

# The Acts of the Apostles

**LESSON 2-3**

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The Keys of the Kingdom in the Book of Acts

## What is the purpose of a key?

A key is an instrument used to lock or unlock something. A key is anything that is used to disclose, open, unlock or solve something. Symbolically, keys speak of authority, power and right.

## What is Jesus' relationship to keys?

Jesus has all power and authority (Mt. 28:18). Jesus has control over many keys.

He holds the keys of the kingdom of heaven (Mt. 16:19).

And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

He has the keys of hell and death (Rev. 1:18).

I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death.

He has the key of David (Is. 22:22; Rev. 3:7).

The key of the house of David I will lay on his shoulder; so he shall open, and no one shall shut; and he shall shut, and no one shall open. Isaiah 22:22

He has the key to the bottomless pit (Rev. 9:1; 20:1).

Jesus said that He would give His followers the keys of the kingdom of heaven (Mt. 16:18-19).

And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

## What are the keys of the kingdom that functioned in the Book of Acts?

What are the keys that unlock the Book of Acts? What are the keys to the success of the disciples in the Book of Acts? What were the keys that opened the doors to the Gospel in the Book of Acts? What were the tools in the hands of the disciples that made it possible for them to carry out the Great Commission?

### **Key Number One: The Holy Spirit**

The Church cannot function or even attempt to fulfill the Great Commission without a relationship to and a reliance on the Holy Spirit. The apostles in the Book of Acts lived in the conscious awareness of being motivated by, empowered by, and under the authority of the Holy Spirit. The work and ministry of the Holy Spirit is central to the Book of Acts, being mentioned some 50 times.

The Holy Spirit in the Book of Acts had a nine-fold role. The Holy Spirit was:

- The Commander-in-Chief (1:2)
- The Inspirer of Prophecy (1:16; 11:28; 13:2, 4)
- The Fulfillment of Prophecy (2:17-18)
- The Promise of the Father (2:33)
- The Gift of God (2:28, 15:8)
- The Comforter of the Churches (9:31)
- The Confirmer of the Word (10:38, 44-47)
- The Rain from Heaven (2:11-18; 10:38, 44-47)
- The Bringer of Joy (13:52)

The disciples in the Book of Acts had a ten-fold relationship to the Holy Spirit. They were:

- Empowered by the Spirit (1:8)
- Baptized in the Spirit (1:5)
- Recipients of the Spirit (8:15; 19:2-6)
- Filled with the Spirit (Acts 2:4; 4:8; 6:3, 5)
- Co-witnesses with the Spirit (5:32)
- Prompted by the Spirit (18:5)
- Appointed by the Spirit (20:23, 28)
- Separated and sent by the Spirit (13:2, 4)
- Transported by the Spirit (8:39)
- Led, guided and directed by the Spirit (8:29)

Philip was directed by the Spirit to join himself to the Ethiopian man in the chariot (Acts 8:29). The Holy Spirit orchestrated the meeting between Peter and Cornelius that opened the door of faith to the Gentiles (Acts 10:19). The conclusions of the council at Jerusalem were inspired by the Holy Spirit (Acts 15:28). Paul was led by the Holy Spirit to go to Macedonia and open a whole new region to the Gospel (Acts 16:6-7). Agabus was inspired by the Holy Spirit to warn Paul concerning his arrest in Jerusalem (Acts 21:11).

What would have happened in these instances if these individuals had not been open and responsive to the voice of the Holy Spirit in their lives?

All through the Book of Acts we find that the Holy Spirit is the dynamic in the ministry of the apostles, and to be filled with the Spirit is absolutely essential for effective and acceptable service.

“In the Book of Acts there is a strong and vivid realization of His presence, a manifest and victorious sense of His working, which is sadly lacking in the experience of the Church today.”  
Wilbur Smith

Every worker for God must be filled with the Holy Spirit. No lower standard is either accepted or suggested. Even for the work of serving tables, this was regarded as an indispensable necessity.

### **Key Number Two: Prayer**

Prayer is the pipeline of the Holy Spirit. Prayer is the link that connects the saints with the Lord of heaven. Prayer is the channel of the supply of the Spirit. It is the way in which we access our heavenly instructions. The Apostles in the Book of Acts demonstrated an absolute dependence on God which is evidenced by their continual watchfulness in prayer.

At least 17 out of the 28 chapters in the Book of Acts have a reference to prayer.

Someone has once said that you can measure your dependence on God by the amount of time that you spend in prayer.

They “continued steadfastly” in prayer (Acts 2:42).

And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.

To continue steadfastly is “to persevere; to give constant attention to a thing; to adhere to one; be devoted to; not to faint; to show oneself courageous; to be in constant readiness for; to wait on continually.” Other translations state...

- They...devoted themselves to... –NLT
- And they steadfastly persevered, devoting themselves constantly to... --Amp

They “gave themselves” to prayer (Acts 6:4).

...but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word.

