



## LESSON 1

### THESE SIGNS SHALL FOLLOW

LESSON TEXT: Acts 1:1-11. Related Scriptures — Mark 16:14-20; Luke 24:46-53; John 14:12, 26.

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, The works that I do shall he do also; and greater works Than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father."

(John 14:12.)

LESSON AIM: To implant a strong desire in the heart of every Believer to see the miraculous manifestations of the Spirit which have been promised to us by Christ.

The most exciting book in the entire Bible! That's exactly  
What we will be studying for the next few months. A book that  
Will stir us; make us search our hearts, repent of our slothfulness,  
And give us a super challenge — if we will accept it.

Why is this Book of Acts so breath-taking? Because it was  
Begun by Holy Ghost-filled disciples, and we as Holy Ghost-  
Filled twentieth century Christians are to finish it. This book  
Should be a continuation from start to finish of the same  
Wonder-working, supernatural power of the Spirit of God working  
Through and with His people in the dispensation of time  
Known as the Church Age, or the dispensation of grace. We  
Live in the most magnificent period of time the world has encountered  
— The last days of the Church Age. Can you grasp?  
The fact that you and I are a part of the radiant bride of Christ  
That shall so attract and beckon to our Bridegroom that He can  
No longer resist the urge to come and take us away. We are the  
Generation of mankind that shall bring back the King!

### SPOTLESS BRIDE

Because of the astounding privilege that has been bestowed  
Upon us to be numbered in this resplendent group of believers,  
It is of absolute necessity that we inspect ourselves to see if  
Our lives measure up to the requirements in the Word of God to  
Be a part of this great host. What will His bride be like? "...A  
Glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing;  
But that it should be holy and without blemish." (Ephesians  
5:27). How can we know if we look and act like His Bride? How  
Can we be sure our garments are to perfection, our lives pure?  
And holy? What is our guideline? How can we tell?

It seems to me that the most logical answer to these perplexing  
Questions is to go to the Word of God. Inspect the beginning  
Of this Church. Examine closely the life of each believer. Check  
Their attitudes. Look at their works. Study their message.

Observe their methods. Examine the results they had. How did  
'They do it? If we are to reach our world, as they did theirs, how  
Can we go about it?

Eternal rewards will be reaped by carefully inspecting our  
Own lives in comparison with the lives of the apostles. Hence,  
The reason for preparing this study course "Apostles in  
Action." Oh, the great dividends we will reap by making sure  
That the Church Christ returns for will be an exact duplicate  
Of the one He established, beginning on the day of Pentecost.  
And should we fail as individuals to measure up to the divine  
Standards of this high calling of God in Christ Jesus, the  
Horrible regrets of missing out on the most incredible privilege  
Ever offered to mankind will be ours.

The Book of Acts will be the textbook for our great search.  
We will not only be "searching for truth"; we will be searching  
For defects in our own lives. Every weak place must be strengthened,  
Every spot removed, every blemish taken away. As we  
Detect each imperfection, let's quickly dispose of it. If we will  
Be diligent to do this, by the end of this study there should be a  
Duplication of the first Church in our own local assembly so  
Striking, that men in the world will not be able to distinguish  
Between the two.

## INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF ACTS

The Book of Acts records the way in which the Church began  
To be built upon the Rock, Christ Jesus. It records the ascension  
And promised return of Jesus; the account of the Holy Ghost  
Being poured out at Pentecost; Peter's use of the keys opening  
The Kingdom to the Jews at Pentecost, to the Samaritans and  
Later to the Gentiles; the actions of the apostles; and the conversion  
And ministry of Paul. The two main characters of this  
Book are Peter and Paul. In the first twelve chapters, Peter is  
The prominent figure. In the remainder of the book, Paul is  
Prominent. Throughout the book, the central force is the Holy  
Spirit working and moving through men.

Our first lesson concerns the ascension of Jesus and the instructions given to His followers before He went away. The last meeting with His disciples was in Jerusalem (Acts 1:4). From here He led them to Bethany (Luke 24:50), which is a Sabbath day's journey or less than a mile. Bethany is on the Eastern slope of the Mount of Olives. This is where Jesus usually chose to stay when visiting Jerusalem. From the Mount of Olives, Jesus ascended back to heaven.

There was no doubt in the minds of any of the disciples as to the truth of the resurrection of Christ. Through many infallible proofs Jesus proved to men that He was actually alive. They not only saw Him, but walked, talked, ate and drank with Him.

