

***“Top 10 Wonders of the World”
(The Way of God)***

Acts 1:1-2

January 4, 2015

INTRO: **VIDEO:** *“Christmas really happened!”*

T/S: If you REALLY believe in Christmas...
 He will totally transform
 “the WAY” you live!

CONTEXTUALIZATION:

➤ THE BRIDGE

- 2012 = “The Word of God”
- 2013 = “The Work of God”
- 2014 = “The Walk of God”
- 2015 = “The Way of God”

The Way: via **John 14:6...**

this name was used widely in the Book of Acts.... Paul introduces himself as a follower of “the Way” to the Governor, and not as a “Christian”(Acts 24:14), even though they were **known as “Christians”** by Acts 11:26.

Act 9:2 *(Saul/Paul) asked for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to **the Way**, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.*

Act 19:9 *But when some became stubborn and continued in unbelief, speaking evil of **the Way** before the congregation, Paul withdrew from them and took the disciples with him...*

Act 19:23 *About that time there arose no little disturbance concerning **the Way**.*

Act 24:14 *But this I confess to you, that according to **the Way**... I worship the God of our fathers, believing everything laid down by the Law and the Prophets*

➤ The Bible

- 2012 = Full Chronological Bible
- 2013 = H2O, Multiply, & 1 John
- 2014 = The Gospel of John
- 2015 = The Book of Acts

JESUS' STATEMENT OF the Great Commission in **Acts 1:8** is the key text in this book... Jesus' disciples will become witnesses only after the Holy Spirit comes on them.

Acts Outline

- I. Jerusalem (1-7)
- II. Judea and Samaria (8-12)
- III. The remotest part of the earth (13-28)

Acts Blueprint

- A. Peter's ministry (1-12)
- B. Paul's ministry (13-28)

Acts Major Themes

- a. The Holy Spirit
- b. Witness
- c. Sovereignty of God
- d. Evangelism
- e. Church beginnings
- f. Koinonia
- g. Prayer
- h. Opposition/Suffering for Christ
- i. Stubborn unbelief
- j. Church growth

Timeless Truth:

*The-Way-of-God is the wonderful
wonder of the world!*

*In the first book,
Theophilus, I have dealt with
all that Jesus BEGAN
to do
and (to) teach,
until the day when he was taken up,
after He had given commands
through the Holy Spirit
to the apostles
whom He had chosen.*

Preview:

1. The GOSPEL
2. True DISCIPLESHIP
3. The MISSION
4. BE-ing a WITNESS
5. Teaching TRUTH
6. FAITH in Christ alone
7. Biblical OBEDIENCE
8. Being biblically SPIRIT-LED
9. Living SENT & SET-APART
10. Chosen children of Amazing GRACE

1. *In the first book...*

#1 Wonder of the World

The GOSPEL/Gospels

Storyline of THE Gospel / Gospels

Genesis 1:1 & John 1:1ff

Genesis 3:15 & John 1:29

John 3:3 & John 3:36

John 6:44 & John 6:66

John 8:32 & John 8:36

John 17:20-21 & 22-23

20“My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, *21*that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. *22*I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one— *23*I in them & you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me & have loved them even as you have loved me.

Isaiah 53 & John 19:30 (*“It is finished!”*)

2. *Theophilus, I have dealt with...*

#2 Wonder of the World True Discipleship

2 People in process...

Disciple... AND Disciple-maker!

➤ Don't make too much of Theo...

Luke 1:3 = *"It seemed fitting for me as well, having investigated everything carefully from the beginning, to write it out for you in consecutive order, most excellent Theophilus"*

Acts 10:34 = *Opening his mouth, Peter said: "I most certainly understand now that God is no respecter of persons..."*

➤ Don't make too little of Theo...

John 3:16 = *"For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that WHO-SO-EVER believes on Him will not perish, but will have eternal life."*

Mark 16:15 = *"Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation."*

➤ **Don't make too much of Luke...**

Romans 3:23 = *"For ALL have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God."*

➤ **Don't make too little of Luke...**

Isaiah 60:22 = *"...one will become a thousand..."*

Mark 4:20 = *Others, like seed sown on good soil, hear the word, accept it, and produce a crop--some thirty, some sixty, some a hundred times what was sown."*

3. all that Jesus BEGAN...

#3 Wonder of the World
The Mission

QUOTE:

The key word for understanding the relevance of the book of Acts is the word "**began.**"

The gospel of Luke ends with the Ascension of Jesus into heaven. And Luke says that the story he told, ending with the ascension of Jesus into heaven, was the BEGINNING of the teaching ministry of Jesus AND it was the BEGINNING of the deeds of Jesus.

The incarnation of the Son of God into human flesh, the once-for-all sacrifice of himself for sin on the cross, the mighty resurrection and Ascension to the Father's right hand is just the BEGINNING of what Jesus came to do and to teach. And the rest of what he came to do, he does NOW... That is the point of the book of Acts and that is why we exist as a church...

The book of Acts is not just the acts of the apostles; it is the acts of the risen, living, enthroned Jesus. He said in *Matthew 16, "I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."* This is Luke's point. Jesus began his doing and teaching until he was taken up to heaven. Now he goes on completing his doing and teaching—he goes on building his church just like he said he would.

- John Piper

QUOTE: The Book of Acts is also the account of the work of the Holy Spirit *in and through* the church. The Gospel of Luke records what Jesus "began both to do and teach" in His human body, and the Book of Acts tells us what Jesus *continued* to do and teach through His spiritual body, the church.

A. Warren Weirsbe

4. *to do...*

#4 Wonder of the World

BE-ing a Witness

John 20:21–22: *Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you."* [There's the commissioning & here comes the Spirit] *And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit."*

Quote:

“He began both to do and teach; he laid the foundation of all that was to be taught and done in the Christian church. His apostles were to carry on and continue what he began, and to do and teach the same things.”

- Matthew Henry

James 2:17 = “...*faith without works is dead faith*”

Salt...

Light...

Aroma...

Ambassadors...

Ministers...

5. *and (to) teach...*

#5 Wonder of the World

Teaching Truth

(Instruct, Inspect, Inspire)

Quotes:

“...one of the key ways Jesus prepared his apostles for the revival that followed at Pentecost was to give them sound teaching. **- NIV Commentary**

J. Edwin Orr = “a theological awakening must precede a true revival...”

Dr. John Mackay = “First the enlightened mind, then the burning heart...”

Example:

see **King Josiah** when a newly discovered Book of the Law was read and a mighty revival was sparked ([2 Kings 22-23](#)).

“Neither cold-truth nor
charismatic-lies are acceptable
in Christ’s Church!”

6. *until the day He was taken up...*

#6 Wonder of the World

Faith in Christ alone

(Look UP – He has risen!)

Acts 2:33 = *“...He has been exalted to the right hand of God...”*

7. *after He had given-commands...*

Matthew 28:18-20 = *Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. **19**Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, **20**and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”*

Luke 24:46-49 = *He told them, "This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, 47 and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. 48 You are witnesses of these things. 49 I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high."*

#7 Wonder of the World
Biblical obedience

Followers... follow!

Servants... serve!

Ministers... minister!

The Unified... unify!

Christians... live for Christ!

NOTE: in the same paradoxical way...

The Disobedient... disobey.

Snakes... slither.

Wolves... attack.

Deceivers... deceive.

Deceived... die.

Liars... lie.

&

Cowards... Cower.

In short, to quote Jesus...

Good trees bear good fruit & bad trees bear bad fruit.

Be shrewd as a serpent & innocent as a dove.

"Do not judge according to appearance, BUT judge with righteous judgment."

QUOTE:

“commandments,” as a noun in the plural number, does not occur in the original. The single word which is translated "had given commandments" is a *participle*, and means simply *having commanded*. There is no need, therefore, of supposing that there is reference here to any other command than to that great and glorious injunction to preach the gospel to every creature (and MAKE DISCIPLES). That was a command of so much importance as to be worthy of a distinct record, as constituting the sum of all that the Savior taught them after his resurrection.

- Barnes' New Testament Notes.

8. *through the Holy Spirit...*

QUOTE: To understand this, it is necessary to call to mind the promise that Jesus made before his death, that after his departure, the Holy Ghost would descend to be a guide to his apostles. See [John 16:7-11](#), [John 16:7](#). It was to be *his* office to carry forward the work of redemption in applying it to the hearts of men.

- Barnes' Notes on the New Testament.

#8 Wonder of the World

Being biblically Spirit-Led
(Abide to obey – John 15)

Quote:

“We need a Spirit-authenticated commission on our lives from the living Christ. We need a deep mind-persuading, heart-gripping verification that Jesus is alive and triumphant over all his enemies, and that his cause is unstoppable. And we need to understand the kingdom of God and how it came, how it is now coming, and how it will come (to fulfillment).” - **John Piper**

9. *to the apostles...*

#9 Wonder of the World

Living-SENT & Set-Apart!

*Every saved soul
is a
sent servant.*

- JDP

Churches are caring caravans of Christ! - JDP

Disciples are designed & defined missionaries. - JDP

Romans 1:1 = *Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle (a.k.a. a “sent one”), set apart for the gospel (a.k.a. “the good news”) of God,*

10. whom He had chosen.

Ephesians 2:8-10 = *For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— 9not by works, so that no one can boast. 10For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.*

#10 Wonder of the World
Chosen Children of
Amazing Grace!

Where and when the broken become the beautiful...

Where and when the hurt become the helpers...

Where and when the messy become the messengers...

Where and when the miserable become the ministers...

Where and when the missed become the missionaries!

Where and when the “aints” become the saints!

Where and when the God-less become the God-lovers!

Where and when the DEAD are BORN-Again!

VIDEO: *“Amazing grace – My chains are gone”*

CLOSE:

Let’s walk this “Way” amongst the wonders of the world... as we study the Book of Acts in 2015

Together we will...

Walk... Work... Watch-out... and Worship...

to the wonder of the world...

by faith alone...

in Christ alone...

for the glory of God alone...

Amen & Amen!

Let’s Pray!