This word means “to be earnest toward, to persevere in and to be constantly diligent in prayer.”

They prayed on a regular basis (Acts 3:1; 10:2, 4; 12:5; 16:13).

Now Peter and John went up together to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour. Acts 3:1

When you maintain your hour of prayer, you never know when God is going to meet you in a special way. On this day Peter and John would see the miracle working power of God displayed as

they went up to pray.

There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of what was called the Italian Regiment, a devout man and one who feared God with all his household, who gave alms generously to the people, and prayed to God always. About the ninth hour of the day he saw clearly in a vision an angel of God coming in and saying to him, "Cornelius!" Acts 10:1-3

When you "pray always" there are those times when you get new visions and revelation from the Lord.

Peter was therefore kept in prison, but constant prayer was offered to God for him by the church. Acts 12:5

When you maintain "constant prayer" for something you will see chains fall off, prison doors opened and the captive set free.

And on the Sabbath day we went out of the city to the riverside, where prayer was customarily made; and we sat down and spoke to the women who met there. Now a certain woman named Lydia heard us. She was a seller of purple from the city of Thyatira, who worshiped God. The Lord opened her heart to heed the things spoken by Paul. Acts 16:14

When you maintain a custom of prayer you will have divine appointments that will open doors for you that you could never plan for yourself. This meeting with Lydia would be one of the things that opened the door for Paul's work in Philippi.

They prayed in specific situations.

- In selecting leadership (Acts 1:24)
- In setting in leaders (Acts 6:6)
- In sending out ministries (Acts 13:3)
- In ordaining elders (Acts 14:23)
- In departing from friends (Acts 20:26; 21:15)

They prayed for special requests and needs.

- For boldness (Acts 4:31)
- To receive the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:15)
- To raise the dead (Acts 9:40)
- Peter's release (Acts 12:12)
- The mind of the Lord (Acts 16:16)
- Deliverance (Acts 16:25)
- Healing (Acts 28:8)

The Church in the New Testament was born in prayer. From then on, prayer was a vital key to their success. The Christians in the Book of Acts breathed the atmosphere of prayer, believed in the power of prayer, began, continued, and ended all their work with prayer. A prayer-less church is a powerless church.

### **Key Number Three: The Word of God**

The Word of God is seen as the Sword of the Spirit in the Book of Acts. The Apostles in the Book of Acts looked solely to the Word of God to impart faith and life to their hearers.

The Word of God was central to all of their teaching and preaching. Every message is totally saturated with the word of God. All of the sermons are saturated with Old Testament references and allusions.

- Peter quoted Joel and David in his message on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:16, 25).
- The apostles went everywhere, preaching the word (Acts 8:4).
- They preached the word to the Jews and quoted the references (Acts 2:16, 25).
- They preached the word to the Gentiles and stated the content (Acts 17:22-34).

The Word of God as seen in the Book of Acts was a complete word. It was:

- The Word of exhortation (Acts 13:15)The Word of salvation (Acts 13:26)
- The Word of the Lord (Acts 13:48-49; 16:32)
- The Word of the gospel (Acts 15:7)
- The Word of His grace (Acts 14:3; 20:32)

So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified. Acts 20:32

The Word of God evoked many positive responses from people.

- They heard the Word (Acts 4:4).
- They received the Word (Acts 2:41; 8:14, 11:1), not just the preacher of the Word.
- They believed the Word (Acts 4:29).
- They desired to hear the Word (Acts 13:7, 42, 44), not just stories.
- They received the Word with readiness of mind (Acts 17:11).
- They gave themselves to the Word (Acts 6:4) and continued steadfastly in the Word (Acts 2:42).
- They searched the Word (Acts 17:11).

These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so. Therefore many of them believed, and also not a few of the Greeks, prominent women as well as men. Acts 17:11-12

- They glorified the Word (Acts 13:48).

Now when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the word of the Lord. And as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed. And the word of the Lord was being spread throughout all the region. Acts 13:48-49

The Word of God was used in many ways by the apostles in the Book of Acts.

- They spoke it boldly (Acts 4:29, 37).
- You can only speak boldly when it is God's Word. The boldness itself gives testimony to the Word (Acts 14:3).
- They preached the Word everywhere (Acts 8:4, 11:19, 13:5, 14:25, 15:35-36).
- They taught the Word (Acts 15:35, 18:11).
- They testified the Word (Acts 8:25).
- They spread or published the Word (Acts 13:49).
- They used the Word to determine policy (Acts 15:15).
- They commended people to the Word (Acts 20:32).

The Word of God brought forth powerful results.

The Word moved in power (Acts 10:44). This is what happens when the Word and Spirit are working together.

While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word.

All in the area heard the Word (Acts 19:10).

And this continued for two years, so that all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.

The Word of God increased (Acts 6:7, KJV).

And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.

The Word of God grew and multiplied (Acts 12:24).

But the word of God grew and multiplied.

The Word of God grew mightily and prevailed (Acts 19:20).

