) spend the time they are waiting in Jerusalem praying and choosing a replacement for Judas. They are getting ready so that when God does move they will be prepared to respond. Do we live with that same expectation of the active presence of God in our lives?

Acts 2:1-13	<p>The Holy Spirit comes and fills the gathered believers. His coming is marked by a rushing wind and flames of fire (both clear signs to these Jews of the presence of God) and He enables the disciples to speak in languages previously unknown to them.</p> <p>This event marks the beginning of something entirely new. God has taken up residence within human beings. We have become mobile temples of the Holy Spirit...God is on the move.</p> <p>The emphasis of this account is not on the dramatic occurrences, which is what we can often focus on, but on the new thing that God is doing, the new way He is choosing to relate to and work with people. Pentecost may have been a one off event but <i>every</i> follower of Jesus is indwelt by the Holy Spirit...every follower of Jesus has can live, as the earliest followers did, in the presence and power of the Spirit.</p>
Acts 2:41, 47	<p>In these verses we see the clear demonstration of the Spirit's activity within the early believers. Peter's preaching may have been excellent but it was the Spirit who filled his words with the power to convict hearts leading to 3000 choosing to follow Jesus.</p> <p>But verse 47 is important for <i>all</i> of us to remember...it was ordinary believers, empowered by the Holy Spirit, who spoke to their neighbours, friends, colleagues, etc about their faith and through their witness lives were transformed on a daily basis.</p>