

Sermon Notes

WORSHIP SERVICE - 2.2.2025

PART 1 - THE PERSON AND THE PROMISE

I. INTRODUCTION TO ACTS

- Only the explanation given in the book of Acts can account for the unstoppable growth of Christianity in the face of hostility and opposition.
- As we study ACTS, we are praying that the Holy Spirit will do a deep work in our hearts by:
 - Magnifying Jesus and giving us a clearer picture of the gospel message.
 - Emboldening us for evangelism, mission, and powerful gospel ministry.
 - Giving us a greater confidence in God's sovereignty over every sphere of life.
 - Strengthening us to endure persecution.
 - Expanding our understanding of who He is, enlarging our dependency upon him, and helping us comprehend his work.
- Main point of today's message: The book of Acts details the ongoing ministry of the exalted Christ through his Spirit-empowered witnesses.

Acts 1:1-5

In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach, 2 until the day when he was taken up, after he had given commands through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. 3 He presented himself alive to them after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God.

4 And while staying with them he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, "you heard from me; 5 for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

1. AUTHOR

- The author of Acts, as in the Gospels, is officially anonymous.
- The earliest historical evidence points to Luke as the author of Acts.
- Earliest manuscripts of Luke contained the ending, "The Gospel according to Luke."
- Early 2nd century church father, Irenaeus, identified Luke as the author of both Luke and Acts.
- Internal evidence in the Gospel points to Luke as the author.
- Christian tradition and the internal evidence lean towards Luke being author of Acts and the Gospel that bears his name.
- Luke was very likely a Gentile convert to Christianity, not a Jew.
- Paul refers to Luke as a physician (Colossians 4:14)

- He was a friend and travel companion of Paul on his missionary journeys.

2. DATE

- Though there are arguments for a later date of mid 70s AD, because of the abrupt ending to the book, with Paul under house arrest in Rome, an early 60's AD date is preferred.

3. GENRE

- The most obvious genre of Acts is historical narrative; covering only a span of about three decades.
- When reading a work like Acts, we need to exercise good practices of biblical interpretation and application.
- Luke describes events and occurrences that took place in the early church without explicitly commending those practices to us.
- We must weigh carefully and use the whole of Scripture to help us understand if descriptive practices are prescriptive practices.

4. PURPOSE

- V1 In the first book, O Theophilus,...
- Volume 1 is Luke's Gospel.
- I highly encourage you to read Luke and Acts multiple times as we go through this series.
- There are many similarities between the two books as they have the same author who had a very distinct purpose in composing his work.
- Luke 1:1-4 Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us, 2 just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have delivered them to us, 3 it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, 4 that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught.
- Luke is writing these works to an individual named Theophilus, his name means, "lover of God" or "dear to God."
- Luke indicates that his purpose in writing these two volumes is to "compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us."
- He is dedicated to providing a very detailed picture of the spread of the gospel all the way to the powerful city of Rome.
- He sets himself up as a reliable historian, "having followed all things closely for some time past."
- He set out to write an orderly account.
- Why did he do all of this? It was so that Theophilus would have "certainty concerning the things you have been taught."

II. CHRIST'S CONTINUING MINISTRY

- V1 In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to DO and TEACH,
- This is a profoundly important statement.
- Luke is summarizing Jesus's life by describing it as what he did and what he taught—words and deeds.
- In his first book—Luke wrote about what Jesus "began to DO and Teach".
- The verb "began" indicates that it was the commencement, only the beginning of Jesus's works and teachings and that this book, Acts, is a

continuation of Jesus's works and teachings.

- Luke's first book takes the account of Jesus's life in works and words up to the point that he was taken up to heaven—his ascension.
- But we need to see that Christ's ascension was not the culmination of what Jesus DID and TAUGHT.
- After Christ's ascension his ministry continued and it is still in progress today!
- His ministry continued through the apostles and the Church.
- His ministry continues today through His Church.
- His ministry will continue until he returns again in glory.

