

"The Introduction to the Book of Acts"

Introduction: This evening we are going to begin a wonderful journey through the Book of Acts. There are 28 chapters and therefore it will take quite a while to work our way through the letter, but it will be a very rewarding journey.

I. The Writer

To begin with tonight I want to look briefly at the writer of Acts. The writer is Luke. The Book of Acts is actually a continuation of the Gospel of Luke which he penned. These two books make up about 28 percent of the Greek New Testament. Luke was a doctor who often traveled with the Apostle Paul.

Colossians 4:14

¹⁴ Luke, the beloved physician, and Demas, greet you.

Because of his occupation he often writes in great detail just you would expect from a physician. As we work our way through the book of Acts, we shall see that he often writes from an eyewitness perspective. We can see one such case in Acts 16.

Acts 16:10-11

¹⁰ And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavoured to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them.

¹¹ Therefore loosing from Troas, we came with a straight course to Samothracia, and the next day to Neapolis;

We know nothing of his conversion, nor do we know where he came from. But we do know that he was used by God to pen two wonderful letters.

II. The Purpose of the Letter

Before we get into the book of Acts, we need to know why it was written. There is much speculation as to why Luke wrote this letter. Some say it was to confirm the Apostleship of Paul. Paul conversion and call to ministry as well as his missionary trips are detailed in this letter, but that really does not take in to account may other topics in this letter. So this is could not be the purpose.

The purpose of the letter seems to be historical. Luke will show us in this letter how the Gospel will go from Jerusalem, to Judea, to Samaria and then to the ends of the earth. Luke will show us how the Gospel in the hands of a few men would be able to be spread around the world. Luke will show us how the message goes from the Jews to the Gentiles.

We shall also see the sovereignty of God in this letter as we watch the Gospel travel across the world. The Gospel will meet much opposition in this letter, but we shall see that nothing can stop the spread of the Gospel. It is God's message of love to all the world and therefore God in His sovereignty will see that the message will go out. In this letter we will be encouraged to see that in the darkest of times God is able to accomplish His purpose no matter who is against the church and the Gospel.

There is yet more of the purpose for us to see as we start into the letter.

Notice Acts 1:1-2

I want to first of all show you that this letter is a continuation of the Gospel of Luke.

Notice Luke 24:44-53

We can clearly see the connection between the two letters.

Notice Acts 1:1 again.

The "former treatise" is the Gospel of Luke. Here we see that the Gospel of Luke is a record of all that Jesus "began to do and to teach".

Application:

This statement about Jesus speaks loudly to you and me today. What Jesus taught He also lived. He lived it then He taught it. This is exactly how we are to live our lives. If you desire to have an impact upon those around you then you **MUST** practice what you preach. We cannot teach a class, nor can we teach our children if we our selves are not faithful. I cannot stand up here and teach you to walk a certain path if I am not willing to first of all set the example. A mom or dad cannot teach their children to live a life dedicated to God if they are not dedicated to God in their walk. When my girls were young, I could not teach them the value of gathering together with other believers if I did not live it out in my life in front of them. This is so important for parents and grandparents to grasp. If you for one minute believe that your children will grow up following God while you chase after the world you have been terribly deceived. This is why I always emphasize here that if someone is going to be a teacher, they **MUST** be faithful.

James 3:1

My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation.

We who are teachers will be held to a higher level of accountability and we will be judged with a greater judgment. Therefore, we **MUST** set the example with our lifestyle. This is

very important to our Lord and there is a connection to our faithfulness now and what will be entrusted to us in the kingdom.

Luke 19:12-13, 15-17

¹² He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return.

¹³ And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come.

¹⁵ And it came to pass, that when he was returned, having received the kingdom, then he commanded these servants to be called unto him, to whom he had given the money, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading.

¹⁶ Then came the first, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds.

¹⁷ And he said unto him, Well, thou good servant: because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities.

Notice Acts 1:1 again.

