

The Acts of the Apostles

April 24, 2022

Introduction: Acts 1:1

Reading: Acts 1:1-11

The Acts of the Apostles

or

The Further Acts of Jesus Christ Through The Holy Spirit

By His Apostles In The Early Church

Introduction

As we begin our adventure together working through the Book of Acts with its author Luke and the other Apostles, I wanted to take time to look at what Luke was trying to accomplish in writing his two volumes; The Gospel of Luke and The Acts of the Apostles. The Book of Acts records the first assault of the Church of Christ and Christianity on the broken world. As I prepared the teaching for this morning by the time I gave background, history and theme of the Book of Acts and then taught on the first 11 verses, my message was about 1 hour long. So, this morning we will explore Luke the person and author, title of the book, date of the writing, theme of this historical record and how it meets our spiritual needs. Next week we will dig into the first 11 verses.

Luke

Luke, the author of the gospel account and the Book of Acts, is only mentioned by name 3 times in the New Testament. In Paul's letter to the Colossi church we learn, "Luke the beloved physician greets you ..." (Colossians 4:14) In Paul's second letter to Timothy, he states, "Luke alone is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is very useful to me for ministry." (2 Timothy 4:11) Paul closes his letter to Philemon (fil·ay·mone) in Colossae, with ²³ "Epaphras (ep·af·ras), my fellow

prisoner in Christ Jesus, sends greetings to you, ²⁴ and so do Mark, Aristarchus (ar·is·tar·khos), Demas, and Luke, my fellow workers.” (Philemon 4:23-24) So, from the scriptures we learn little of Luke’s background or about him personally. In neither of the books written by Luke does he ever use his name – his focus is on Christ. Luke was a Gentile, we learn this from Paul’s writing in Colossians chapter 4, verses 10 to 14. These verses tell us that Luke was not among those circumcised, therefore, we can conclude he is not Jewish. There is evidence Luke was Greek and it appears his ability to understand both Greek and Hebrew languages coupled with his analytical physician’s mind made him the perfect recorder and historian of the chronological gospel account of Jesus and the history of the early church found in Acts. At that time in history many physicians were slaves of wealthy people. Luke’s name is Greek and was shortened from “Lucias” and historical records of that time show names ending in “as” were very common among slaves. Theophilus, the one who Luke dedicates the Book of Acts to and again from historical sources, we learn he was a wealthy government official in Antioch whose name means “friend of God”. His name was likely changed to Theophilus when he converted to Christ. By the time Luke travels with the apostles, he is no longer a slave and theologians believe he was freed after Theophilus became saved. So, some believe that verse 1 is addressed to Luke’s former master, “In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach ...” Once freed Luke becomes a traveler with the apostles, a missionary and writer. Many historians believe Luke was from Antioch because Theophilus was from there and by Luke’s keen interest in Antioch found 11 times in the Book of Acts.

Title

The title Acts or Acts of the Apostles was added later, for this book was an addition to Luke’s first book. The story found in Acts overlaps the last scenes of

the gospels and shows the risen Christ commissioning His apostles for the beginning of the world-wide task of proclaiming the gospel and their enabling for its truth to be known by the gift of the Holy Spirit. In its original writing Acts was not given a title. Its title was assigned in the late 2nd century. Some have said that a more appropriate title might be *The Acts of the Holy Spirit*. I believe however, an even more fitting title would be *The Further Acts of Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit by His Apostles in the Early Church*. That title is long, so shorting the name to Acts is easier to remember. However, my title is based on the first verse of the Book. Luke is relaying a reliable account of Jesus continuing the work that He began in The Gospel of Luke, again reading verse 1, “[In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach ...](#)” So, continuation of the first book or as we know it as Luke’s second book is focused on the acts of Jesus by the given power of God the Holy Spirit through His apostles. Acts records what Jesus continued to do and to teach through His apostles. Luke is telling his friend that everything Jesus taught and did is truth and can be trusted; just as his gospel account is God’s truth.

Date

Most theologians and historians give the Book of Acts a date between A.D. 62, which was the year Paul was released from Roman imprisonment and a late date of A.D. 69. Some believe Luke wrote Acts as late as 96 A.D., but the fact do not support this. That date of the writing of Acts is based on the fact that the Romans destroyed Jerusalem in 70 A.D. and this is not mentioned, and as careful as Luke was in being historically correct, he would not have left out the destruction of Jerusalem. Also, since Nero’s persecution of Christians, which began in 64 A.D. is omitted this indicates Luke wrote earlier than 64 A.D. Luke, also does not record the

death of Paul in Rome that took place in late 64 or early 65 A.D. These facts lead me to believe the date of this historical writing to be between 62 to 64 A.D.

