

"The Introduction to the Book of Acts"

Part 2

Introduction: This evening we return again to our study of Acts. Last week we looked at the two points.

1. **The Writer**

The writer is Luke who was a physician who travel with the Apostle Paul many times. When he writes he gives details as a physician would and he often writes from an eyewitness perspective. This is the same Luke who wrote the Gospel of Luke and Acts is the continuation of the Gospel of Luke.

Luke 24:47-51

⁴⁷ And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

⁴⁸ And ye are witnesses of these things.

⁴⁹ And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.

⁵⁰ And he led them out as far as to Bethany, and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them.

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

2. **The Purpose of the Letter**

There are several purposes for the letter. The letter shows us how the Gospel which was entrusted to eleven men was able to go from Jerusalem to all corners of the world. The letter shows us how the Lord started with a small group who were the church and He then caused it to grow to thousands and thousands of people.

Acts 1:15

¹⁵ And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples, and said, (the number of names together were about an hundred and twenty,)

Acts 2:41

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

Acts 2:47

⁴⁷ Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.

Acts 4:4

⁴ Howbeit many of them which heard the word believed; and the number of the men was about five thousand.

This is the last number we are given, and it is most likely because of the rapid growth.

This all came about through the preaching of the Gospel. There were no gimmicks, no special programs, but only the straight forward preaching of the Gospel. This is exactly what is needed today also. There needs to be the preaching of the Gospel and teaching of the entire counsel of the Word of God. This is what changes lives and brings people into a lifestyle the glorifies God.

This letter shows us that what Jesus began in the Gospels He now continues through His church. Notice the words of Adrian Rogers:

"In the Gospels, you find out what Jesus did in His human body, the body of His flesh. In the Book of Acts, you find out what Jesus is doing in His mystical body, the church. You see, Jesus is still active and alive on Planet Earth today, and He still has a body. In the Gospels, it was His material, physical body. In the Book of Acts, it is His new body, which is the church, and Jesus is alive and well today in His mystical body. This is what the Bible calls, in Colossians 1:27 "Christ in you." You see, we're not here just imitating the Lord Jesus. I love the idea, "What would Jesus do?" That implies what would He do if He were here. Friend, He is here. And it is not what would He do? We just need to let Him do what He will do (through His Spirit Who indwells us!) We are the visible part of the invisible Jesus, and He is the invisible part of the visible church.... we need to stop doing things for Jesus. We need to start letting Him do something through us. You see, there is only one Person who has ever lived the Christian life. What's His name? Jesus. No one else has ever lived the Christian life, only Jesus. And if the Christian life is lived where you hang your hat, where you go to work, where you go to school, it will not be you living it; it will be Jesus living it in you."

The letter shows us how the Apostles went from living in fear and hiding to being willing to stand in the face of the authorities and die for their faith. We looked at this briefly last week. There were several things which emboldened the Apostles. First of all there was the resurrection. They knew Jesus died and when they saw Him after the resurrection, they were changed men. The Holy Spirit also emboldened the Apostles.

Acts 2:1, 4, 14, 22-23

And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.

⁴ And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

¹⁴ But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judaea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words:

²² Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know:

²³ Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain:

There was yet another revelation which emboldened these men and that was their understanding of the Old Testament prophecies. While they walked with Jesus, they did not understand how the Old Testament prophecies would be fulfilled in Him.

Luke 9:43-45

⁴³ And they were all amazed at the mighty power of God. But while they wondered every one at all things which Jesus did, he said unto his disciples,

⁴⁴ Let these sayings sink down into your ears: for the Son of man shall be delivered into the hands of men.

⁴⁵ But they understood not this saying, and it was hid from them, that they perceived it not: and they feared to ask him of that saying.

Luke 18:31-34

³¹ Then he took unto him the twelve, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished.

³² For he shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on:

³³ *And they shall scourge him, and put him to death: and the third day he shall rise again.*

³⁴ *And they understood none of these things: and this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken.*

After the resurrection this all changed.

Luke 24:

³⁸ *And he said unto them, Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts?*

⁴⁴ *And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me.*

⁴⁵ *Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures.*

⁴⁶ *And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day:*

⁴⁷ *And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.*

⁴⁸ *And ye are witnesses of these things.*

Notice Acts 1:3

Here in this verse we see that Luke references what he had recorded in his Gospel. When Jesus showed Himself to His Apostles, He spoke to them things pertaining to the Kingdom of God.

So as we enter the book of Acts the Apostles are now understanding how all that has happened was part of the plan of God and this knowledge has emboldened them for what they are about to face. This is why the Old Testament is quoted 57 times in the book of Acts.

Application:

This again reinforces the need for God's people to learn the Bible.

2 Peter 1:3-4

³ *According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue:*

⁴ *Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.*

Let us now get into the book of Acts.

I. The Foundation for the Apostles
Acts 1:1-12

Notice Acts 1:1-2

These two verses make it very clear that the ministry of Jesus did not end at His ascension, but it continued with the Apostles and even today it continues with you and I who know Jesus Christ as Savior. We see here in verse 2 that Jesus worked through the Apostles by the Holy Spirit. He gave them commandments and He led them where they were to go and taught them what they were to teach.

Notice Acts 1:3

We are told here that Jesus showed Himself alive after His resurrection, to His Apostles by many infallible proofs. We see one such time recorded in Luke's Gospel.

Luke 24:36-40

³⁶ *And as they thus spake, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you.*

³⁷ *But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit.*

³⁸ *And he said unto them, Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts?*

³⁹ *Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have.*

⁴⁰ *And when he had thus spoken, he shewed them his hands and his feet.*

Paul then references more of the infallible proofs in the letter to the Corinthians.

1 Corinthians 15:3-8

³ *For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures;*

⁴ And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:

⁵ And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve:

⁶ After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep.

⁷ After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles.

⁸ And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time.

The resurrection is the foundation of the Christian faith. The Apostles had to know for sure that Jesus rose from the dead. Their understanding of the resurrection would enable them to continue even when the path became very difficult. If there was no resurrection, then there was no hope.

1 Corinthians 15:12-19

¹² Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?

¹³ But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen:

¹⁴ And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain.

¹⁵ Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not.

¹⁶ For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised:

¹⁷ And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins.

¹⁸ Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished.

¹⁹ If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.

Conclusion:

The resurrection and the Apostle's understanding of how Jesus was the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies caused a fire to burn within them and nothing could quench the fire. This is exactly what the church needs today, and this comes as we get in the Word and God opens our eyes to the Truth and we begin to understand more of the Bible.