The Gospel of Luke contains what Jesus BEGAN to do and teach and the book of Acts shows how that work continues through the church/His body. In the book of Acts we see the birth of the church and her works, and we must realize that it does not end in Acts 28. The work still continues today as the Holy Spirit works through the body of Jesus Christ. Some have said that the book of Acts is not complete because God is still writing more chapters today as His work continues through you and me.

Notice the words of Stedman:

"The Gospel of Luke is the record of the incarnation of the Son of God. In John's word, he was "the Word made flesh, who came and dwelt among us,". Jesus, the Man, came to begin something, "to do and to teach," and the record of that beginning is in the Gospels. But, by clear implication, this second book is the continuation of what Jesus began to do. In a very real sense, Acts is not the acts of Christians, but the continuing acts of Jesus. It is an account of what Jesus continues to do and to teach. In the Gospels He did it in His physical body of flesh. In the book of Acts He is doing it through the bodies of men and women who are indwelt by His life. Thus, whether in the Gospels or in Acts, incarnation is the "secret strategy" by which God changes the world. Whenever God wants to get a message across to men, he does not simply send someone to announce it; His final way of driving it home is to dress the message in flesh and blood. He takes a life and aims it in a

certain direction and, by the manifestation of His own life through the blood and flesh of a human being, He makes clear what He has to say. That is the strategy of the book of Acts. It is the record of incarnation; men and women, possessed by Jesus Christ, owned by Him, and thus manifesting His life. That is the secret of authentic Christianity. Anytime you find a Christianity that is not doing that, it is false Christianity. No matter how much it may adapt the garb and language of Christianity, if it is not the activity human beings possessed and indwelt by the life of Jesus Christ it is not authentic Christianity! That is the true power of the Church, as we shall see in this book. The book of Acts therefore is an unfinished book. It has never been ended, but is still being written. The book abruptly closes with an account of Paul in the city of Rome, living in his own hired house. It just ends there as though you might turn over the next page and begin the next adventure. This book is Volume 1, and we are writing Volume 20 now. It may well be the last volume in the series. I hope so."

Getting back to purpose of the book, we can be sure that one purpose is to shows us how the church is to function.

Now before we go further, we need to also understand that this book is a transitional book. It shows us the transition from Judaism to Christianity. For this reason we must understand that we cannot develop our doctrine from this book. In this book we will see the apostolic gifts being exercised such as speaking in tongues, miracles and healing. These gifts were needed to confirm the message of the apostles. Keep in mind when the New Testament church began it did not have the New Testament Bible. So the church followed the doctrine of the apostles.

Acts 2:41-43

⁴¹ *Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.*

⁴² *And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.*

⁴³ *And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles.*

The sign gifts were to show the authenticity of the True apostles and their message.

2 Corinthians 11:13-14

¹³ *For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ.*

14 And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light.

There is yet one more point in the introduction that needs to be seen. That is the change in Jesus disciples. Let us notice the disciples after the death of the Lord.

John 20:18-19

18 Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the LORD, and that he had spoken these things unto her.

19 Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you.

It was after Jesus walked with the Emmaus disciples that they began to show boldness. Let us notice something that Luke tells us about the conversation.

Luke 24:27

27 And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.

Jesus showed them how the Old Testament prophecies pointed to Him. As they began to understand that what had happened was all in the plan of God, they became much bolder.

Luke 24:51-53

51 And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven.

52 And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy:

53 And were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God. Amen.

Conclusion:

When we come to Acts, we see the apostles standing in the face of danger preaching Jesus Christ crucified. They went from hiding to being willing to die. The resurrection certainly emboldened them; the holy Spirit certainly emboldened them but what seems to have really given them the courage was when they started to understand how the Old Testament prophecies were fulfilled in Jesus Christ. As we go through Acts, we will see that the Old Testament is quoted 57 times. When the apostles got their hearts wrapped

around how God had foretold all that had happened, they were ready to take on hell with a water gun.

Application:

This is another place where we see the need to learn the Word of God!

Psalm 1:1-3

Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.

² *But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.*

³ *And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.*