

Acts 1

- I. 1:1-3 Introduction: Christ's Resurrection
- II. 1:4-8 The Promise of the Holy Spirit
- III. 1:9-11 Christ's Ascension
- IV. 1:12-14 Waiting for the Promise
- V. 1:15-26 The Selection of Matthias

- I. 1:1-3 Introduction: Christ's Resurrection

- A. 1:1 Acts fills the gap between the Gospels and the Epistles. Dr Luke writes to Theophilus the sequel to the Gospel of Luke. Who is Theophilus? Here are some ideas:

- i. Name (*Theos + Philos*) means “Lover of God”, “Friend of God”. Figuratively? Maybe.
- ii. Luke's master as physicians were often the slaves of wealthy individuals.
- iii. A Roman official, perhaps one having to do with Paul's upcoming trial as the book ends.

- B. Luke is claiming to write objective history. Regarding the historicity of the Book:

“The historical framework is exact. In terms of time and place the details are precise and correct . . . As documents these narratives belong to the same historical series as the record of provincial and imperial trials in epigraphical and literary sources of the first and early second centuries AD . . . For Acts the confirmation of historicity is overwhelming . . . Any attempt to reject its basic historicity even in matters of detail must now appear absurd. Roman historians have long taken it for granted.” – A.N. Sherwin-White, Oxford Roman historian (Died 1993)

That same accuracy earlier convinced Sir William Ramsay, the nineteenth-century British archaeologist. He began as a doubter, but ended as a believer in the book:

“I may fairly claim to have entered on this investigation without any prejudice in favour of the conclusion which I shall now attempt to justify to the reader. On the contrary, I began with a mind unfavourable to it, . . . but more recently I found myself often brought in contact with the book of Acts as an authority for the topography, antiquities, and society of Asia Minor. It was gradually borne in upon me that in various details the narrative showed marvelous truth.” (St. Paul the Traveller and the Roman Citizen)

- C. *all that Jesus began both to do and teach* Jesus continues to work in Acts, now through the church, His body, indwelt by the Holy Spirit.

- i. **Key Emphasis #1 in Acts: Jesus Christ, especially His death and resurrection**

All the sermons in the book focus on Jesus. We'll try in vain to find teaching in Acts of the self-help or feel-good variety. It's all about the crucified and risen Christ.

Relevance: To this day True Christian Churches are founded squarely upon the historical facts of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ – and not something else.

II. 1:4-8 The Promise of the Holy Spirit

- A. 1:6 *Lord, will You at this time...?* A question of timing, but only of timing. Christ does not discourage their interest in prophecy generally. (Remember He criticized the Pharisees and Sadducees for not discerning the signs of the times.) Nor does He alter their expectation of a literal, earthly kingdom for Israel – only their desire to know when it would come.

Mark 13:33 (NKJV) Take heed, watch and pray; for you do not know when the time is.

- i. Again their kingdom expectations were apparently right on the mark – as Jesus does nothing to squelch them. John MacArthur puts it like this:

“If they were mistaken about such a crucial point in His kingdom teaching, His failure to correct them is mystifying and deceptive. A far more likely explanation is that the apostles’ expectation of a literal, earthly kingdom mirrored the Lord’s own teaching and the plan of God clearly revealed in the Old Testament.”

- ii. Therefore these disciples and the early church awaited a literal Kingdom Age – but those who have tried to date it, and many have tried, have always been wrong.

Matthew 24:44 (NKJV) Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.

- B. 1:8 *power = dunamis* = supernatural power or ability. The church's intensity, vigor and impact all come from this power of the Holy Spirit. “Spirit” w/cap S 54x in 28 chapters

i. Key Emphasis #2 in Acts: A Church Empowered by the Holy Spirit

“Before Christ sent the church into the world, He sent the Spirit into the church. The same must be observed today.” – John Stott

“Revivals start with a sovereign work of the Holy Spirit who takes control of His Church and moves the way he chooses. Revivals die when people take control again and try to predict, program or direct the Spirit to work the way they want Him to work.” – Ian Malins, Prepare the Way for Revival, (Chosen Books, Grand Rapids, MI, 2004) p161

Witness = martus from which we get the word “martyr”. The definition of this word has been stretched and changed over the years. The Holy Spirit empowers us to be witnesses – not to get weird feelings and do weird things.

ii. Key Emphasis #3 in Acts: A Church Actively Evangelizing the World

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| C. Outline of Acts | Chapter |
| i. The Witness in Jerusalem | 1 – 7 |
| ii. The Witness in Judea and Samaria | 8 – 12 |
| iii. The Witness to the End of the Earth | 13 – 28 |

Relevance: We can and need to be evangelizing people individually and an evangelizing church corporately. That's what the Holy Spirit desires to make us.

III. 1:9-11 Christ's Ascension

- A. Christ is going home to His Father – to heaven where He belongs.

John 16:7 (NKJV) Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you.

- B. How is this to our advantage? The Holy Spirit is God, but not limited to one human body. He indwells all believers.

- i. Contrast: If Jesus physically spoke in a different church every week He could only hit 52 churches per year. The Holy Spirit puts Jesus wherever His people go.

IV. 1:12-14 Waiting for the Promise

- A. **Key Emphasis #4 in Acts: A Church Devoted to Prayer**

- i. The book of Acts is without question a book of action as the title indicates. The disciples are out there working to reach the world. Nonetheless, *prayer* is mentioned 30 times in the book's 28 chapters. Prayer was an integral part of all that they did.

"When we rely upon organization, we get what organization can do; when we rely upon education, we get what education can do; when we rely upon eloquence, we get what eloquence can do. But when we rely upon prayer, we get what God can do."

- A. C. Dixon (1854-1925), pastor of Moody Church, Chicago (1906-1911); Metropolitan Tabernacle, London (1911-1919)

V. 1:15-26 The Selection of Matthias

- A. We read nothing more of Matthias, but that doesn't mean he was a "loser" as an apostle. Of the original twelve only Peter and John get Luke's attention in Acts. James the brother of John appears only in Acts 12 when he dies. Matthias may have been every bit as effective in his ministry as Matthew, Andrew, Thomas, Bartholomew, Philip and the rest.

*Revelation 21:14 (NKJV) Now the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the **twelve apostles** of the Lamb.*

The Conclusion of the Book of Acts:

Acts 28:30-31 (NKJV) Then Paul dwelt two whole years in his own rented house, and received all who came to him, preaching the kingdom of God and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no one forbidding him.

The book of Acts ends without any definite end to the story. This is, I believe, deliberate on the part of the Holy Spirit. The reason is that the story is still being written. Each generation adds their own chapter to the history of the church, but each one should strive as much as possible to connect it, not to the generation that came just before, but to the first generation of the church written about here. That is when the church was at its peak.