Theme

The theme of the Book is seen in how Jesus' command, found in verse 8 is fulfilled, **“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.”** This verse predicts the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Which happened. One can literally use verse 8 with its command for receiving the Holy Spirit and the rest of the verse as the Table of Contents for the Book of Acts. Jesus tells the disciples you will be My witnesses to the world - and they were and we are to do likewise! Luke presents us with a travel log of the Great Commission. He shows just how God's will came to pass and also it encourages us to continue Jesus' teaching and mission through the generations until His return.

The setting of the beginning of Acts as the continuation of Luke's Gospel account begins at the end of the forty-day period between Jesus' resurrection and His ascension back to Heaven. We remember that in those forty days the disciples were shown repeatedly that Jesus was alive and that He was not a spirit but has a glorified body. He also taught them many things concerning Himself and their mission until His return. The bulk of His teaching during those days between resurrection and ascension were on the subject of the Kingdom of God and the mission of the disciples and for all believers until He returns.

The book of Acts could easily be divided into two books and theologians believe it originally was two separate accounts; Acts Book 1 comprising of chapters 1 to 15:35 recording the global need for the Gospel for all people with the reception of Gentile Christians into the emancipated Church separated from

Judaism. And Acts Book 2 beginning with Paul's second missionary journey in chapter 15, verse 36 and continuing through chapter 28. Acts Book 2 records the events of the expansion of the Church all the way to Rome.

So, the theme of the Book of Acts could be summed up as, *the call for all Christians to understand Christ, both prior to His crucifixion and after His ascension and their mission in life to proclaim the true Gospel of the Kingdom of God while staying active in God's Word and Christ's Church to guard themselves from the distractions and falsehoods of the world.*

Human Need Met

The main reason I believe the Book of Acts applies to us today and in the coming months it will become ever clearer; just like Theophilus, we too need to see that Jesus' work is not finished. He finished His redemptive work on the cross and even announced the fact before He died on the cross, **“It is finished’ and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.”** (John 19:30) Paying the price for sin and conquering death was finished. However, His work of saving men, women, boys and girls is not finished. The Kingdom of God began with the first coming of Christ but is not completed yet. His followers must continue Jesus' work of sharing the Gospel with others until His return.

The other issue we must always keep in mind is that before the disciples could carry the message of salvation to those who had not heard was that they needed an accurate understanding of the Gospel message themselves. Things have not changed many today have shallow spiritual understanding and are like the blind leading the blind. Some accept the teaching of people who have labeled themselves as spiritual leaders, yet their teachings are skewed or false. We must know who Jesus is and what He has done before we can go and tell others. If we

say we do not feel comfortable in sharing with others, for whatever reason, then we are a stumbling block to the work of Christ and God's Kingdom. Jesus does not speak about disciples or saved Christians who will **not** carry forth His work. If you have been a Christian for 6 months or more you should know enough about the Gospel message to share it with others. Even if you feel unsure about sharing the Gospel you can begin by sharing your testimony of what Christ has done in your life. As a Christian you have a responsibility to study the Bible and gain spiritual wisdom. Are you giving the study of God's Word priority in your life?

The Book Acts teaches believers how to live together in meaningful Christian fellowship. To support and care and share freely with each other. We will see this laid out by Luke beginning in chapter 2, verse 42 all the way through chapter 4. Is our church modeled after the early church? Is it a place for learning and living out God's truth? Is our church a safe place for all who come? We know through the living of our own lives that Christians have disagreements and Luke teaches how these conflicts are to be handled for Christians to live in harmony and be a witness to the world. The Book of Acts is about ordinary people, like you and me, doing extraordinary things, not by their power, but by the power of God the Holy Spirit. The Book of Acts tells the story of spirit-filled lives giving the disciples what Jesus had and what Jesus received in order for them to do what Jesus did. Acts is about continuing the mission of Jesus until His return.

As a practical application, this is why it is so important for Husbands and Fathers to understand their role as leader of their homes. Acts is the record of practicing Christians under the power of the Holy Spirit. It follows creation order and family order given by God. Men does this describe your life. Men, it is your responsibility to make sure every member of your family understands and is equipped to go and tell others of the saving Gospel of Christ. We are given the

responsibility and the task to equip our families. Men you will give an account before God for your wife and children. Our society is biblically illiterate and it is the fault of fathers. If dads do not know the truths of Scripture the family will not know them either. However, just knowing them is not enough. Fathers must share them with their wives and children. Dads, you are to be the theologians and biblical teachers of your home. To fail in this is to fail as the head of your home.

So just like Luke dedicates this book to his friend who has questions and wants understanding, this book will give us answers and bolster our spiritual wisdom and equip us to better share the saving gospel of Christ with the lost world. I hope you are encouraged and excited as we launch into Acts next week. Know Luke's reason for writing is the same today as it was almost 2000 years ago; ***It calls Christians to understand Christ and their mission in life to proclaim the true Gospel of the Kingdom of God while staying active in God's Word and Christ's Church to guard themselves from the distractions and falsehoods of the world. Amen!***