- A fitting title to ACTS could be, "The ACTS of the exalted Christ in his continuing ministry through his Spirit-empowered Apostles."
- Luke begins his book not with a focus on the apostles, the Church, or even the Spirit—he begins with his eyes firmly fixed on Jesus.
- The first verse sets up Acts not so much a work of the apostles, or merely the work of the Spirit, but the continuing works of the risen and exalted Jesus!
- As you go through Acts, pay careful attention to the many times Jesus appears—his presence is all through the book.

- Christ is continuing his ministry today!
- What Jesus taught his apostles continues to be taught every day through his Church.
- Jesus continues his work of redeeming and saving.
- His ministry began on earth, but it is not completed until his kingdom is consummated.
- He is actively ruling and reigning sovereignly over his church, leading us through His Spirit and His Word.

- He spoke to his apostles after the resurrection about the kingdom of God.
- The kingdom of God is God's sovereign rule over this world and over his people.
- They were to expand his kingdom by being his witnesses and proclaiming the good news and taking the gospel to the ends of the earth.
- He is sovereignly and presently reigning and his kingdom is being expanded through his ongoing ministry through the church until the fullness of his people come in.

- Many Christians go about their day-to-day lives as if Jesus is absent and is not presently reigning.
- Does the way you live your life and the way you go about making decisions reflect the reality of Christ's present reign and sovereign rule?

1. THE FOUNDATION MINISTRY OF THE APOSTLES

- Jesus was not taken up to heaven until "after he had given commands through the Holy Spirit to the apostles..."
- Before he had ended his ministry on earth, Jesus made provision for the furtherance of his ministry through his apostles who would be endowed with the Holy Spirit.
- We cannot underestimate the unique position the apostles occupy and the unique power they would receive in service to Christ.
- They would serve as the foundation stones of the continuing ministry of the exalted Christ. (Ephesians 2:19-21)

a. CHRIST CHOSE HIS APOSTLES

- Christ's apostles were chosen by him.
- ...the apostles whom he had chosen...

- Luke 6:12-13 In these days he went out to the mountain to pray, and all night he continued in prayer to God. 13 And when day came, he called his disciples and chose from them twelve, whom he named apostles:
- The apostles were not self-appointed, they were directly and personally chosen and appointed by Jesus Christ himself.
- Our English term apostle, is from the Greek word, “apostolos” which means messenger, delegate, or envoy who is sent out with a message and carries the authority of the sender.
- Luke reminds us that Jesus’s ministry is about words and deeds.
- We can see from the gospel accounts how Jesus taught his disciples.
- We can see from the gospel accounts Christ’s powerful works of healing and deliverance, his command over storm and seas, his works back up and confirm his words and claims.
- We will see this pattern of words and deeds replicated in the ministry of the apostles whom Jesus chose.
- The other pattern we will see replicated is that of suffering and exaltation.
- This is why the true gospel is the apostolic gospel entrusted to the twelve.
- Paul wrote that if any would come preaching a gospel contrary to the apostolic gospel preached, let them be accursed. (Galatians 1:6-9)
- There are no apostles today!
- These apostles were with Jesus throughout his ministry, they were eyewitnesses of all of the events in the gospel accounts—most importantly, they were eyewitnesses to his resurrection.

b. CHRIST PRESENTED HIMSELF ALIVE TO HIS APOSTLES

- V3 He presented himself alive to them after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God.
- The foundational witnesses of Jesus’s ongoing ministry had to be eyewitnesses.
- Acts 1:21-22 So one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, 22 beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us—one of these men must become with us a witness to his resurrection.”
- Luke stresses that when Jesus appeared to them he did so with “many proofs.”
- Luke 24:36-42 As they were talking about these things, Jesus himself stood among them, and said to them, “Peace to you!” 37 But they were startled and frightened and thought they saw a spirit. 38 And he said to them, “Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? 39 See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me, and see. For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.” 40 And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. 41 And while they still disbelieved for joy and were marveling, he said to them, “Have you anything here to eat?” 42 They gave him a piece of broiled fish, 43 and he took it and ate before them.
- These proofs continued over 40 days.
- He presented himself to their physical senses: their eyes, ears, and hands.
- Paul writes that he appeared to more than 500 after his resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:5-8).
- The resurrection is not a myth.
- His resurrection was physically witnessed and repeatedly confirmed over forty days to those who would continue to carry his message and ministry.