Context:

“The Way”

(an early name for the early Church)

The Way: The name which was widely used for the believers, and is most unknown to Christians today would be the title “The Way”. Probably originating from Christ Himself, who called Himself “The Way”(John 14:6), this name was used widely in the Book of Acts. The below verses prove that they were known more widely as “the Way,” than as the “Christians,” especially as Paul introduces himself as a follower of “the Way” to the Governor, and not as a “Christian”(Acts 24:14), even though they were known as “Christians” by Acts 11:26.

*Act 9:2 and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to **the Way**, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.*

*Act 19:9 But when some became stubborn and continued in unbelief, speaking evil of **the Way** before the congregation, he withdrew from them and took the disciples with him, reasoning daily in the hall of Tyrannus.*

*Act 19:23 About that time there arose no little disturbance concerning **the Way**.*

*Act 24:14 But this I confess to you, that according to **the Way**, which they call a sect, I worship the God of our fathers, believing everything laid down by the Law and written in the Prophets,*

*Act 24:22 But Felix, having a rather accurate knowledge of **the Way**, put them off, saying, “When Lysias the tribune comes down, I will decide your case.”*

Introduction

Except for the ascension of Jesus Christ, events recorded in [Acts 1](#) are anything but dramatic. After all, what is exciting about a business meeting?

Then why record these events? **Why didn't Luke just start with the story of Pentecost? For several reasons.**

To begin with, Luke was writing volume two of a work that started with what we call the Gospel of Luke (see [Luke 1:1-4](#)); and he had to begin with the proper salutation and introduction. We don't know who Theophilus was or even if he was a believer; but Luke's salutation suggests that he may have been an important Roman official (see [Acts 23:26](#); [24:3](#); [26:25](#)). Likely Theophilus was a Christian or at least a seeker who was carefully studying the Christian faith. His name means "friend of God," and we hope he lived up to his name.

But even more important, **Luke had to build a bridge between his Gospel and the Book of Acts ([Luke 24:50-53](#))**. At the close of his Gospel, he had left the believers in the temple, praising God. Now he had to pick up the story and explain what happened next. Imagine how confused you would be if, in reading your New Testament, you turned the last page of the Gospel of John and discovered—**Romans!**

The Book of Acts is also the account of the work of the Holy Spirit *in* and *through* the church. The Gospel of Luke records what Jesus "began both to do and teach" in His human body, and the Book of Acts tells us what Jesus *continued* to do and teach through His spiritual body, the church.

Even today, congregations can learn much about church life and ministry from this book, and this even includes the business meetings!

In this chapter, we see **the believers taking care of "unfinished business" and getting ready for Pentecost. What they said and did reveals to us the faith of the church.** In what did they really believe?

Any Christian wanting to know how to be a disciple of Christ in this world should turn to Acts to know how the first Christians lived.

Acts is unique in that it contains **ninety-seven verses** during Paul's journeys where the third person is replaced by the first person plural—the so-called "**we passages**," which claim to be the observations of an eyewitness.

The prologue of the Gospel of Luke, which applies to Acts as well, indicates that Luke intended to write an account that was historically accurate ([Luke 1:1-4](#)).

Acts has thirty-two speeches (excluding short statements), which make up 25 percent of the narrative.

F. F. Bruce, gave a now-famous lecture, "The Speeches in the Acts of the Apostles," in 1942.

...Paul was indeed uncompromising when it came to the fundamental principles of the faith, such as salvation by faith alone. But where these principles were not affected, he was willing to adapt himself to his audience. While justification by faith in Christ and the message of the cross are not given as much emphasis in the summaries of his speeches that Luke records as they receive in the letters, these teachings are always implied and sometimes explicitly stated.

Major Themes of Acts

JESUS' STATEMENT OF the Great Commission in [Acts 1:8](#) is the key text in this book, highlighting the two main themes of Acts: the Holy Spirit and witness. Jesus' disciples will become witnesses only after the Holy Spirit comes on them. Jesus then gives the geographical sequence in which the task of witness will be carried out—they will begin with Jerusalem, then move to Judea and Samaria, and culminate with witness to the ends of the earth. This sequence provides an outline for the book of Acts

The priority of evangelism. From chapter 1, where the Great Commission is recorded ([1:8](#)), right up to the end of the book, the great activity that dominates this book is evangelism. An interesting realization dawned on me as I was coming to the end of this commentary: The two major methods used in evangelism in Acts were the winning of attention through miracles and apologetics. All the messages recorded in Acts had a strong apologetic content. The evangelists sought to show that Christianity withstood the questions that the people were asking, and the records of the speeches indicate that their evangelism was strongly content-oriented. The chart on "Evangelistic Preaching in Acts" gives a summary of the methods and message of the first evangelists.

The power of the Holy Spirit. Many have felt that Acts should be called "The Acts of the Holy Spirit." The first chapter records the promise of the Holy Spirit ([1:4-5](#), [8](#)), the second his descent, and the rest of the book his work in and through the church.

Community life. Acts presents a vibrant community that was passionate about mission, with the members caring for each other, pursuing holiness, and dealing with matters that affected its unity. In the

description of community we also see Luke's characteristic concern for the poor (which is more pronounced in his Gospel).

Teaching. Not only is teaching presented as something done with Christians, in Acts it is also part of the evangelistic process.

Prayer. Fourteen of the first fifteen chapters of Acts (ch. 5 excepted) and many of the later chapters mention prayer; in Acts, as in Luke's Gospel, prayer is a key theme.

Breaking human barriers in Christ. In keeping with the geographical order presented in the Great Commission ([1:8](#)), Luke shows how the gospel spread from Jerusalem to Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth. In this process Gentiles are saved; he describes the way the church handled that witness as well as other social differences among Christians, leaving us with the strong impression that human barriers were broken in the early church and giving us reasons why that is so.

The place of suffering. Like much of the rest of the New Testament, there is much reflection on suffering in Acts. Here the suffering faced by the church is mostly on account of opposition to the gospel.

The sovereignty of God. Allied to the emphasis on suffering is the underlying theme that God is working out his sovereign purposes even through suffering. This is the dominant theme of the passage that describes the church's reaction to the first experience of suffering ([4:23-31](#)).

The Jewish reaction to the gospel. A surprising amount of space is given to attempts of the church to evangelize the Jews and to Paul's perseverance with this task in spite of many disappointments. Acts begins with the apostles' asking Jesus when he will restore the kingdom to Israel ([1:6](#)) and ends with an affirmation that because of the hardness of the hearts of the Jews, the gospel is being taken to the Gentiles ([28:25-28](#)).

The legal status of Christianity. Luke is eager to give the impression that the Roman authorities did not consider Christianity to be a dangerous or illegal movement. Acts also contains examples of the eloquent defense of the Christians faith before the state.

Some suggest that unless a narrative passage explicitly teaches a principle to follow, we should not use it in a normative way. Gordon Fee helpfully distinguishes between concluding from a passage that "we must do this," when we should be saying that "we may do this." However, out of the belief that "*all* Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness" ([2 Tim. 3:16](#)), I believe we can go beyond this general approach to glean normative truth from the narratives of Acts even if a specific proposition is missing. Note, for example, Paul's comments regarding God's judgment on Israel during Old Testament times: "Now these things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did... These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us" ([1 Cor. 10:6, 11](#)).

In keeping with this principle, in [Romans 4](#) and [Galatians 3](#) Paul used God's dealings with Abraham to construct his theology of justification by faith and not works.

Sometimes what we have in narrative passages are examples to inspire us. [Hebrews 11](#) uses Old Testament figures as inspiring examples of persevering faith for us to follow. Paul specifically asked the readers of his letters to follow his example ([1 Cor. 4:6; 11:1; Phil. 3:17](#)). For example, "Take note of those who live according to the pattern we gave you" ([Phil. 3:17](#)). Acts is the place from which to receive that pattern. We believe that through the lives and ministries of the apostles, God acted in ways that reveal his will and his ways to humanity.

We must, of course, be cautious about how we use this principle. We must carefully distinguish principles that are normative and those

that are specific to certain situations and therefore not applicable to all situations. Take, for example, Gamaliel's advice to leave the Christians alone because if Christianity is not of God, it will fail; and if it is of God, the Jewish leaders cannot stop it ([Acts 5:38-39](#)). God certainly used this advice to the advantage of the church, but it is not a principle always to be followed. If we did so, we could end up accepting as from God the growth of Islam, Sai Bāba's cult, and the Jehovah's Witnesses!

Or again: Klein, Blomberg and Hubbard point to the different models of church government and organization found in Acts. They show how "Congregationalists, Presbyterians, and Episcopalians all legitimately point to passages in Acts to support their views of church structure and leadership." This should tell us that different styles of leadership and structure are acceptable within the body of Christ and that we should look for the most appropriate one that does not break biblical principles. In doing this, we will look for models as practiced in the early church and recorded in Acts that suit our particular situation.

Acts as a Radical Challenge to Today's Church

CONTEMPORARY CHRISTIANS WHO read Acts with an open mind will find themselves challenged with pointed applications by what happened in the early church.

- To a society where individualism reigns and where the church also seems to have adopted a style of community life that "guards the privacy of the individual," the early church presents a radical community where the members held all things in common.
- To a society where selfishness is sometimes admired and each one is left to fend for himself or herself, Acts presents a group of Christians who were so committed to Christ and the cause of the gospel that they were willing to sacrifice their desires for the good of others.

- To a society where pluralism defines truth as something subjective and personal, Acts presents a church that based its life on certain objective facts about God and Christ—facts that were not only personally true but also universally valid and therefore had to be presented to the entire world.
- To a society that denies absolute truth and therefore shuns apologetics and persuasion in evangelism in favor of dialogue, Acts presents a church that persuaded people until they were convinced of the truth of the gospel. Instead of aiming at mutual enrichment as the main aim of interreligious encounter, as many do today, the early church proclaimed Christ as supreme Lord with conversion in view.
- In an age where specialization has hit evangelism so much that we rarely find churches that emphasize healing also emphasizing apologetics, Acts presents a church where the same individuals performed healings and preached highly reasoned, apologetic messages.
- In an age when many churches spend so much time, money, and energy on self-preservation and improvement, Acts presents churches that released their most capable people for reaching the lost.
- In an age where many churches look to excellence in techniques to bring success, Acts presents a church that depended on the Holy Spirit and gave top priority to prayer and moral purity.
- In an age when many avenues are available to avoid suffering & thus many Christians have left out suffering from their understanding of the Christian life, Acts presents a church that took on suffering for the cause of Christ and considered it a basic ingredient of discipleship.

