

ACTS: THE BIRTH OF THE CHURCH
The Rest of the Story Part 1
Acts 1:1-11
Notes

Introduction

The book of Acts is written by Luke, the historian and physician, who also wrote the Gospel of Luke. Acts is to be understood as Volume II to Luke's Gospel record. Where the Gospel was written primarily to tell about Jesus' life and ministry, Acts was written to tell of the birth and growth of the church.

Acts was written to Theophilus (see also Luke 1:3). Luke chronicles the birth of the church beginning with Jesus' reiterating the Great Commission call given in Mt. 28:18-20 and the promise of the coming of the Holy Spirit upon all believers. From the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Chapter 2 Luke records the work of the Spirit upon God's people, testifying to Jesus' words of carrying the Gospel from Jerusalem to the uttermost parts of the earth.

The majority of the book follows the conversion and subsequent mission adventures of the Paul, who ends up being Luke's travel companion, and friend. Luke probably wrote Acts between A.D. 60-62, before the end of Paul's first Roman imprisonment. The reason for this date hinges on the abrupt ending of Acts which finds Paul waiting trial before Caesar in Rome. There are several reasons to suggest an early date. Luke does not record James' martyrdom (A.D. 62), nor the Christian persecution under Emperor Nero (A.D. 64). The Temple, which was destroyed in A.D. 70 was not mentioned and an event of this magnitude would surely be discussed by Luke.

Suggested Outline (Abbreviated-adapted from *The NIV Application Commentary, Acts*)

Prologue	1:1-2
Preparation for Pentecost	1:3-26
Jerusalem Witness	2:1-7:60
Pentecost	2:1-47
Temple Healing	3:1-4:31
Radical Community	4:32-5:11
Apostles on Trial	5:12-42
Deacons	6:1-7
Stephen's Ministry	6:8-7:60
Judea, Samaria, Gentile Witness	8:1-11:18
Scattered Church	8:1-4
Philip's Ministry	8:5-40
Saul's Conversion/Call	9:1-31
Peter's Miracles	9:32-45

Cornelius' Story	10:1-11:18
End of the Earth Witness	11:19-28:31
Antioch Church	11:19-30
Judean Christianity	12:1-25
Paul's 1 st Mission Trip	12:26-14:28
The Jerusalem Council	15:1-35
Paul's 2 nd Mission Trip	15:36-18:22
Paul's 3 rd Mission Trip	18:23-21:16
Paul in Jerusalem	21:17-23:11
Paul in Caesarea	23:12-26:32
Journey to Rome	27:1-28:15
Roman Ministry	28:16-31

The first account I composed, Theophilus, about all that Jesus began to do and teach, ²until the day when He was taken up to heaven, after He had by the Holy Spirit given orders to the apostles whom He had chosen. ³To these He also presented Himself alive after His suffering, by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a period of forty days and speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God. ⁴Gathering them together, He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised, "Which," He said, "you heard of from Me; ⁵for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

⁶So when they had come together, they were asking Him, saying, "Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?" ⁷He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority; ⁸but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth."

⁹And after He had said these things, He was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. ¹⁰And as they were gazing intently into the sky while He was going, behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them. ¹¹They also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven." (Acts 1:1-11)

The Power in the Proof (1-3)

As we open the book of Acts, we see Jesus provides power in the proof of the resurrection.

Luke opens the text with a mention of his previous work, his Gospel. Acts is not to be understood on its own, but as a second volume to Luke's first work.

In Luke's gospel he tells of the life of Jesus and in the book of Acts he records for us the birth of the church.

Luke's words in verse 1 are extremely important for us, especially in light of our culture's loose definition of truth.

Luke makes a point to tell the recipient of his letter that he took care in his gospel to record all that Jesus said and did until this particular day arrived.

Verses 3-4 tell us that during the time between Jesus' resurrection and his being taken up to heaven he spent 40 days with his apostles making sure they knew it was really him, and offering them verifiable, concrete, objective truth of his resurrection.

This proof of his resurrection then substantiates everything Jesus said about himself, his mission, and his relation to the Father.

The apostle Paul offers us additional support for Luke's claim of Christ's ministry post resurrection in 1 Cor. 15:4-8.

³For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, ⁵and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. ⁶After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep; ⁷then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles; ⁸and last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared to me also.

Paul tells us that Jesus presented himself to the apostles and then to 500 people.

The objective truth of Jesus' resurrection has eternal significance for every individual.

By the time of his ascension to heaven, Jesus has provided his disciples with proof of the reality of the resurrection.

The disciples took Jesus' truth to heart so much that 11 of the 12 died a martyrs' death.

It has been more than 2,000 years since Jesus' feet left this earth, but the truth of the power of the resurrection still rings true today.