So the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed.

The word that is translated "prevailed" in this verse means "to have force." The Word of God is a force to contend with and ultimately, if it is upheld above the words of man, it will overcome or prevail.

#### **Key Number Four: The Name of the Lord**

When Jesus left the earth He extended His authority to His followers (Mt. 28:18-20). He gave them the right to use His name (Mark 16:17-18; John 16:23-24).

And in that day you will ask Me nothing. Most assuredly, I say to you, whatever you ask the Father in My name He will give you. Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full. John 16:23-24

The day that Jesus' spoke of had now arrived. The Apostles in the Book of Acts were totally dependent on the name of the Lord to effect results and empower their ministry.

The apostles understood that their own resources were limited.

Their money would never accomplish the task (Acts 3:6).

*So he gave them his attention, expecting to receive something from them. Then Peter said, "Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk." And he took him by the right hand and lifted him up, and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength. Acts 3:5-7*

Their holiness would never be sufficient (Acts 3:12).

*So when Peter saw it, he responded to the people: "Men of Israel, why do you marvel at this? Or why look so intently at us, as though by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk?"*

Their own natural abilities would only fall short (Acts 3:16; 4:7-12).

*And His name, through faith in His name, has made this man strong, whom you see and know. Yes, the faith which comes through Him has given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all. Acts 3:16*

*And when they had set them in the midst, they asked, "By what power or by what name have you done this?" 8 Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers of the people and elders of Israel: 9 If we this day are judged for a good deed done to a helpless man, by what means he has been made well, 10 let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole. 11 This is the 'stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.' 12 Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." Acts 4:7-12*

The apostles understood that the name of the Lord was God's special gift to them.

As the rod was a special gift to Moses (Ex. 4:1-4, 17).

*And you shall take this rod in your hand, with which you shall do the signs.*  
Exodus 4:17

As the mantle was a special gift to Elijah and Elisha (II Kgs. 2:8, 13-14).



The apostles understood that His name was equal to His person and represented His authority (Acts 4:7).

*And when they had set them in the midst, they asked, “By what power or by what name have you done this?”*

*And they set the men in their midst and repeatedly demanded, By what sort of power or by what kind of authority did [such people as] you do this [healing]? –Amp*

The apostles in the Book of Acts saw the name of the Lord bringing:

- Salvation (Acts 2:21, 4:12)
- Deliverance (16:18)
- Healing (Acts 3:6, 4:10)
- Signs and Wonders (Acts 4:30)
- Forgiveness and remission of sins (Acts 10:43)

The Apostles in the Book of Acts related to the name by:

- Having faith in His name (Acts 3:16)
- Calling on the name (Acts 2:21; 9:14; 22:16)
- Baptizing in the name (Acts 2:38; 8:16; 10:48; 19:5)
- Teaching and preaching in the name (Acts 9:21, 27, 29)
- Teaching and preaching the name (Acts 4:17; 8:12)
- Magnifying the name (Acts 19:17)
- Taking out a people for His name (Acts 15:14)
- Bearing His name (Acts 9:15; 15:17)
- Doing signs and wonders in His name (Acts 4:30)
- Suffering for His name (Acts 5:41; 9:16)

*So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name. And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ. Acts 5:41-42*

Risking their lives for His name (Acts 15:26)

Being willing to die for His name (Acts 21:13)

*Then Paul answered, “What do you mean by weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.”*

*They truly did whatever they did in the name of the Lord (Col 3:17).*

And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.

The Apostles in the Book of Acts faced challenges relative to the name. They faced pressure from other religious leaders not to use the name (Acts 4:17; 5:28, 40).

*But when they had commanded them to go aside out of the council, they conferred among themselves, 16 saying, "What shall we do to these men? For, indeed, that a notable miracle has been done through them is evident to all who dwell in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it. 17 But so that it spreads no further among the people, let us severely threaten them, that from now on they speak to no man in this name." 18 So they called them and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. 19 But Peter and John answered and said to them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge. 20 For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." 21 So when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding no way of punishing them, because of the people, since they all glorified God for what had been done. 22 For the man was over forty years old on whom this miracle of healing had been performed. Acts 4:15-22*

Those who oppose the name try to keep us from using the name of Jesus. The challenge for us today is to keep our message general and do not refer to Jesus in specific terms. The challenge is just to refer to God in general terms so as not to offend those who have a different concept of God.

They understood that the use of the name cannot be a magic formula (Acts 19:13-16). They understood that the key to using the name is having a personal relationship to Jesus.

*Then some of the itinerant Jewish exorcists took it upon themselves to call the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits, saying, "We exorcise you by the Jesus whom Paul preaches." 14 Also there were seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, who did so. 15 And the evil spirit answered and said, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are you?" 16 Then the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, overpowered them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded.*

They realized that people can live contrary to the name (Acts 26:9).

*Indeed, I myself thought I must do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Since we bear His name we should live a life that is consistent with His name.*