

# Gamma - Leaders

## Acts 1

### Study 1 Preparing for Missions

#### Case 1

**Prophetess Cindy Jacobs declares church growth expert Peter Wagner as prophet in 2000**

***“Cindy said “The lord would say today my son Peter I put the anointing of apostle of prayer upon you, I put the mantle of an Abraham, a patriarch, and I’m calling you forth into the land of promise.” — C.P. Wagner May 11, 2000 National School of the Prophets (bold mine) (This section excerpted from Let Us Reason<http://www.letusreason.org/latrain21.htm>)***

*Jacobs wasn’t done with speaking false prophecies over C. Peter Wagner. She also claimed his work with the Second Apostolic Age would be on par with what Martin Luther accomplished! Jacobs stated:*

*“Mike and I were sitting at a restaurant with Peter Wagner, and the Lord gave me a word for him, that God was going to use him to do something that would **change the face of Christianity**. And he said, “Well, I’ll probably never tell anybody that.” Oh, yeah, right, Then, well, right. That’s the second part. I was gonna say that. In fact, the Lord, the Lord, and **the word of the Lord said, “It will be, it will be like unto what Martin Luther did.”** — Cindy Jacobs National School of the Prophets, subtitled “Mobilizing the Prophetic Office May 11th, 2000*

- 1. Look at what the apostles did to appoint a new apostle and discuss whether a modern day prophetess like Cindy can appoint a modern day apostle?**

The gifts we do not share with the apostles have to do with the unquestioned,unconditioned authority of their teaching. Paul the apostle makes a telling statement in I Corinthians. *“If anybody thinks he is a prophet or spiritually gifted, let him acknowledge that what I am writing is the Lord’s command. If he ignored this, he himself will be ignored.”* (I Cor. 14:37-38) Immediately before this statement he is telling the church that they must “judge (evaluate) the prophets.” That is, when anyone speaks or prophecies in their worship services or assemblies, the church must decide if their

words are true or not. How? Paul says that his apostolic teaching is the standard. It is interesting that he insists that he is not to be evaluated! His teaching is not checked, for it is received as if it is *“the Lord’s command.”* But anyone else at all — even a prophet — is not to be accepted without being judged according to apostolic truth. Paul does this again in a letter to the Thessalonians. *“If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of him. Do not associate with him, in order that he may feel ashamed. Yet do not regard him as an enemy, but warn him as a brother.”* (II Thess.3:14-15)

This means that the teaching authority of the apostles was unique. Their teaching now is only available in the Scripture. No one else can possibly contradict it, or even add to it, for no one else has ever had these three unique gifts. Anyone for example, who says, “well, the Bible teaches this, but now we know better” is assuming an apostolic ministry that they have no right to. If fact, if someone even begins to insist they have revelations of God that are to be unquestioned — even if they don’t contradict the Scripture — they are assuming an apostolic ministry that they have no right to. For example, if a Christian says to you, “God told me that you must marry Ms. or Mr. X.”, and if that Christian regards this as not advice or wisdom to be weighed, but a command from God, then they are taking on themselves the kind of authority Paul and the other apostles exercised (I Cor.14:37-38). But they don’t have the three unique gifts that go with that authority. They did not have 40 days of direct instruction by the risen Lord. So today, the Bible must stand in judgement over any insights and knowledge of spiritual things that we have. Their writings are the foundation of the church (Eph.2:20). The apostolic teaching ministry still continues, but through the Scriptures, not through authoritative individuals.

On the other hand, the gifts we do share with the apostles have to do with the power and effectiveness of their evangelism, through word and deed. As we go through the book of Acts, we will see that usually the name “apostle” is reserved for the Twelve, as opposed to the rest of us, but sometimes the name “apostle” is given to others, such as Barnabus (Acts 14:14). Why? The word “apostle” means “the sent ones”. The apostolic ministry as power-filled witnesses and representatives of Christ is given to all of us along with the apostles,

for while the three gifts equipping the apostles for a teaching ministry were given to them alone, the two gifts equipping the apostles for an evangelistic ministry were given to all those around them.

We must remember that these two ministries overlap in the lives of the Twelve, and therefore we do not necessarily expect visible tongues of flame, etc., when we seek power to be witnesses. But the fact remains that we are all called as “apostles” (as some say — not with a capital ‘A’, but with a lower case ‘a’.) We are all called to be men and women-in-mission, empowered for witness.