Outline of Acts

Prologue ([1:1-2](#))

A. Preparation for Pentecost ([1:3-26](#))

1. Instructions Before the Ascension ([1:3-8](#))
2. The Ascension ([1:9-11](#))
3. After the Ascension ([1:12-26](#))

B. Witness in Jerusalem ([2:1-7:60](#))

1. The Day of Pentecost ([2:1-47](#))
 - a. The Coming of the Spirit ([2:1-13](#))
 - b. Peter's Pentecostal Speech and the People's Response ([2:14-42](#))
 - c. The New Community ([2:43-47](#))
2. Healing at the Temple and Its Consequences ([3:1-4:31](#))
 - a. A Cripple Cured ([3:1-10](#))
 - b. Peter's Speech ([3:11-26](#))
 - c. Evangelism Proscribed by the Sanhedrin ([4:1-22](#))
 - d. The Believers Respond with Prayer ([4:24-31](#))
3. Radical Community ([4:32-5:11](#))
 - a. Radical Sharing ([4:32-35](#))
 - b. Radical Generosity ([4:36-37](#))
 - c. Radical Discipline ([5:1-11](#))
4. The Apostles Before the Sanhedrin ([5:12-42](#))
 - a. Continuing Power ([5:12-16](#))
 - b. Arrest, Trial, and Beating ([5:17-40](#))
 - c. After the Beating ([5:41-42](#))
5. The Appointing of the Seven ([6:1-7](#))
6. The Ministry and Martyrdom of Stephen ([6:8-7:60](#))
 - a. Stephen's Ministry ([6:8-10](#))
 - b. Accusations Against Stephen ([6:11-15](#))
 - c. Stephen's Speech ([7:1-53](#))
 - d. Stephen's Death ([7:54-60](#))

C. Witness in Judea and Samaria and the Beginnings of Gentile Evangelism ([8:1-11:18](#))

1. The Church Is Scattered ([8:1-4](#))
2. Philip's Ministry ([8:5-40](#))
 - a. Public Ministry in Samaria ([8:5-25](#))
 - b. Personal Ministry with the Ethiopian ([8:26-40](#))
3. Saul's Conversion and Call ([9:1-31](#))
 - a. The Damascus Road Experience ([9:1-9](#))
 - b. Ananias's Ministry to Saul ([9:10-19a](#))

- c. Early Attempts at Ministry ([9:19b-25](#))
 - d. Finally to Jerusalem ([9:26-30](#))
 - e. A Church at Peace ([9:31](#))
 - 4. Miracles of Peter ([9:32-43](#))
 - 5. The Story of Cornelius ([10:1-11:18](#))
 - a. Cornelius's Vision ([10:1-8](#))
 - b. Peter's Vision ([10:9-16](#))
 - c. Peter Meets the Messengers ([10:17-23a](#))
 - d. Peter and Cornelius Meet ([10:23b-33](#))
 - e. Peter's Speech ([10:34-43](#))
 - f. Gentiles Receive the Holy Spirit ([10:44-48](#))
 - g. The Jewish Christians Approve ([11:1-18](#))
- D. Witness to the Ends of the Earth ([11:19-28:31](#))
 - 1. The Church in Antioch Established ([11:19-30](#))
 - a. Gentiles Converted ([11:19-21](#))
 - b. Encouragement from Barnabas ([11:22-26](#))
 - c. A Gift to Jerusalem ([11:27-30](#))
 - 2. A Parenthesis on Judean Christianity ([12:1-25](#))
 - a. James Martyred ([12:1-2](#))
 - b. Peter Imprisoned and Miraculously Freed ([12:3-19](#))
 - c. Herod's Death ([12:20-25](#))
 - 3. The First Missionary Journey ([12:25-14:28](#))
 - a. A Missionary Team Is Sent Out ([12:25-13:3](#))
 - b. A Proconsul Converted in Cyprus ([13:4-12](#))
 - c. Ministry to Jews and Gentiles in Pisidian Antioch ([13:13-52](#))
 - d. Ministry in Iconium ([14:1-7](#))
 - e. Rejection and Reception in Lystra and Derbe ([14:8-21a](#))
 - f. Return Visits to Churches and Antioch ([14:21b-28](#))
 - 4. The Jerusalem Council ([15:1-35](#))
 - a. Paul and Barnabas Go to Jerusalem ([15:1-4](#))
 - b. Settling the Issue of Salvation and the Gentiles ([15:5-20](#))

- c. Fellowship Between Jewish and Gentile Christians ([15:21-35](#))
- 5. The Second Missionary Journey ([15:36-18:22](#))
 - a. The Team Breaks Up ([15:36-40](#))
 - b. The Macedonian Call ([16:1-10](#))
 - c. Ministry and Imprisonment in Philippi ([16:11-40](#))
 - d. Ministry and a Riot in Thessalonica ([17:1-9](#))
 - e. Ministry Among the Noble Bereans ([17:10-15](#))
 - f. Ministry Among Jews and Intellectuals in Athens ([17:16-34](#))
 - g. Ministry and a Legal Victory in Corinthians ([18:1-17](#))
 - h. Itinerating En Route to Antioch ([18:18-22](#))
- 6. The Third Missionary Journey ([18:23-21:16](#))
 - a. Ministry in Galatia and Phrygia ([18:23](#))
 - b. Insertion: The Completion of Apollos ([18:24-28](#))
 - c. The Completion of Twelve Ephesians ([19:1-7](#))
 - d. Apologetic and Power Ministry in Ephesus ([19:8-22](#))
 - e. The Riot in Ephesus ([19:23-41](#))
 - f. Encouraging the Churches in Macedonia, Greece, and Troas ([20:1-16](#))
 - g. Encouraging Ephesian Elders in Miletus ([20:17-38](#))
 - h. In Tyre and Caesarea ([21:1-16](#))
- 7. Paul in Jerusalem ([21:17-23:11](#))
 - a. Paul Meets the Jerusalem Christians ([21:17-26](#))
 - b. Paul Is Arrested ([21:27-36](#))
 - c. Paul Speaks to the Mob ([21:37-22:21](#))
 - d. Paul Uses His Roman Citizenship ([22:22-29](#))
 - e. Paul Before the Sanhedrin ([22:30-23:11](#))
- 8. Paul in Caesarea ([23:12-26:32](#))
 - a. Paul Moved to Caesarea ([23:12-35](#))
 - b. Paul Before Felix ([24:1-27](#))
 - c. Paul Appeals to Caesar ([25:1-12](#))
 - d. Paul Before Agrippa ([25:13-26:32](#))

9. The Journey to Rome ([27:1-28:15](#))
 - a. The Journey Begins ([27:1-12](#))
 - b. The Storm ([27:13-26](#))
 - c. The Shipwreck ([27:27-44](#))
 - d. Ministering in Malta ([28:1-10](#))
 - e. Rome at Last ([28:11-15](#))
10. Ministering in Rome ([28:16-31](#))
 - a. A Rented Home in Rome ([28:16](#))
 - b. Paul and the Jews in Rome ([28:17-28](#))
 - c. Bold Preaching and Teaching ([28:30-31](#))

- NIV Application Commentary

Introduction

The book of Acts is the first volume of church history. It records the story of the church from its explosive beginning on the Day of Pentecost to the imprisonment at Rome of its greatest missionary.

During those three decades, the church expanded from a small group of Jewish believers gathered in Jerusalem to embrace thousands in dozens of congregations throughout the Roman world. Acts describes how the Spirit of God superintended, controlled, and empowered the expansion of the church. Indeed, the book could well be called "The Acts of the Holy Spirit Through the Apostles."

Acts is a significant book for several reasons. With the epistles, but without Acts, we would have much difficulty understanding the flow of the early history of the church. With it, we have a core history around which to assemble the data in the epistles, enriching our comprehension of them. The book follows first the ministry of Peter, then of Paul. From it we learn principles for discipling believers, building the church, and evangelizing the world.

The book of Acts also teaches much about the Holy Spirit, who is mentioned more than fifty times. He regenerates, baptizes, fills, and

sanctifies believers. The Holy Spirit is seen choosing missionaries ([13:2](#)) and directing their operations ([8:29](#)). He presided at the first church council ([15:28](#)) and, in short, directed and controlled all operations of the church.

The doctrinal importance of Acts is not limited, however, to its teaching on Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. While it does not flow around doctrinal issues, but historical events, it nevertheless touches many theological truths. Donald Guthrie aptly summarizes the theological significance of Acts: "The importance of the book of Acts is in its preservation of the main doctrinal themes presented in apostolic preaching, even if there is no evidence of an attempt to develop a systematized theology"

Purpose

Luke states his purpose for writing his two-volume work in the prologue to Luke: "It seemed fitting for me as well, having investigated everything carefully from the beginning, to write it out for you in consecutive order, most excellent Theophilus" ([Luke 1:3](#)). Acts was also addressed to Theophilus, continuing where Luke's gospel left off.

Theophilus is unknown, though Luke's address of him as "most excellent" ([Luke 1:3](#)) suggests he was a Roman official (cf. [Acts 24:3](#); [26:25](#)). Whether he was a Christian Luke was instructing, or a pagan he was trying to persuade, is also not known.

Luke did not write a complete account of the first three decades of the church. He selectively chose those events and persons that suited his inspired purpose.

Luke's primary purpose is to show the spread of Christianity, empowered and energized by the Holy Spirit, throughout the Roman world ([1:8](#)).

