

Acts – An Introduction

A sermon series by Pastor Byron Chesney – Wednesday, August 26, 2015

As we begin a new Sermon series from the Book of Acts, I think we need to cover some basic things concerning this book.

1. There are 28 Chapters in the Book of Acts, and 1007 verses.
2. The human pen-men of the book is unmistakably Luke the Physician, the same pen-men as the Gospel of Luke.
3. The Book of Acts is a continuation of the Gospel of Luke which was written to a man named Theophilus: [Luke 1:3-4](#) *It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus, 4 That thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed.* And the Book of Acts starts out with Luke addressing the same man: [Acts 1:1](#) *The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach,*
4. So, Luke ends with Jesus ascending to Heaven and the disciples gathering in Jerusalem, and Acts picks back up with those same disciples gathered together in Jerusalem and hearing from the Lord and he tells of the ascension of Jesus once again with a little more detail.
5. It is believed that the Book of Acts was written from Rome somewhere in the time period of AD 60-63.
6. The name of the Book, is typically named; The Acts of the Apostles. That is what most Bibles have in them. I prefer a different title, however, which is: “*The Acts of Jesus Christ through His Apostles.*”
7. The subject of the Book is what we just said, the acts of Jesus Christ through his Apostles, however, it is also a narrative history of the beginning of the New Testament Church. It covers the preaching of the Gospel from Peter to the Jews in chapters 1-12 and the preaching of the Gospel from Paul to the Gentiles in 13-28.
8. The ending of the Book of Acts seems to end rather abruptly, almost as if Luke didn't have time to finish it. Some have said that he may have been martyred and did not finish the book, some have said he had to make a hasty retreat from Rome due to all the persecution going on. However, it ends with Paul finally being able to preach in Rome: [Acts 28:31](#) *Preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him. ---* and then it just ends.

So, we will start our Bible study and attempt to cover the first 14 verses:

† [Acts 1:1-14](#): *1 The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach,*

Luke starts out by mentioning the previous volume of writings, that he calls “treatise,” this is the Gospel of Luke. As we have already mentioned, this is volume 2 of writings from the Physician Luke and both are written to the same person, Theophilus.

Unfortunately we do not know much at all about this man, Theophilus as he is not mentioned anywhere else in the Bible. We can tell a few things about him though. His name in Greek means; “*Friend of God.*”

In the Gospel of Luke, Luke addresses him as “*most excellent Theophilus.*” The only people that were addressed in such a way were Roman officials. You can compare this greeting to the one that Paul gave Felix the Governor in Acts 23:26, when he greeted him as “*most excellent governor, Felix.*” So we can pretty safely assume that this man, Theophilus, was some kind of Roman official and that he had an interest in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Interestingly we notice that Luke does not address him as “*most excellent*” in the Book of Acts, but instead just says; “*O Theophilus.*” I was reading H.A. Ironside's commentary on this and he suggests that maybe Theophilus after reading what Luke wrote about the Lord in the Gospel of Luke, that he may have trusted Jesus as Savior and became a Christian and left his Roman position of power. We of course do not know that for a fact but it would make sense.

[2](#) *Until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen:*
[3](#) *To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God:*

And so Luke gives Theophilus a quick background of the events right at the ascension of Christ. He appeared to his disciples, who are here called “Apostles,” and was with them for forty days teaching them about the things of the kingdom of God.

[4](#) *And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. 5 For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.*

And then Jesus tells them they need to stay in Jerusalem until they receive the promise of the Father. That promise was the promise to fill them with the Holy Ghost in order to empower them to do mighty works and to spread the Gospel.

6 When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?

And typical of the disciples, they wanted more information. They wanted to know exactly when he was planning on establishing his earthly kingdom. That is what they had all been waiting on. They believe that he is the Messiah and they know the Messiah is supposed to rule and reign on earth so when is he going to defeat Rome and restore Israel as God's Kingdom and take back the throne of David and establish himself as King?

7 And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power.

And he tells them it's not for them to know when that time is going to come. Only the Father knows when it is going to be. In other words it was none of their business. Notice that even though Jesus is God, he is still in subjection to God the Father. Jesus said he thought it not robbery to be equal with God because he was God but he still is subordinate to the Father even though they are equal.

8 But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

Don't let that statement get by you; "*ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you.*" What a scary and sobering thing this must have been for the disciples. Knowing that they were going to be receiving some kind of power that is going to enable them to do things they've never done before. And afterwards they would be preaching all over the world. They had experienced some power just being with Jesus for 3 1/3 years but the power they would experience through the Holy Ghost will be the greatest thing to ever happen to them.

Now, if you remember the first time Jesus sent these guys out, they were not to take the message world-wide. --- Matthew 10:5-7: 5 These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: 6 But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. 7 And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. But, now he tells them to preach unto the uttermost part of the earth!

9 And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. 10 And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; 11 Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.

What an awesome thing for them to see. Can you imagine witnessing that? I'll be they talked about that for the rest of their lives. Probably sat around the dinner table at night telling that story over and over; "and then he was just taken up! We just stood there watching him and he just POOF, disappeared into Heaven! And then these two angels appeared out of nowhere and asked us why we were staring up into the sky?"

12 Then returned they unto Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a sabbath day's journey.

So they were up on Mt. Olivet, or the Mount of Olives, which sits 700 feet above Jerusalem. From the top you can see the entire city. On the west side of the mount was the Garden of Gethsemane, where our Lord knelt and prayed on the night he was arrested.

Now, this phrase; "*a Sabbath day's journey,*" can be confusing. It sounds like they are a day away from Jerusalem but what this means is the Mount of Olives is within the legal distance of travel on the Sabbath. Moses didn't make the law and God didn't make that law, but it was a law established by the Jewish teachers (Rabbis) for the Sabbath day. The distance was 2,000 paces. It was just under a mile away. So they walked the mile back to Jerusalem from where they had been in Mt. of Olives. Probably took no more than 20 minutes or less.

13 And when they were come in, they went up into an upper room, where abode both Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, Philip, and Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon Zelotes, and Judas the brother of James.

This upper room that they were congregated in was most likely in the 2nd or 3rd story of someone's home in Jerusalem, and not a room above the Temple. It may have been one of the disciple's homes. Nearly all of the houses in Jerusalem had these upper rooms built onto them. This is where devotions were held and teaching and family conversations. It would have been private. Every single one of the original called disciples were present that day except for Judas Iscariot who had already killed himself.

14 These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren.

We see also present were women, probably wives of the disciples and faithful women to Jesus such as all the different Marys that loved him, and Mary, the mother of Jesus who had been entrusted into the care of the Apostle John, and also the brethren of Jesus, this would be his brothers and sisters. --- And so we are going to stop here for tonight and pick back up next week which gives us more details of Judas' death and it covers the choosing of a new 12th Disciple which will finish up Chapter 1 of our studies.

† All Scripture from the Authorized King James Version