They knew it was Jesus and not another, because they saw and felt the marks of the wounds in Jesus' actual crucified and glorified body. During the forty days between the resurrection and ascension, the Bible records ten or eleven appearances to His disciples. Statements made in Acts 10:41 and 13:31 imply that He could possibly have made many appearances other than those recorded and that His post-resurrection ministry may have been more extensive than we know.

Many promises were given to the apostles by the Lord regarding future power and mighty manifestations of the Spirit. Mark 16:17 lists the signs that should follow every believer—Cast out devils, speak with new tongues, take up serpents, no deadly thing shall hurt you, and the sick shall recover by laying hands on them. Then verse 20 states that "they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following." The same "signs" should follow believers in our day just the same as in centuries past. John recorded the words of Jesus concerning this power we were to possess after receiving the promised Spirit, a little stronger than Mark's recording. He wrote in chapter 14, verse

12: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father."

## GREATER WORKS

It seems hard for us to believe that we could do greater works than Jesus, after reading of all His miracles. Did the apostles do greater works? Well, there were three works they did that Jesus never did. (1) They laid hands on believers and they received the gift of the Holy Ghost — one of the greatest works on earth. (2) Just the shadow of Peter passing over the sick and suffering brought healing (Acts 5:15-16). (3) Special miracles were performed by Paul, "So that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them." (Acts 19:11-12.)

Undoubtedly, the Lord has provided the same power for His Church as He possessed Himself so that they might do His works. Do we ever consider that this provision has already been made and that all we need do is take advantage of it? It would be ridiculous to think that God would impart special power unto the disciples at the beginning of the Church Age that He would withhold from those at the closing of the age. If any generation ever needed supernatural power to do the works of God, surely this world we live in needs to see a display of divine wonderment. It appears that it is ours ... for the asking!

One of Jesus' last commands was to wait in an appointed place to receive this power He spoke of. The place was Jerusalem. In the same city where Jesus was put to shame, He chose to pour out the Holy Ghost. This favor done to Jerusalem should teach us to forgive our enemies and persecutors.

Jesus' promise of the Holy Ghost baptism was verified by John the Baptist (Matthew 3:11). John prophesied that this experience would be accompanied by fire. Though we don't

see the visible tongues of fire today; we still feel the results of this power that is escorted by fire.

### WE MUST DO IT!

The last words Jesus spoke before He ascended into heaven were that they should be... witnesses unto Him after receiving this power and that they should preach this gospel to the world ... even the uttermost parts of the earth (Acts 1:8). The disciples did not forget this. Tradition says that most of them died as martyrs in distant lands. Once again, in our generation, this Scripture must be fulfilled. This gospel must be preached in all the world for a witness to all nations; and then shall the end come (Matthew 24:14). Jesus said that "this generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled" (Matthew 24:34), and the preaching of the gospel in all the world was one of the "things" mentioned. There is a great task yet to be done by the Church, and in order to accomplish it, we must use supernatural means.

After Jesus rose into the heavens, the disciples continued to gaze into the sky. Perhaps they hoped He would quickly return again, even though He had told them it was expedient for them that He go away. Or perhaps they expected to see some visible change in the heavens, for Christ had told them that hereafter they should see heaven opened (John 1:5) two angels appeared, assuring them that Jesus was really gone, but to take courage because He was coming back again in the same manner as He went away. This same Jesus who came to earth in disgrace to be judged, will come again with great glory to judge all mankind. ^ When we consider the soon coming of our Lord. it should cause us to examine ourselves in the faith (II Corinthians 13:5). If we are falling short of the miracles, signs and wonders of the first Church, we should (earnestly contend for the faith which was once given unto the saints (Jude 3).

What did the apostles see and do that is seldom seen and done today? They:

- (1) cast out devils,
- (2) saw the lame walk,
- (3) saw signs, wonders and miracles,
- (4) saw the dead raised,
- (5) had the gifts of the Spirit in operation,
- (6) saw whole cities  
turn to God as a result of a miracle,
- (7) laid hands on believers  
and they received the Holy Ghost,
- (8) Had great boldness to

Witness. When we can see and do the same, we can say that  
The church of today is a duplicate of the original.

It's time to begin planning and believing for Holy Ghost  
Revival. It's on the way. Each lesson in this series will instruct  
Us a little more how to go about experiencing a restoration and  
Return to the action of the apostles.