Outline

- IV. Jerusalem ([1:1-8:4](#))
 - A. The beginning of the church ([1:1-2:47](#))
 - B. The expansion of the church ([3:1-8:4](#))
- V. Judea and Samaria ([8:5-12:25](#))
 - A. The witness to the Samaritans ([8:5-25](#))
 - B. The conversion of a Gentile ([8:26-40](#))
 - C. The conversion of the apostle to the Gentiles ([9:1-31](#))
 - D. The witness to the Gentiles ([9:32-12:25](#))
- VI. The remotest part of the earth ([13:1-28:31](#))
 - A. The first missionary journey ([13:1-14:28](#))
 - B. The Jerusalem council ([15:1-35](#))
 - C. The second missionary journey ([15:36-18:22](#))
 - D. The third missionary journey ([18:23-21:16](#))
 - E. The journey to Rome ([21:17-28:31](#))

- MacArthur New Testament Commentary

Nearly 2,000 years ago, a match was struck in Palestine. At first, just a few in that corner of the world were touched and warmed, but the fire spread beyond Jerusalem and Judea out to the world and to all people. Acts provides an eyewitness account of the flame and fire—the birth and spread of the church. Beginning in Jerusalem with a small group of disciples, the message traveled across the Roman Empire. Empowered by the Holy Spirit, this courageous band preached, taught, healed, and demonstrated love in synagogues, schools, homes, marketplaces, and courtrooms, and on

streets, hills, ships, and desert roads— wherever God sent them, lives and history were changed.

Acts is an accurate historical record of the early church. But Acts is also a theological book, with lessons and living examples of the work of the Holy Spirit, church relationships and organization, the implications of grace, and the law of love. And Acts is an apologetic work, building a strong case for the validity of Christ's claims and promises.

The gospel first went to the Jews, but they, as a nation, rejected it. A remnant of Jews, of course, gladly received the Good News. But the continual rejection of the gospel by the vast majority of the Jews led to the ever-increasing proclamation of the gospel to the Gentiles. This was according to Jesus' plan: The gospel was to go from Jerusalem, to Judea, to Samaria, and to the ends of the earth (1:8). This, in fact, is the pattern that the Acts narrative follows. The glorious proclamation began in Jerusalem (chapters 1-7), went to Judea and Samaria (chapters 8 and following), and to the countries beyond Judea (11:19; 13:4 and on to the end of Acts). The second half of Acts is focused primarily on Paul's missionary journeys to many countries north of the Mediterranean Sea. He, with his companions, took the gospel first to the Jews and then to the Gentiles. Some of the Jews believed, and many of the Gentiles received the Good News with joy. New churches were started, and new believers began to grow in the Christian life.

Purpose:

To give an accurate account of the birth and growth of the Christian church

Setting:

Acts is the connecting link between Christ's life and the life of the church, between the Gospels and the Letters.

Key Verse:

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts [1:8](#))

Key Places:

The apostle Paul, whose missionary journeys fill much of this book, traveled tremendous distances as he tirelessly spread the gospel across much of the Roman Empire. His combined trips, by land and sea, equal more than 13,000 air miles.

1. **Judea** Jesus ascended to heaven from the Mount of Olives, outside Jerusalem, and his followers returned to the city to await the infilling of the Holy Spirit, which occurred at Pentecost. Peter gave a powerful sermon that was heard by Jews from across the empire. The Jerusalem church grew, but Stephen was martyred for his faith by Jewish leaders who did not believe in Jesus ([1:1-7:60](#)).
2. **Samaria** After Stephen's death, persecution of Christians intensified, but it caused the believers to leave Jerusalem and spread the gospel to other cities in the empire. Philip took the gospel into Samaria, and even to a man from Ethiopia ([8:1-40](#)).
3. **Syria** Paul (Saul) began his story as a persecutor of Christians, only to be met by Jesus himself on the road to Damascus. He became a believer, but his new faith caused opposition, so he returned to Tarsus, his home, for safety. Barnabas sought out Paul in Tarsus and brought him to the church in Antioch of Syria, where they worked together. Meanwhile, Peter had received a vision that led him to Caesarea, where he presented

the gospel to a Gentile family, who became believers ([9:1-12:25](#)).

4. **Cyprus and Galatia** Paul and Barnabas were dedicated by the church in Antioch of Syria for God's work of spreading the gospel to other cities. They set off on their first missionary journey through Cyprus and Galatia ([13:1-14:28](#)).
5. **Jerusalem** Controversy between Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians over the matter of keeping the law led to a special council, with delegates from the churches in Antioch and Jerusalem meeting in Jerusalem. Together, they resolved the conflict and the news was taken back to Antioch ([15:1-35](#)).
6. **Macedonia** Barnabas traveled to Cyprus while Paul took a second missionary journey. He revisited the churches in Galatia and headed toward Ephesus, but the Holy Spirit said no. So he turned north toward Bithynia and Pontus but again was told not to go. He then received the "Macedonian call," and followed the Spirit's direction into the cities of Macedonia ([15:36-17:14](#)).
7. **Achaia** Paul traveled from Macedonia to Athens and Corinth in Achaia, then traveled by ship to Ephesus before returning to Caesarea, Jerusalem, and finally back to Antioch ([17:15-18:22](#)).
8. **Ephesus** Paul's third missionary journey took him back through Cilicia and Galatia, this time straight to Ephesus in Asia. He visited other cities in Asia before going back to Macedonia and Achaia. He returned to Jerusalem by ship, despite his knowledge that arrest awaited him there ([18:23-23:30](#)).
9. **Caesarea** Paul was arrested in Jerusalem and taken to Antipatris, then on to Caesarea under Roman guard. Paul always took advantage of any opportunity to share the gospel, and he did so before many Gentile leaders. Because Paul appealed his case to Caesar, he began the long journey to Rome ([23:31-26:32](#)).

10. **Rome** After storms, layovers in Crete, and shipwreck on the island of Malta, Paul arrived in Sicily and finally in Italy, where he traveled by land, under guard, to his long-awaited destination: Rome, the capital of the empire ([27:1-28:31](#)).

The Blueprint

C. PETER'S MINISTRY ([1:1-12:25](#))

1. Establishment of the church
2. Expansion of the church

After the resurrection of Jesus Christ, Peter preached boldly and performed many miracles. Peter's actions demonstrate vividly the source and effects of Christian power. Because of the Holy Spirit, God's people were empowered so they could accomplish their tasks. The Holy Spirit is still available to empower believers today. We should turn to the Holy Spirit to give us the strength, courage, and insight to accomplish our work for God.

D. PAUL'S MINISTRY ([13:1-28:31](#))

1. First missionary journey
2. The council at Jerusalem
3. Second missionary journey
4. Third missionary journey
5. Paul on trial

Paul's missionary adventures show us the progress of Christianity. The gospel could not be confined to one corner of the world. This was a faith that offered hope to all humanity. We, too, should venture forth and share in this heroic task to witness for Christ in all the world.

MEGATHEMES

THEME	EXPLANATION	IMPORTANCE
<i>Church Beginnings</i>	Acts is the history of how Christianity was founded and organized and solved its problems. The community of believers began by faith in the risen Christ and in the power of the Holy Spirit, who enabled them to witness, to love, and to serve.	New churches are continually being founded. By faith in Jesus Christ and through the power of the Holy Spirit, the church can be a vibrant agent for change. As we face new problems, Acts gives important remedies for solving them.
<i>Holy Spirit</i>	The church did not start or grow by its own power or enthusiasm. The disciples were empowered by God's Holy Spirit. He was the promised Advocate and Guide sent when Jesus went to heaven.	The Holy Spirit's work demonstrated that Christianity was supernatural. Thus, the church became more Holy Spirit conscious than problem conscious. By faith, any believer can claim the Holy Spirit's power to do Christ's work.
<i>Church Growth</i>	Acts presents the history of a dynamic, growing community of believers from Jerusalem to Syria, Africa, Asia, and Europe. In the first century,	When the Holy Spirit works, there is movement, excitement, and growth. He gives us the motivation, energy, and ability to get the gospel to the whole

Christianity spread from believing Jews to non-Jews in 39 cities and 30 countries, islands, or provinces.

world. How are you fitting into God's plan for spreading Christianity? What is your place in this movement?

Witnessing

Peter, John, Philip, Paul, Barnabas, and thousands more witnessed to their new faith in Christ. By personal testimony, preaching, or defense before authorities, they told the story with boldness and courage to groups of all sizes.

We are God's people, chosen to be part of his plan to reach the world. In love and by faith, we can have the Holy Spirit's help as we witness or preach. Witnessing is also beneficial to us because it strengthens our faith as we confront those who challenge it.

Opposition

Through imprisonment, beatings, plots, and riots, Christians were persecuted by both Jews and Gentiles. But the opposition became a catalyst for the spread of Christianity. Growth during times of oppression showed that Christianity was not the work of humans, but of God.

God can work through any opposition. When persecution from hostile unbelievers comes, realize that it has come because you have been a faithful witness and you have looked for the opportunity to present the Good News about Christ. Seize the opportunities that opposition brings.

Acts

Introduction

The book of Acts provides a glimpse into the first three decades of the early church (ca A.D. 30-63) as it spread and multiplied after the ascension of Jesus Christ. It is not a detailed or comprehensive history. Rather, it focuses on the role played by apostles such as Peter, who ministered primarily to Jews, and Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles.

Circumstances of Writing

Author: The book of Acts is formally anonymous. The traditional view is that the author was the same person who wrote the Gospel of Luke—Luke the physician and traveling companion of Paul ([Col 4:14](#); [2Tim 4:11](#); [Phm 24](#)). As early as the second century A.D., church leaders such as Irenaeus wrote that Luke was the author of Acts. Irenaeus based his view on the "we" passages in Acts, five sections where the author changed from the third person ("he/she" and "they") to first-person plural ("we") as he narrated the action ([16:10-17](#); [20:5-15](#); [21:1-18](#); [27:1-29](#); [28:1-16](#)). Irenaeus and many scholars since his time have interpreted these passages to mean that the author of Acts was one of the eyewitness companions of Paul. Luke fits this description better than any other candidate, especially given the similar themes between the Gospel of Luke and the book of Acts.

Background: The date of composition of the book of Acts is to a large extent directly tied to the issue of authorship. A number of scholars have argued that Acts should be dated to the early 60s (at the time of Paul's imprisonment). Acts closes with Paul still in prison in Rome ([28:30-31](#)). Although it is possible that Luke wrote at a later date, a time when Paul had been released, it is more plausible to think that he completed this book while Paul was still in prison. Otherwise he would have ended the book by telling about Paul's release.