- 2. The leaders of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Baptist church were deliberating over the difficult issue of whether the church should sell its premises to the brother of the pastor who was a developer who stood to make a huge profit for himself. The leaders themselves finally agreed to sell and wrote to the church to inform them and ended their letter saying that they “ had the mind of Christ in the matter” . When members of the congregation voiced their objections they were told not to rebel against “the Lord’s anointed leaders” and told to read the book of acts to see how much authority the apostles had in the church. Do you agree?**

This distinction (between how the apostolic ministry does yet does not continue in the church) means that applying the book of Acts to our own time can be tricky at points. We cannot simply read anything the early church did (since its elders were apostles) and just assume we should do it the exact same way. Our own churches are not led by apostles, thus our leaders do not have the absolute authority that they had too and therefore we have to be careful not to simply try to copy everything the early church did.

There is always a corporate check and balance system where the congregation can measure the actions of its leaders against the authority of Scripture. The leaders are not infallible and in this case there is obvious financial irregularities which reflects badly on the leaders. The leaders authority is only as effective as their proximity and fidelity to Scripture. They must be able to defend their decisions in the light of Scripture.

It will be important to keep a balance in mind. On the one hand, the

apostolic ministry of teaching and authority no longer resides in individual leaders of the church, on the other hand the command of witness and the promise of the Spirit was sent to all Christians. This means that there are two opposite dangers to avoid in reading the book of Acts. On the one hand, we must not forget that there is some distance between us and them. On the other hand, we must not put too much distance between ourselves and them. Let me be specific. Many in the charismatic movement have read Acts as if the apostles' ministry was not unique, and as a result they assume that we must copy everything they did exactly. On the other hand, many people who dislike the charismatic movement have overreacted to their emphasis on experience and power. They do not want to see that the power of the Spirit and the barrier-breaking effectiveness of witness is still available to us. Indeed, we should be convicted if we do not see people coming to Christ constantly, and if we don't see the power of the Spirit in our assemblies, and if we don't find our hearts bound together in supernatural love, and so on.

- 3. Hannah went to a new church and was soon complaining loudly to her husband that this was not a spirit filled church. " There are no miracles, the pastors cannot speak in tongues and there are no deliverance and healing services". All there is , is just this funny Alpha program where people are coming to faith but that's all. She pointed to the book of Acts and said" Look at the power of the spirit there" this church has none. Do you think she is right?**

Hannah has made the mistake of taking the narrative descriptions of Acts and directly applying them to this church.

This is not how we should be interpret the book of Acts. We need to do this with humility. We must not use it to bludgeon people with: "this church isn't Spirit-filled unless we have all the miracles we see in the book of Acts!" On the other hand, we must not avoid the clear picture of a vital, living church. We must measure ourselves by it and seek God's help to be all he wants the church to be.

The most important feature of the Spirit's filling is witness to the gospel and everytime in the book of Acts when the filling of mentioned it is associated with the testimony of the gospel. Acts 1 Jesus tells the apostles to wait for the baptism of the Spirit to be his witnesses and these are witnesses to the gospel.

## Case 2

March 26, 1997 brought the grizzly discovery that 39 members of the Heaven's Gate cult had committed mass suicide, believing their souls would be transported to a spaceship trailing the Hale-Bopp comet. Fifteen years have passed since the group became an international sensation -- attracting a mix of horror and ridicule -- but New Age believers are still harboring hopes that alien visitors will beam them up and away from earth.

The newest crop of these have gathered in a commune, 200-strong, outside the upside-down mountain Pic de Bugarach in the south of France. There, they hope extraterrestrial saviors will whisk them away when the world ends December 21, 2012

Applewhite taught that by denying themselves worldly comforts, sex and physical affection, individuality, money and jobs, they could ascend to the 'Next Level' and leave the earth before it was destroyed

Another group which calls itself the "true Russian Orthodox Church," believes the end of the world will come in May 2008. Four children are among 29 cult members holed up in a ravine in Russia's Penza region, where they apparently dug a cave. One of the children in the cave is 18 months old, reported Itar-Tass. Temperatures in the cave are below 54 degrees Fahrenheit (12 degrees Celsius), the Russian news agency reported.

The cult members have refused law enforcement requests to come out or release the children, and they have threatened to commit suicide if police resort to force, according to Russian state television

**1. In Acts 1:9 the Angel told the disciples to stop looking upwards and merely wait for His return. What should the ascension mean to them and to us? Compare what the disciples did to prepare for life in anticipation of Christ's return and the end of the world and compare this to some behavior of cults today**

In vv.9-11, the apostles saw Jesus' ascension. The ascension of Christ is so important that it is the only incident in Jesus' life that Luke repeats — he puts it at the end of his gospel and the beginning of the book of Acts. The angels gently rebuke the apostles — they are not supposed to “*stand here looking into the sky*” (v.11). What does that mean? Some think that they were trying to discourage the disciples from trying to guess when he was coming back. But their statement “*this same Jesus will return*” is not concerned with timing at all. Why do they assure the disciples that he is still the “*same*”

and is coming back?

