

ACTS 1: The Mission ... *“What We’re Supposed to be Doing!”*

Introduction: Firstly ... “The full title of the book of Acts is *The Acts of the Apostles*. That title could equally well read *The Acts of the Holy Spirit*.”

Acts is a book of the early church history and is especially the book of the Holy Spirit. *“The Acts”*, even that title was not original, because Acts was the second part of the Gospel of Luke. Some have suggested, however, that not the acts of the apostles (who have no major importance in the book) but the acts of the Holy Spirit were meant. Such a conclusion might seem unwarranted, but an obvious recognition of the unusual importance of the Holy Spirit in Acts is completely justified.

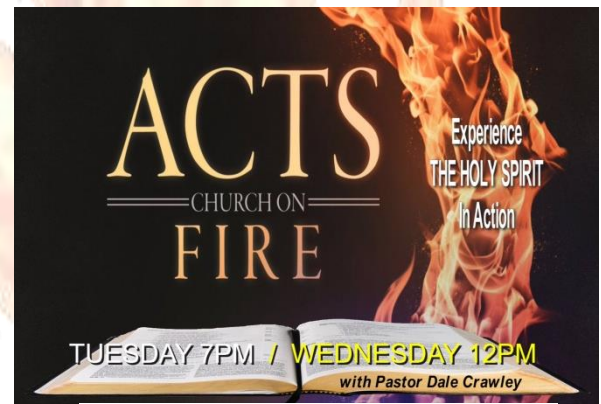
Luke authored first his Gospel, and then Acts. The parallels are undeniable. In the first, Jesus is empowered by the Spirit to model an otherworldly intensity and joy, to preach the word, to be a portal of God’s healing power, and to respond to murderous persecution in resurrection power. In the second, the church is the spiritual body of Jesus, empowered by the Spirit to do these exact same things!

“So Jesus said to them again, “Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you.” John 20:21 *“Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father.”* John 14:12

Author: Luke, a physician who was a close associate of the Apostle Paul, wrote the book of Acts. He went on many of Paul’s missionary journeys but is best known for writing the Gospel of Luke and Acts. These two books are actually two volumes of the same book. *The book of Luke deals with* ... the life, teaching, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus ... *while the book of Acts focuses on* ... the gift of and work of the Holy Spirit after Jesus ascends into heaven.

Purpose: Like the book of Luke, it is written to initially to Theophilus (v.v 1-3). Both Luke and Acts are incredibly well researched historical documents that give us an “orderly account” of both Jesus’ life and the initial movement of Jesus followers. These two works are without equal in recording ancient history and very well respected within the scholarly community—even by non-believers.

(v.3) **“many infallible proofs”** - Our faith and reason work together, they are not at odds with one another. *Jesus had to show them that He was alive, because dead men don’t come back to life!*



September 3rd – 4th, 2019

Being a person of faith doesn't mean that you check your mind at the door. Everyone is a person of faith ... it just depends on what you put your faith "in"!

Jesus' Commissions (vv. 4-11):

(v. 4) "Stay in Jerusalem." Why do you think Jesus said this? Jerusalem had a unique role as the "city of God" but it was also the place where His death and resurrection happened. This was not home for the disciples, Galilee was. *Jesus was telling them in essence, life will not be going back to the way things were!*

(v. 5) Jesus promises the Holy Spirit again and ties it to the fulfillment of Scripture.

(v. 6) Time has passed between verses 5-6. It is astounding that the disciples, having heard all the things that they have heard, having seen all the things that they have seen, still don't get it. They are thinking about the Kingdom of Israel, as if Jesus is going to be like King David of old and bring back the glory years. ***They still don't get how big Jesus' salvation will be.*** This is a further affirmation of just how big of deal the Holy Spirit is ... in illumining their minds and directing their lives!

(v. 7) ***If anyone ever sets a date for when Jesus will return, beware!*** Jesus tells us, that only the Father knows the time for the restoration of His Kingdom. *(Isn't it funny how someone in every generation claims to have "figured it out"?) 😊*

(v. 8) This verse sets the scope for the remainder of the book. It is descriptive of the book, but also helps us to order our own lives.

Description of the Book:

- Witnesses in Jerusalem – Acts 2-7
- Witnesses in Judea and Samaria – Acts 8-12
- Witnesses to the ends of the earth – Acts 13-28

Prescriptive Ministry:

- Our Jerusalem: our city and sphere of influence
- Our Judea: those a little further away but still culturally similar
- Our Samaria: those who are geographically close but culturally very different
- Our Ends of the Earth: all nations and peoples of the earth

I would say ... that we all have some responsibility "to be involved in being witnesses" to all of these different people groups. Think concentric circles of influence: going and sending.

Final Words (vv. 9-11)

These are the final words of Jesus before He is taken up into heaven. Last words have a powerful effect. Additionally, two angels appear and tell them that Jesus is gone, but He will come back in the same way He departed. It will not be clocked or hidden the next time. We will all know!

Active Waiting & Decision-Making (vv. 12-26)

As they were waiting for the Holy Spirit, the disciples decide to make a decision concerning who will be the 12th disciple/apostle to replace Judas Iscariot. "They" establish Criteria:

1. He needs to have been with us since the beginning of Jesus' ministry.
2. He needs to be known and have godly character. Two men are found that fit the criteria – Barsabbas called Justus and Matthias.

"They" Cast Lots, trusting the Sovereignty of God to providentially decide between two equally qualified men. The lot falls to Matthias, so he is chosen. *Casting lots was their version of flipping a coin or drawing straws.*

Why do we not employ this method of choosing leaders now? Scholars have endless debates as to whether or not this is a viable way of determining the last apostle. Some think that the disciples jumped the gun ("*wait*" v.4) and chose Matthias when God really was going to choose the Apostle Paul. (see Galatians 1:1)

I'm pointing out the obvious as to why we don't employ this method now – this happened before they had the Holy Spirit! Since we now have the empowering and leading of the Holy Spirit ... we can make informed decisions by always seeking His guidance before we attempt to make decisions.

Key Points:

- The Holy Spirit is necessary in fulfilling mission.
- The return of Christ will happen, but we will not know when.
- It is important that we are witnesses within the sphere of influence God gives us.

Application/Discussion Questions:

1. How do you rely on the Holy Spirit to be a witness?
2. Where is your Jerusalem? Judea? Samaria? End of the earth? And how are you effectively witnessing to them ... the Gospel of Jesus Christ?
3. How do you know whether or not you have the Holy Spirit?