Message and Purpose

The book of Acts emphasizes the work of God through the Holy Spirit in the lives of people who devoted themselves to Jesus Christ, especially Paul as he led the Gentile missionary endeavor. It is no exaggeration to say that the Christian church was built through the dynamic power of the Spirit working through chosen vessels. Another important concept is the radial spread of the gospel from Jews to Gentiles, from Jerusalem to Judea, from Samaria and on to the rest of the world ([1:8](#)). Thus Christianity transformed from being a sect within Judaism to a world religion that eventually gained welcome everywhere, even in the heart of the pagan Roman Empire: Rome itself.

At the heart of the Christian movement was the work of the apostle Paul, a former skeptic who became Christianity's most vocal advocate. From his first appearance at the stoning of Stephen (where he concurred in the decision to stone Stephen for his Christian preaching), to his final appearance while imprisoned in his own rented house at Rome (where he was active in spreading the gospel even as he faced a death sentence), Paul's work on behalf of the gospel is evident at almost every turn as he proclaimed the good news before "Gentiles, kings, and the Israelites" ([9:15](#)).

The book of Acts provides biographical glimpses of a few of the early apostles as they spread the gospel first in Jerusalem and then on to the rest of the world. Peter, Philip, and a few others were responsible for the spread of the gospel to Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria. Paul was responsible for much of the rest of the world.

Paul's typical missionary strategy was to go to a familiar place in each city he visited, usually a synagogue, and proclaim the gospel first to local Jews. The speed with which he shifted his focus to Gentiles outside the synagogue depended on how Jews received him within the synagogue. Before leaving town, Paul united Jewish and Gentile converts alike to form a local church.

The early apostles are distinguished by their being filled by the Holy Spirit and empowered to proclaim the gospel under a variety of trying circumstances. These circumstances included theological, political, and physical oppression or a combination of these as they were marginalized, imprisoned, and stoned.

Nevertheless, through the power of the Holy Spirit they refused to stop proclaiming the message that the OT prophesied about a coming Savior which was fulfilled in the person and works of Jesus of Nazareth. As a result, many thousands of people in Jerusalem and abroad came to believe that the Lord Jesus was the Messiah, their one hope for salvation from their sins.

Contribution to the Bible

The book of Acts ties the other books of the NT together. It does so by first providing "the rest of the story" to the Gospels. The gospel and the message of the kingdom of God did not end with Jesus' ascension to heaven forty days after His resurrection, but continued on in the lives of His followers. Acts shows us how the words and promises of Jesus were carried out by the apostles and other believers through the power of the Holy Spirit. Second, the book of Acts gives us the context for much of the rest of the NT, especially the letters Paul wrote to the churches he had helped establish during his missionary journeys.

Structure

So far as literary form is concerned, the book of Acts is an ancient biography that focuses on several central characters, especially Peter and Paul. Ancient biography was not concerned simply with narrating events but with displaying the character of the people involved, especially their ethical behavior. Other features included genealogies and rhetorical elements such as speeches. Ancient biographies also commonly drew from both written and oral sources for information.

[Acts 1:8](#) provides the introduction and outline for the book. Once empowered by the Holy Spirit, the disciples proclaimed the gospel boldly in Jerusalem. As the book progresses, the gospel spread further into Judea and Samaria, and then finally into the outer reaches of the known world through the missionary work of Paul.

A.D. 33-37	A.D. 37-41	A.D. 41-49	A.D. 49-62
Jesus' trials, death, resurrection, and ascension Nisan 14-16 or April 3-5, 33	Paul returns to his native Tarsus. Summer 37-40	Claudius, Emperor of Rome 41-54	Paul and Silas take second missionary journey. 49-52
Pentecost 33	Caligula, Emperor of Rome 37-41	Believers respond to famine prophesied by Agabus. 44-47	Paul's third missionary journey 53-57
Saul's conversion on the Damascus Road October 34	Barnabas travels from Antioch of Syria to find Paul. Summer 40	Martyrdom of James, son of Zebedee 44	Paul's arrest in Jerusalem (57) and imprisonment at Caesarea 58-59
Paul's years in Arabia 34-37	Conversion of Cornelius and his family 40	Death of Herod Agrippa 44	Paul's journey to Rome late 59
Paul's first visit to Jerusalem following his conversion 37?	Barnabas and Saul serve together in Antioch. 41	Paul, Barnabas, and John Mark make first missionary journey. 47-49	Paul's house arrest in Rome 60-62

- HCSB Study Bible.

Introduction to Acts

We have with an abundant satisfaction seen the foundation of our holy religion laid in the history of our blessed Saviour, its great author, which was related and left upon record by four several inspired writers, who all agree in this sacred truth, and the incontestable proofs of it, that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. Upon this rock the Christian church is built. How it began to be built upon this rock comes next to be related in this book which we have now before us, and of this we have the testimony only of one witness; for the matters of fact concerning Christ were much more necessary to be fully related and attested than those concerning the apostles. Had Infinite Wisdom seen fit, we might have had as many books of the Acts of the Apostles as we have gospels, nay, as we might have had gospels: but, for fear of over-burdening the world ([John 21:25](#)), we have sufficient to answer the end, if we will but make use of it. The history of this book (which was always received as a part of the sacred canon) may be considered.

I. As looking back to the preceding gospels, giving light to them, and greatly assisting our faith in them. The promises there made we here find made good, particularly the great promises of the descent of the Holy Ghost, and his wonderful operations, both on the apostles (whom here in a few days we find quite other men than what the gospels left them; no longer weak-headed and weak-hearted, but able to say that which then they were not able to bear ([John 16:12](#)) as bold as lions to face those hardships at the thought of which they then trembled as lambs), and also with the apostles, making the word mighty to the pulling down of Satan's strong holds, which had been before comparatively preached in vain. The commission there granted to the apostles we here find executed, and the powers there lodged in them we here find exerted in miracles wrought on the bodies of people-miracles of mercy, restoring sick bodies to health and dead bodies to life-miracles of judgment,

striking rebels blind or dead; and much greater miracles wrought on the minds of people, in conferring spiritual gifts upon them, both of understanding and utterance; and this in pursuance of Christ's purposes, and in performance of his promises, which we had in the gospels. The proofs of Christ's resurrection with which the gospels closed are here abundantly corroborated, not only by the constant and undaunted testimony of those that conversed with him after he arose (who had all deserted him, and one of them denied him, and would not otherwise have been rallied again but by his resurrection, but must have been irretrievably dispersed, and yet by that were enabled to own him more resolutely than ever, in defiance of bonds and deaths), but by the working of the Spirit with that testimony for the conversion of multitudes to the faith of Christ, according to the word of Christ, that his resurrection, the sign of the prophet Jonas, which was reserved to the last, should be the most convincing proof of his divine mission. Christ had told his disciples that they should be his witnesses, and this book brings them in witnessing for him,-that they should be fishers of men, and here we have them enclosing multitudes in the gospel-net,-that they should be the lights of the world, and here we have the world enlightened by them; but that day-spring from on high the first appearing of which we there discerned we here find shining more and more. The corn of wheat, which there fell to the ground, here springs up and bears much fruit; the grain of mustard-seed there is here a great tree; and the kingdom of heaven, which was then at hand, is here set up. Christ's predictions of the virulent persecutions which the preachers of the gospel should be afflicted with (though one could not have imagined that a doctrine so well worthy of all acceptance should meet with so much opposition) we here find abundantly fulfilled, and also the assurances he gave them of extraordinary supports and comforts under their sufferings.

- Matthew Henry's Commentary

Text:

Acts 1:1-2 (NASB)

¹ *The first account I composed, Theophilus, about all that Jesus began to do and teach,*

² *until 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.*

The book of Acts begins with the outpouring of the promised Holy Spirit and the commencement of the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

As you read Acts, put yourself in the place of the disciples: Identify with them as they are filled with the Holy Spirit, and experience the thrill of seeing thousands respond to the gospel message. Sense their commitment as they give every ounce of talent and treasure to Christ. And as you read, watch the Spirit-led boldness of these first-century believers, who through suffering and in the face of death take every opportunity to tell of their crucified and risen Lord. Then decide to be a twenty-first-century version of those men and women of God.

- Life Application Study Bible.

Acts I

I: 1, 2. A NARRATIVE of Jesus of Nazareth, designed to convince men that he is the Christ, would most naturally begin with his birth and terminate with his ascension to heaven. Such was the “former narrative” which Luke had addressed to Theophilus, and he alludes to it as such in introducing his present work: (1) *“The former treatise I composed, O Theophilus, concerning all that Jesus began both to do and to teach, (2) until the day in which, having given commandment through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen, he was taken up.”*

This reference to his former narrative is most appropriate in its place, inasmuch as the one now undertaken is based entirely upon it. **The specific reference to “the day in which, having given commandment through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen, he was taken up” is still more in point, from the fact that all the authority which the apostles had for the labors Luke is about to narrate was derived from the commandment given on that day. The history of that day furnishes but one commandment then given, which was the apostolic commission. In this commission, then, Luke locates the starting point of his present narrative.**

During the personal ministry of Jesus, he authorized no human being to announce his Messiahship. On the contrary, whenever he discovered a disposition to do so, he uniformly forbade it, and this not only to various recipients of his healing power, but to the apostles themselves. When Peter made the memorable confession, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God,” we are told that, at the close of the conversation, “he charged his disciples that they should tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ.” Such was his uniform injunction on similar occasions. Even when Peter, James, and John had witnessed his transfiguration, and heard God himself proclaim him his Son, as they came down from the mount, “Jesus charged them, saying, Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man is risen from the dead.”

This stern prohibition, quite surprising to most readers of the New Testament, may be accounted for... in the mental and moral condition of the disciples themselves. Their crude conceptions of the Messiahship, their gross misconception of the nature of the expected Kingdom, their misunderstanding of much that he had taught them, and their imperfect remembrance of that which they had understood, rendered them incapable of presenting his claims truthfully, not to say infallibly, to the world. Moreover, their faith had not, as yet, acquired the strength necessary to the endurance of privations and persecutions. While laboring under these defects, they were most wisely prohibited from preaching that he was the Christ.