It would have been very natural for the apostles to be immediately in great distress — assuming that they had lost Jesus, that he was now absent from them, and thus they were bereft. But the angels assure them that Jesus, though in one sense gone, is in another sense still with them. On the one hand, he is “*taken from you*”, yet they stress that he is “*the same*” — he has not transformed into some other form. He is still personal and human, though glorified. He is still their leader. And therefore, they tell them to stop “*standing*”, stop being inactive.

We have to link these verses with Luke said in his introduction. Luke considered the book of Acts the continuing ministry of Jesus through his apostles. In v.1, he refers to his gospel volume as being about “*all Jesus began to do and teach*”. Thus Luke sees the ascension as the way in which Jesus continues to minister, but now from his place in heaven he can do it through all of his people everywhere.

In summary. The apostles were momentarily frozen into inaction by a sense that they had lost Jesus. They are assured that the ascended Jesus is still quite the same — he is still their personal leader and savior. The ascension means “get busy”! It means we have more confidence and excitement than ever — for now our Lord is “at large” in the universe, working through us until we return.

**2. Jesus told them not begin their mission until they receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (1:4-5). What do they do to prepare for this gift in 1:13-14? And in vv 15-27 ?**

First, they prayed (vv.14). The characteristics of this prayer are only shared briefly, but several characteristics are evident in the concise description. a) This was *corporate* prayer. They did not just pray as individuals, but they came together to “*all*” pray in a whole group. They prayed with others. b) This was *united* prayer, which goes beyond the mere fact that it was corporate. “*Joined... together*” translates one of Luke’s favorite words — *homothymadon*, which can mean coming to consensus (cf. Acts 15:25). In prayer they came to

deeper unity of thought and mind and heart as they prayed. They came to agreement as they prayed. c) This was *prevailing* prayer. They prayed “*constantly*” which means to be very persistent and diligent. It doesn’t tell us how frequently or how long they prayed together — there is no mention of hours. But the impact of the phrase is to convey that they spend vast tracts of time together in prayer.

They chose new leadership (vv.15-26). Many questions are raised by this passage, and we must not be too distracted by the details so as to miss the general principle it teaches. But first, here are the two details that we must notice:

The first detail is the death of Judas. Peter refers to the death of Judas, and Luke’s aside about the circumstances of Judas’ death seem to contradict what Matthew says about it. Matthew 27:3-5 states that Judas hung himself, but Luke here says that he died through a fall (Acts 1:18-19). Some see this as a contradiction. But it does not need to be read this way. If a man had hung himself and he had not been found quickly, his body would have been quite bloated and decayed and, if cut down, could have fallen and ruptured in a gory mess. That would certainly be reason enough for the name “Field of Blood” to be attached to the place. The other detail is the manner through which a new apostle is chosen to replace Judas. They drew lots. Many have pointed out that this was before Pentacost, and after the giving of the Spirit to the church there was no record of this kind of decision-making again, even when great decisions are made (cf. Acts 6:1-6; Acts 13: 1-3; Acts 15:6-21). It is important to note Peter’s remark that an apostle is to be chosen by the Lord, not by the disciples (v.24), and so the drawing of lots was a way to let Jesus make the final choice. There have been those who have felt that the choosing of Matthias was illegitimate, and that Paul was God’s choice to “complete” the Twelve. But there is no comment in the text that indicates that.

The principles that are often lost in discussion of these two details are very significant: a) First, they prepared for their mission by waiting on God to raise up gifted and godly leaders. This was the other thing, besides prayer, which can be said to be a key for “revival”, for a spiritual empowering for mission. God works through leaders, so they went about seeking those he had appointed.

b) Second, they sought them by studying the Scriptures (v.20) with regard to the leadership position, by prayer (v.24), and by group discussion and wisdom (v.23 — proposing two men). This is therefore strong testimony about the importance of raising up leaders for God to use, and the “delicacy” of the process. It takes a balance of hard-nosed study and thinking together with a prayerful dependence on God’s leading.

## **Reflection questions**

**Do I really bear in mind the return of Christ and my accountability to Him in my daily life. If no why not ? How does this issue affect the way I live? Share your struggles**

**What preparations should I personally be doing in the light of Christ’s coming?**

## **Meditation**

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth

(Acts 1:8 ESV)

What wrong attitudes do I need to repent of

What is it in these verses that bring comfort.

What is it in these verses that build me up

Meditate on these for the next week and come back to share with each other how God has spoken to you through the Holy Spirit.