The proof of the resurrection gives power to all that the disciples were about to do and say.

In our postmodern, post-Christian world, truth is no longer objective, but subject based on an individual's unique beliefs and experiences.

Our culture revolts against the idea of an objective truth that is true for all.

This postmodern culture is birth from an existentialist philosophy that says objective facts "out there" do not have an impact on personal truths "in here."

"You have your truth and I have my truth."

So, when we proclaim the truth of Jesus we are rebuffed at every angle because we are seen as unkind, bigots, or judgmental because we "foolishly" claim Christ as the only way to have a relationship with the Father.

We need to know when we proclaim Jesus, we are proclaiming objective, concrete, universal truth.

Jesus was born of the virgin Mary, lived a sinless life, died on the cross for the sins of the world, was buried, 3 days later was raised from the grave, and he now sits at the right hand of the Father interceding for us.

And any person who places their faith in Jesus and repents of their sin is eternally forgiven and has a personal relationship with God.

The proof of Jesus' resurrection is a powerful proof of his claim to deity and his claim of salvation and we should never be shy in declaring this truth.

The Power in the Promise (4-8)

Beginning in verse 4 Luke tells us, possibly one of the most important passages in the New Testament.

In this passage Jesus provides power in the promise of the Holy Spirit.

One day Jesus and the disciples are in Jerusalem and they are talking, and Jesus drops a bomb on them and messes up their world.

He tells them to stay in Jerusalem and wait for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, which he promised them in John 16.

He tells them (v.5) that this baptism of the Spirit is different from John the Baptist's baptism. It would not be a water baptism, but a spiritual baptism.

Ritual baptism was commonplace in ancient cultures and symbolized a cleaning and identification.

When a person was baptized into a community, he or she became one with it.

As a person emerged from the water, they did so with a new identity and as a representative of the community.

The Greek actually says, "You will be baptized into the Holy Spirit."

The most beautiful thing about this promise is that is not only for the apostles.

The promise of the Holy Spirit is for every believer

The Spirit is the promise of power for every believer upon salvation. Upon salvation a few things happen simultaneously.

- You are immediately forgiven of sin
- You are immediately justified (made right before) to God
- You are given the Holy Spirit who seals you for all eternity, who makes you one with God, who empowers you for ministry, and who guides you in the Word to honor the Lord.

There is no waiting on the Holy Spirit. The disciples' waiting was a unique event, a description of a time in history, not a prescription of future activity.

But then the disciples didn't get it, did they; they still did not understand.

They were still concerned about power, about Jerusalem, about their position, but notice was Jesus does.

He says when the Spirit comes upon you, you will be a witness (martyr-witness, give testimony to); be a witness to my word and my deeds not only in Jerusalem, but everywhere.

How could they do this? Because the promise of the Holy Spirit is a promise of power and this power is for all believers.

This word for power is "dynamis" and refers to a person's ability or capacity.

This means that when Jesus tells us to be his witnesses, we are not being a witness in our own power and strength, but by the very power of God.

The power of the resurrection of Jesus fuels our very life.

When you serve, when you obey the Word of God, when you witness, when you give generously and sacrificially, when you live for God you are not doing so in your own power, nor are you expected to do so.

God himself, the Holy Spirit who lives in you as a result of your trusting in Christ empowers you to love, to forgive, to bear burdens, to serve, to fight the battle, to never give up, to finish the race strong.

Jesus tells us that we will be powerful witnesses for him to our neighbors as well as those across the world we have never met.

The Power in the Prophecy (9-11)

As Luke closes out this section, we see in verses 9-11 that Jesus provides power in the prophecy of his return.

Jesus gives them their mission and then he heads out!

You can imagine with me, the disciples' confusion and bewilderment.

As they look up toward heaven in the clouds two men, angels, appear and as a rather odd, but pointed question.

“What are you doing standing here? He told you to go!”

These angels then proclaim a truth for us Jesus’ return while not immediate, will be imminent.

Jesus gives the proof of his resurrection, he gives the mission and the power to fulfill it, and then he gives a prophecy concerning his return.

You know what he doesn’t give? A timetable.

We are to serve in the mission of Jesus until he returns.

The Holy Spirit is the supreme qualification and assurance of our salvation and with the Spirit we are to live our lives to the fullest being witnesses of Jesus until his return.

We are not to worry about when or how. We are not to concern ourselves with supposed signs. We are to avoid complacency and negativity.

The life of the believer is to be one of purpose and intent.

May we as a church, as a people of God redeemed by Christ, may we commit to the plan.

There is power in the prophecy of Christ’s return. It excites us. It invigorates us. It strengthens us to know that one day our Lord will return in the clouds, just as he left, and we will be with him.