The command quoted by Mark, “Preach the gospel to every creature,” necessarily comes first. The command, “Disciple all nations,” is next in order; for it is by means of preaching that they were to make disciples. But when a man is made a disciple he becomes a *believer*; and Matthew and Mark agree in the statement that he who *believes*, or in Matthew's style, he who is *discipled*, is then to be *immersed*. Luke, however, says that *repentance* must be preached, and as repentance precedes obedience, we are compelled to unite it with faith, as antecedent to immersion. Next after immersion comes Mark's statement, “he shall be saved.” But salvation may be either that which the pardoned sinner now enjoys, or that to be enjoyed after the resurrection from the dead: hence this term would be ambiguous but for Luke's version of it, who quotes that “*remission of sins*” is to be preached. This limits the meaning of the promise to that salvation which consists in remission of sins. Next after this comes the command, “teaching them to observe and do” what I have commanded you. Finally, they were to proclaim that they who believed not, and, consequently, complied not with the terms of the commission, should be condemned. In brief, they were commanded to go into all the world, and make

disciples of all nations by preaching the gospel to every creature; to immerse all penitent believers into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, promising such the remission of their sins; then teaching them all their duties and privileges, as disciples of Jesus. In the mean time, all were to be assured that he who believed not should be condemned.

Making this commission the starting point of his narrative, Luke proceeds, after a few more preliminary observations, to relate the manner in which it was executed. This is the key to the whole narrative. We will find the apostles adhering strictly to its guidance. Their actions will furnish a complete counterpart to the items of their commission, and the best exposition of its meaning. For the strongest confirmation of the brief exposition just given, we refer to the course of the narrative as set forth in the following pages.

- J. W. McGarvey's A Commentary on Acts of Apostles

Luke's Aim in Writing (per John Piper)

He wrote the Gospel According to Luke, and the Acts of the Apostles. And **his immediate purpose in writing them was to help a man named Theophilus see the truth about what Jesus did and taught and how the church spread throughout the Roman world.** It may help to see this first-hand. In **Luke 1:3–4** he writes:

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, that you may know the truth concerning the things of which you have been informed.

Then in **Acts 1:1** Luke refers back to the gospel and says:

In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach.

Theophilus is probably some kind of Roman official because of the title "most excellent" which Luke uses only for Roman officials like Felix (**Acts 23:26**) and Festus (**Acts 26:25**), the governors of Judea.

Theophilus had some knowledge of Jesus and the church, but it was not clear and certain and complete. Luke's aim was to give him a faithful account of what Jesus did and said and then of the progress of the church in the world.

Just the Beginning of Jesus' Deeds and Teaching

Verse 1: *"In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach until the day when he was taken up."*

The key word for understanding the relevance of the book of Acts is the word "began." Luke says, "In the first book—in the gospel—I dealt with all that Jesus BEGAN to do and to teach until his Ascension into heaven after his resurrection."

The gospel of Luke ends (in **Luke 24:51–53) with the Ascension of Jesus into heaven. And Luke says that the story he told, ending with the ascension of Jesus into heaven, was the BEGINNING of the teaching ministry of Jesus. It was the BEGINNING of the deeds of Jesus.**

The Finality of the Work of Jesus

Now I don't want to minimize the finality—the once-for-allness—of the saving work of Jesus on the cross and in his resurrection. **Hebrews 10:12** says, "When Christ had offered FOR ALL TIME a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God." When Jesus cried "It is finished," the debt was paid, the sins were covered, the wrath was removed and Satan was mortally wounded. I don't want to minimize the glorious once-for-allness of that in any way.

Yet Only the Beginning of Jesus' Work

But I do want to stress what Luke says here—that what Jesus did on the earth in his tough, compassionate, loving, healing deeds and what he said on the earth in his truthful, authoritative, convicting, comforting teaching was only the beginning of his doing and his teaching. This is absolutely crucial for understanding the purpose of the book of Acts and who we are as a church and what this age is all about. Because the clear implication is that NOW—now that Jesus is seated at the right hand of the Father—he is NOT finished. He is not done with his work and with his teaching. He is not dead and he is not absent. He is alive and he is present. He is doing and he is teaching.

The incarnation of the Son of God into human flesh, the once-for-all sacrifice of himself for sin on the cross, the mighty resurrection and Ascension to the Father's right hand is just the BEGINNING of what Jesus came to do and to teach. And the rest of what he came to do, he does NOW in this age until the time appointed by the Father for the consummation of all things. That is the point of the book of Acts and that is why we exist as a church and that is what this age is all about.

The book of Acts is not just the acts of the apostles; it is the acts of the risen, living, enthroned Jesus. He said in Matthew 16, "I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." This is Luke's point. Jesus began his doing and teaching until he was taken up to heaven. Now he goes on completing his doing and teaching—he goes on building his church just like he said he would.

Illustrated in Paul's Ministry

Let me illustrate this from Paul's ministry. Paul is one of the main human heroes of the book of Acts. Half the book could be called the Acts of Paul. But listen to what was really happening in the ministry of Paul (**from Romans 15:18–19**):

I will not venture to speak of anything except what CHRIST HAS WORKED THROUGH ME to win obedience from the Gentiles, by word and deed, by the power of signs and wonders, by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Whatever Paul accomplished for the kingdom, it was Jesus doing and teaching. Note the same pair of words: Christ worked through me "by word and deed." Jesus is speaking and acting. He is alive, and he is building his church. That is what the book of Acts is about. And that is why it is so relevant for us today. Jesus is still alive. He will always be alive! He is still speaking and working. He is building his church, wherever people come under the authority of his name and receive his forgiveness for sins and trust his power. That is what we long to see happen more and more in this city and among all the unreached peoples of the world.

What's Needed to Be Living Instruments of Jesus?

So we turn now to verses 2 and 3 and ask this question: **What does Jesus give to people so that they become his fellow workers and fellow speakers in building his church in the world until he comes?**

Or: What do people need in order to be the instruments of the living Jesus today? There are three things mentioned in verses 2 and 3 and a fourth thing mentioned in verses 4–5, namely, the baptism of the Holy Spirit. I am going to save that for **next week** and deal only with the three things in verses 2–3 today.

What did Jesus give to the apostles so that they could be his instruments as he moved through the Roman world spreading his reign? And how much of this might apply to us?

A Commission or Command Through the Holy Spirit

First, He gave them a commission or a command.

Verse 2, "[I dealt with all that Jesus began to do and to teach] until the day when he was taken up, after he had given commandment through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen."

To be the instrument of Jesus as He works and speaks in the world, **the apostles needed a command, or commission, or an authorization that came with the authentication of the Holy Spirit. When Luke says that he gave them command through the Holy Spirit, it might mean simply that Jesus was prompted by the Holy Spirit to give the Great Commission to preach (**Acts 10:42**;**

Luke 24:47) and make disciples (**Matthew 28:19**). But I think Luke means for this to have relevance for the way the apostles themselves received the command, not just the way Jesus thought of it.

John 20:21–22:

(Notice the role of the Holy Spirit here)

Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so send I you." [There's the commissioning.] And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit."

Doesn't that sound like a situation which Luke might describe as giving commandment through the Holy Spirit? Some people say this is a kind of acted-out parable of what would happen at Pentecost when the Holy Spirit filled the apostles (**Acts 2:4**). But the more I think about the freedom and variety of the work of the Holy Spirit, the less I feel constrained to see this as a parabolic action. Why can we not simply say that when Jesus breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit," there was a real ministry of the Holy Spirit in the lives of the apostles for that moment and that situation and for the understanding and appropriation and processing of that commission?

That is what I suggest Luke means when he says that Jesus gave them a commandment through the Holy Spirit. It was through the ministry of the Holy Spirit that he spoke, and through the ministry of the Holy Spirit

that they received, the word of commission. The Spirit helped them in those days before Pentecost to understand the command (**Luke 24:45**) and to accept the command and to be glad with the command (**Luke 24:52**). And this in no way contradicts that on the day of Pentecost something more happened, something deeply empowering for the fulfillment of the commission that Jesus had given them through the Holy Spirit. We will talk about that next week (1:4–5).

So to be the instrument of Jesus as he works and speaks in the world, the first thing the apostles needed was a commission that came with the authentication of the Holy Spirit. That's the point of verse 2.

We Need Much of What the Apostles Had

Now, I affirm that we do not stand in the place of the apostles. They were unique in the history of redemption. They had unique face-to-face contact with the living Christ (**Acts 10:41!**). They had unique inspiration and authority as the foundation of the church (**Ephesians 2:20**). But that doesn't mean we don't need much of what they had. We do—especially if we are going to be instruments in the hands of the living Jesus who today continues working and teaching to build his church.

We need a Spirit-authenticated commission on our lives from the living Christ. We need a deep mind-persuading, heart-gripping verification that Jesus is alive and triumphant over all his enemies, and that his cause is unstoppable. And we need to understand the kingdom of God and how it came, and how it is now coming, and how it will come.

And my prayer is that in this series of messages on the book of Acts Jesus himself will speak and act and give us just what we need to be the instruments of his power in the world. AMEN.

- John Piper

Acts 1:1-2 Commentary:

[ACTS 1](#) INTRODUCES many themes that are important to the whole book: Jesus' life and ministry, his sufferings as a fact predicted in the Old Testament, the importance of and evidence for the resurrection, the importance and power of the Holy Spirit, the priority of witness, the Great Commission with its scope extending to the ends of the earth, the missionary attitude as opposed to parochialism, the kingdom of God, the importance of truth and of Scripture in the Christian life, the role of the apostles, the ascension and second coming of Christ, and the importance of prayer and fellowship. As such it is a key to understanding the book of Acts. Because of this we will devote comparatively more space to it even though it is one of the shorter chapters.