- His resurrection is undeniably affirmed through the testimony of many witnesses.
- Because Jesus rose from the grave as he said he would, it authenticated everything Jesus had taught to his disciples.
- It authenticated every claim to his messiahship, his divinity, and his authority.
- How about you? Are you standing firm on the resurrection?
- If so, you should be emboldened to share your faith with others and testify of the risen Lord.

c. CHRIST COMMANDED HIS APOSTLES

- Luke also notes that Jesus “had given commands through the Holy Spirit to the apostles...”
- There are some early Greek texts of Acts that include the phrase, “to preach the gospel.”
- His commands or instructions would have been the content of the Great Commission we have at the end of Matthew’s gospel to make disciples of all nations, baptizing disciples and teaching them to observe all that Jesus commanded them (Matthew 28:19).
- It would have been, as Luke writes at the end of his gospel, “that repentance for forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem” (Luke 24:47).
- They received instructions as a preliminary to being sent out to preach and teach in his name.
- What is our responsibility? To obey apostolic teaching because it is Christ’s teaching.
- We must do what Christ commands us through His Word.

III. CHRIST'S ANTICIPATORY PROMISE

- Luke mentions some of the last instructions he gave to his apostles as the grounds for the promise he makes.
- He told them to stay in Jerusalem and not depart from the city.
- Why Jerusalem? It was the place from which the blessings of the Messiah would flow to the nations.
- It had to begin in Jerusalem because the promised Messiah would be from Israel, a King in the line of David, from Jerusalem, the gospel will radiate outward.
- God’s covenant with Abraham, from his offspring all the nations of the earth shall be blessed (Genesis 18:18; 22:18; 26:4)
- Psalm 72:17 May his name endure forever, his fame continue as long as the sun! May people be blessed in him, all nations call him blessed!
- Isaiah 61:9 Their offspring shall be known among the nations, and their descendants in the midst of the peoples; all who see them shall acknowledge them, that they are an offspring the Lord has blessed.
- Jesus also commanded them to wait.
- They were to wait for the promise of the Father—the Holy Spirit.
- Before launching off on mission to carry Jesus’s message they need to wait for what was promised to them from the Father.
- Luke 24:49 And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.”
- V5 “but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.”
- Jesus’s apostles, his witnesses, would be clothed or endowed with power, and that power would come from being baptized, or immersed into the Holy Spirit.

- John recognized that his baptism was a precursor to the baptism that would come with Christ, he said “I baptize you with water, but he who is mightier than I is coming, He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.” (Luke 3:16)
 - John’s gospel details the discussion Jesus had with disciples in the upper room prior to his death. He tells his disciples that he will ask the Father and the Father will give them another Helper, the Spirit of truth. (John 14:16-17, 26; 15:26; 16:7-8, 13-15).
 - They won’t be able to do what Jesus has chosen and called them to do without power—without the Holy Spirit.
 - God’s work must be done in God’s power!
-
- How about you?
 - Do you depend on the Spirit or do you rely on your own abilities?
 - Are you prayerfully waiting on God or do you rush on impulsively without his guidance?
 - We, like the apostles, need moment-by-moment dependence on the Holy Spirit to sanctify us, strengthen us, and empower us for bold witness.
-
- Commit yourselves to reading through Acts several times.
 - These opening verses lay the foundation for everything else we will cover. And it is a foundational truth for our life as followers of Christ.
 - Jesus continues his ministry.
 - Are you living as if Jesus is still at work?
 - Jesus’s resurrection guarantees our faith and validates the gospel message.
 - Are you standing firm in the power of His resurrection?
 - Jesus is sovereignly reigning right now from his exalted position.
 - Are you trusting in his sovereign rule over every sphere of life?
 - And he has sent the Spirit to empower us for his mission as his witnesses.
 - Are you walking in Spirit-empowered obedience and boldness?

APPLICATION AND REFLECTION

In light of today's message....

- What did I learn about the gospel?
- How can I apply what I learned about the gospel to my life?
- With whom can I share the gospel this week?