The Former Book ([1:1-2a](#))

THE OPENING SECTION of Acts contains a prologue along with a historical introduction. The author begins by referring to his "former book," gives the name of the recipient (Theophilus), and summarizes the contents of the earlier book (the Gospel of Luke). Theophilus means "friend of God" or "loved by God," but it is unlikely, as some (e.g., Origen) have suggested, that this name is a symbol for an anonymous person or group of people. This particular name was in use at that time, and the description of Theophilus as "most excellent" (see [Luke 1:3](#)) suggests that a real person is meant. "Most excellent" could suggest that a high government official is being addressed, but that is not a necessary inference as it was also used as a "form of polite address." In those days, it was common for books to be dedicated to distinguished persons.

If Luke's first volume describes "all that Jesus *began* to do and to teach *until* the day he was taken up to heaven," we can assume that this second volume describes what he *continued* to do and to teach (through his Spirit) *after* he was taken up. Luke uses the word "all" in both the Gospel and Acts in a general way that the context must define. Thus, "we cannot assume he meant his Gospel to be any more exhaustive than Acts."

Teaching and Instructions Before the Ascension ([1:2b-8](#))

IN THE FORTY days before Jesus' ascension, his primary ministry related to the truth of the gospel ([vv. 2b-3](#)). (1) He gave "instructions ... to the apostles" ([v. 2](#)). The verb for instructing (*entellomai*) has the idea of commanding or giving orders. This must refer to the commands given in [verses 4](#) and [8](#) not to leave Jerusalem until the Spirit comes and to preach the gospel to the ends of the earth (cf. [Luke 24:46-48](#)). These instructions were given "through the Holy Spirit" ([v. 2](#)), which introduces a key theme of Acts: All Christian ministry depends on the activity of the Spirit in the minister and in the ones ministered to.

Teaching and revival. From what we read in [verses 2-5](#), we can infer that one of the key ways Jesus prepared his apostles for the revival that followed at Pentecost was to give them sound teaching. The place of biblical teaching in revival has been debated, and sometimes great outpourings of revival have been criticized for being low on preaching and teaching the Word. This was not the case with Peter's speech at Pentecost, and several spiritual awakenings have been recorded where the Word was uncompromisingly taught. Whatever may have happened *during* a revival, it is well established that, as in Acts, Bible teaching has always been done *before* a revival. The great historian of revival, J. Edwin Orr, has said that a theological awakening must precede a revival of religion.

Dr. John Mackay writes, "First the enlightened mind, then the burning heart. First a revival of theological insights, and then the revival we need."

This is what happened under King Josiah when a newly discovered Book of the Law was read and a mighty revival was sparked (2 Kings 22-23). The principle we glean, then, is that if we wish to prepare for revival today, we must be faithful in teaching the Word to our people.

The Holy Spirit and mission. This passage shows us how important the Holy Spirit is to our understanding of mission and how important mission is to our understanding of the Holy Spirit ([vv. 2, 5, 8](#)). The rest of the book of Acts expounds this theme.

Contemporary Significance

QUOTE: INTEGRATING THE OBJECTIVE and the subjective. How difficult we find integrating the subjective and the objective aspects of Christianity today. The early church, therefore, challenges us here.

We have churches that are "strong on the Bible" but which show little vitality because they suffer from a dead orthodoxy. Segments of the evangelical movement were for many years weak on the experiential aspects of the faith, especially when it came to evangelism—until the charismatic movement burst into the scene.

This may well explain why, until recently, the gospel made such little inroads in Asia, despite years of missionary activity. Asia has a rich heritage of spirituality, and it found the rational and activist evangelical message unappealing and unfulfilling. Throughout the history of the church there were movements—like the charismatic, the Wesleyan holiness, and the Moravian movements—that brought back the subjective aspects of the basic Christian gospel. But often these churches lacked solid biblical teaching. I believe we are presently seeing, in far too many evangelical churches, a reaction to the dry orthodoxy of the earlier generations that is dangerously influenced by the postmodern mood of our day (see next section), which emphasizes the subjective at the expense of the objective.

Yet the history of the church is studded with beautiful examples of Christian leaders and movements that integrated the warm heart and the sound mind. From earlier centuries I think of the apostle Paul, Origen, John Chrysostom, St. Augustine, the Puritans, Blasé Pascal, John Wesley, Jonathan Edwards, and Charles Finney. In our century I can think of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, E. Stanley Jones, Martyn Lloyd-Jones, J. I. Packer, Jack Hayford, Henri Nouwen, and John Piper. It would be good for us to linger with these giants so that something of their ability to integrate the warm heart and the sound mind might rub off on us.

However, we find it difficult to linger with such people because the demands of our rushed and specialized age make this difficult. The integration we are talking about

comes from grappling with many areas of life at the same time, and that is difficult in our specialized world. We prefer to have our specialist scholars and specialist spiritual writers. As long as we permit such fragmentation of truth, we are going to have an anemic church that does not know the depth of what it means to know God out of a foundation of objective reality and an experience of deep spirituality. From [Acts 1](#), then, we can infer that the ideal Christian teaching is done by Spirit-empowered individuals whose teaching is grounded on the objective facts of the gospel and should result in evangelism.

Truth and the postmodern mood. [Verses 2-3](#) show us what an important place truth has in Christianity. But each of the three statements there runs counter to the thinking of what may be called the postmodern mood of the day. The onset of the postmodern era has been placed by different scholars at dates ranging from the early 1970s to the early 1990s. Some of its characteristics will emerge in the discussion below.

(1) We said that **the "instructions through the Holy Spirit" given by Jesus ([v. 2](#)) were primarily about the Great Commission—to make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them and teaching them ([Matt. 28:19-20](#)).** Christ promised that such a ministry would result in people leaving their other religions in order to follow him. **But this command runs directly counter to religious pluralism,** which is a key postmodern emphasis. According to pluralism, no ideology can claim to possess absolute truth; all the religions are more or less equals in the universe of faiths. Veith points out that while modernists argued in various ways that Christianity is not true, postmodernists do not argue

this way. Their main objection is to the Christian claim to have the only ultimate truth.

Postmodernists are eager to share their beliefs with others so that people can learn from them. But as they see it, no group should attempt to convert others to their side out of a belief that they possess absolute truth. Yet this is precisely what Christians aim to do. Therefore two questions have become important for contemporary Christians: "Why do we still hold to the uniqueness of the Christian gospel?" and, "Why do we still proclaim Christ in this pluralistic age?"

- NIV Application Commentary,

The work of Jesus Christ is both finished and unfinished. His great work of providing redemption is finished, and nothing may be added to it (cf. [John 17:4](#)). His work of ministry and proclamation, however, is not finished. That work He only started. Along with the other gospels, **the first account composed** by Luke for **Theophilus** (the gospel of Luke), records **all that Jesus *began to do and teach*** during His life on earth. The rest of the New Testament describes the continuation of His work by the early church. We are still finishing it until He comes.

Christ's work of redemption is completed, and the church's work of evangelism begins. Acts chronicles the initial stages and features of that unfinished work, and sets the path the church is to follow until the end.

As the book of Acts begins, an important transition takes place. During His ministry on earth, the work of preaching and teaching was done primarily by our Lord Himself as He trained His disciples. Now it is time to pass that responsibility on to the apostles, before He ascends to the Father. The burden of proclaiming repentance and the good news of forgiveness to a lost world will rest squarely on their shoulders. The apostles will also be responsible for teaching the truths of the faith to the church.

The Message

The first account I composed, Theophilus, about all that Jesus began to do and teach, until the day when He was taken up, after He had by the Holy Spirit given orders to the apostles whom He had chosen.
([1:1-2](#))

As already noted, **the first account** refers to Luke's gospel, which he **composed** for **Theophilus** (see the Introduction for further details). That **account** was largely concerned with the earthly life and ministry of our Lord, revealing **all that Jesus began to do and teach, until the day when He was taken up**. From the inception of His earthly ministry until His ascension, Jesus had instructed His disciples by both deed and word. His miracles were to strengthen their faith; His parables were to clarify spiritual truth for them; His teaching was to formulate their theology. He revealed to them the truth they would need to carry on His work.

It is axiomatic that those who would carry the message of Christ to the world must know what that message is. There must be an accurate understanding of the content of Christian truth before any ministry can be effective. Such knowledge is foundational to spiritual power and to fulfilling the church's mission. The lack of it is insurmountable and devastating to the evangelistic purpose of God.

The apostle Paul was so concerned about this that it was central to his desire for all believers. In [Ephesians 1:18-19a](#) he wrote, "I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe."

To the Philippians he wrote, "This I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve the things that are excellent, in order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ" ([Phil. 1:9-10](#)).

Paul's prayer for the Colossians eloquently expresses his longing that all believers be mature in knowledge:

For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you may walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience. ([Col. 1:9-11](#))

In [2 Timothy 2:15](#), Paul charged Timothy, "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth." Then he challenged his son in the faith to teach sound truth to others (cf. [1 Tim. 4:6, 11, 16; 6:2b, 3, 20, 21; 2 Tim. 1:13, 14; 2:2; 3:16, 17; 4:1-4](#)).

The writer of Hebrews rebuked some of his readers' ignorance of the truth: "For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food" ([Heb. 5:12](#)).

Mere factual knowledge, of course, was powerless to save those Hebrews, or anyone else, unless it was believed and appropriated. In [Matthew 23:2-3](#), Jesus warned against imitating the hypocritical Pharisees: "The scribes and the Pharisees have seated themselves in the chair of Moses; therefore all that they tell you, do and observe, but do not do according to their deeds; for they say things, and do not do them." Jesus set the pattern of consistency in behaving and proclaiming because, as Luke observed, He **began** both to **do** as well as to **teach**. He perfectly lived the truth He taught. - **John MacArthur**

Greek Strong's Number: 652

Greek Word: [ἀπόστολος](#)

Transliteration: apostolos

Phonetic Pronunciation: [ap-os'-tol-os](#)

Root: from [<G649>](#)

Cross Reference: TDNT - 1:407,67

Part of Speech: n m

Vine's Words: [Apostle](#), [Apostleship](#), [Messenger](#)

Usage Notes:

English Words used in KJV:

apostle 78

messenger 2

he that is sent 1

[Total Count: 81]

from [<G649>](#) (apostello); a *delegate*; specially an *ambassador* of the Gospel; officially a *commissioner* of Christ [*“apostle”*] (with miraculous powers) :- apostle, messenger, he that is sent.

Greek Strong's Number: 1586

Greek Word: [ἐκλέγω](#)

Transliteration: eklegō

Phonetic Pronunciation: [ek-leg'-om-ahee](#)

Root: middle voice from [<G1537>](#) and [<G3004>](#) (in its primary sense)

Cross Reference: TDNT - 4:144,505

Part of Speech: v

Vine's Words: [Choice](#), [Choose](#), [Chosen](#)

Usage Notes:

English Words used in KJV:

choose 19

choose out 1

make choice 1

[Total Count: 21]

middle from [<G1537>](#) (ek) and [<G3004>](#) (lego) (in its primary sense);
to *select* :- make choice, choose (out), chosen.

- Strong's Talking Greek & Hebrew Dictionary.

“Choice” (chosen)

Usage Number: A-1

Part Of Speech: Verb

Strong's Number: [<G1586>](#)

Original Word: [ἐκλέγω](#), *eklegō*

Usage Notes: "to pick out, select," means, in the Middle Voice, "to choose for oneself," not necessarily implying the rejection of what is not chosen, but "choosing" with the subsidiary ideas of kindness of favor or love, [Mark 13:20](#); [Luke 6:13](#); [Luke 9:35](#) (RV); [Luke 10:42](#); [Luke 14:7](#); [John 6:70](#); [John 13:18](#); [John 15:16, 19](#); [Acts 1:2, 24](#); [Acts 6:5](#); [Acts 13:17](#); [Acts 15:22, 25](#); in [Acts 15:7](#) it is rendered "made choice;" [1 Cor. 1:27, 28](#); [Eph. 1:4](#); [Jas. 2:5](#).

- Vine's Expository Dictionary

Verse 1. *The former treatise.* The former book. The Gospel by Luke is here evidently intended. Greek, "the former *logos*," meaning a discourse, or a narrative.

O Theophilus. [Luke 1:3](#). As this book was written to the same individual as the former, it was evidently written with the same design to furnish an authentic and full narrative of events concerning which there would be many imperfect and exaggerated accounts given. See [Luke 1:1-4](#). As these events pertained to the descent of the Spirit, to the spread of the gospel, to the organization of the church by inspired authority, to the kind of preaching by which the church was collected and organized; and as those events were a full proof of the truth and power of the Christian religion, and would be a model for ministers and the church in all future times, it was of great importance that a fair and full narrative of them should be preserved. Luke was the companion of Paul in his travels, and was an eye-witness of no small part of the transactions recorded in this book. See [Acts 16:10,17](#), [20:1-6](#), [27](#), [28](#). As an eye-witness, he was well qualified to make a record of the leading events of the primitive church. And as he was the companion of Paul, he had every opportunity of obtaining information about the great events of the gospel of Christ.

Began both to do, etc. This is a Hebrew form of expression, meaning the same thing as that Jesus *did* and *taught*. See [Genesis 9:20](#), "Noah *began* to be an husbandman," i.e. *was* an husbandman. [Genesis 12:3](#), in the Septuagint: "Which God *began* to create and make;" in the Hebrew, "which God created and made." [Mark 6:7](#), "*Began* to send them forth by two and two," i.e. sent them forth. See also [Mark 10:32](#), [14:65](#), "And some *began* to spit on him;" in the parallel place in [Matthew 26:67](#), "they *did* spit in his face."

To do. This refers to his miracles and his acts of benevolence, including all that he did for man's salvation. It probably includes, therefore, his sufferings, death, and resurrection, as a part of what he has *done* to save men.

To teach. His doctrines. He had given an account of what the Lord Jesus did, so he was now about to give a narrative of what his apostles did in the same cause, that thus the world might be in possession of an inspired record respecting the redemption and establishment of the Christian church. The history of these events is one of the greatest blessings that God has conferred on mankind; and one of the highest privileges which men can enjoy is that which has been conferred so abundantly on this age in the possession and extension of the word of God.

Verse 2. *Until the day.* The fortieth day after his resurrection, [Acts 1:3](#), [Luke 24:51](#).

In which he was taken up. In which he ascended to heaven. He was taken up into a cloud, and is represented as having been borne or carried to heaven, [Acts 1:9](#).

Through the Holy Ghost. **To understand this, it is necessary to call to mind the promise that Jesus made before his death, that after his departure, the Holy Ghost would descend to be a guide to his**

apostles. See [John 16:7-11](#), [John 16:7](#). It was to be *his* office to carry forward the work of redemption in applying it to the hearts of men. Whatever was done, therefore, *after* the atonement and resurrection of Jesus, *after* he had finished his great work, was to be regarded as under the peculiar influence and direction of the Holy Ghost. Even the instructions of Jesus, his commission to the apostles, etc., were to be regarded as coming within the department of the sacred Spirit, within the province of *his* peculiar work. The instructions were given by Divine authority, by infallible guidance, and as a part of the work which the Holy Spirit designed. Under that Spirit the apostles were to go forth; by *his* aid they were to convert the world, to organize the church, to establish its order and its doctrines. And hence the entire work was declared to be by his direction. Though in his larger and more mighty influences, the Spirit did not descend until the day of Pentecost, [Luke 24:49](#); comp. [Acts 2](#) yet in *some measure* his influence was imparted to them before the ascension of Christ, [John 20:22](#).

Had given commandments. Particularly the command to preach the gospel to all nations, [Matthew 28:19](#), [Mark 16:15-19](#). It may be worthy of remark, that the word **commandments, as a noun in the plural number, does not occur in the original. The single word which is translated "had given commandments" is a participle, and means simply *having commanded*. There is no need, therefore, of supposing that there is reference here to any other command than to that great and glorious injunction to preach the gospel to every creature. That was a command of so much importance as to be worthy of a distinct record, as constituting the sum of all that the Saviour taught them after his resurrection.**

The apostles. The eleven that remained after the treason and death of Judas.

Whom he had chosen. [Matthew 10](#); [Luke 6:12-16](#).

(*) "Until the day" [Acts 1:9](#), [Luke 24:51](#), [1 Timothy 3:16](#)

(*) "commandments unto the apostles" [Matthew 28:19](#), [Mark 16:15-19](#)

- Barnes' Notes on the New Testament.

[Acts 1:1-2](#)

In these verses,

I. Theophilus is put in mind, and we in him, of **St. Luke's gospel**, which **it will be of use for us to cast an eye upon before we enter upon the study of this book**, that we may not only see how this begins where that breaks off, but that, as in water face answers to face, so do the acts of the apostles to the acts of their Master, the acts of his grace.

1. **His patron, to whom he dedicates this book (I should rather say his pupil, for he designs, in dedicating it to him, to instruct and direct him, and not to crave his countenance or protection), is Theophilus, [v. 1](#). In the epistle dedicatory before his gospel, he had called him most excellent Theophilus; here he calls him no more than O Theophilus; not that he had lost his excellency, nor that it was diminished and become less illustrious; but perhaps he had now quitted his place, whatever it was, for the sake of which that title was given him,-or he was now grown into years, and despised such titles of respect more than he had done,-or Luke was grown more intimate with him, and therefore could address him with the**

more freedom. It was usual with the ancients, both Christian and heathen writers, thus to inscribe their writings to some particular persons. But the directing some of the books of the scripture so is an intimation to each of us to receive them as if directed to us in particular, to us by name; for whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning.

2. His gospel is here called the former treatise which he had made, which he had an eye to in writing this, intending this for a continuation and confirmation of that, *ton prōton logon*-the former word. What is written of the gospel is the word as truly as what was spoken; nay, **we now know no unwritten word that we are to give credit to, but as it agrees with that which is written. He made the former treatise, and now is divinely inspired to make this,** for Christ's scholars must go on towards perfection, [Hebrews 6:1](#). And therefore their guides must help them on, must still teach the people knowledge ([Ecclesiastes 12:9](#)), and not think that their former labours, though ever so good, will excuse them from further labours; but they should rather be quickened and encouraged by them, as St. Luke here, who, because he had laid the foundation in a former treatise, will build upon it in this. Let not this therefore drive out that; let not new sermons and new books make us forget old ones, but put us in mind of them, and help us to improve them.

3. The contents of his gospel were that, all that, which Jesus began both to do and teach; and the same is the subject of the writings of the other three evangelists. Observe,

(1.) Christ both did and taught. The doctrine he taught was confirmed by the miraculous works he did, which proved him a teacher come from God ([John 3:2](#)); and the duties he taught were copied out in the holy gracious works he did, for he hath left us an example, and that such as proves him a teacher come from God

too, for by their fruits you shall know them. Those are the best ministers that both do and teach, whose lives are a constant sermon.

(2.) He began both to do and teach; he laid the foundation of all that was to be taught and done in the Christian church. His apostles were to carry on and continue what he began, and to do and teach the same things. Christ set them in, and then left them to go on, but sent his Spirit to empower them both to do and teach. It is a comfort to those who are endeavouring to carry on the work of the gospel that Christ himself began it. The great salvation at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, [Hebrews 2:3](#).

(3.) The four evangelists, and Luke particularly, have handed down to us all that Jesus began both to do and to teach; not all the particulars-the world could not have contained them; but all the heads, samples of all, so many, and in such variety, that by them we may judge of the rest. We have the beginnings of his doctrine ([Matthew 4:17](#)), and the beginnings of his miracles, [John 2:11](#). Luke had spoken, had treated, of all Christ's sayings and doings, had given us a general idea of them, though he had not recorded each in particular.

4. The period of the evangelical story is fixed to the day in which he was taken up, [v. 2](#). Then it was that he left this world, and his bodily presence was no more in it. St. Mark's gospel concludes with the Lord's being received up into heaven ([Mark 16:19](#)), and so does St. Luke's, [Luke 24:51](#).

Christ continued doing and teaching to the last, till he was taken up to the other work he had to do within the veil.

- Matthew Henry's Commentary

Biblical Flow

Old Testament: Creator Christ to Coming Christ

N.T. Gospels: Christ & Christianity

N.T. Acts: Christ & Church/Commission

N.T. Epistles: Christ & Clarification

N.T. Revelation: Christ & Closure