

## Acts: Introduction

### The Luke/Acts Connection:

- Author: Luke – a physician (educated, Greek vocabulary, excellent historian)
- Wrote the two books as a 2-volume collection
- Luke's Purpose?
  - Luke 1:1-4 *"Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have delivered them to us, 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 have certainty concerning the things you have been taught."*
    - Compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished
      - Delivered to Luke by:
        - Eyewitnesses
        - Ministers of the Word
        - Luke had 'followed all things closely for some time past'
          - Luke was a companion of the Apostle Paul for multiple years
          - Was present in Jerusalem for approx. 2 years during Paul's imprisonment
            - Had ample time to speak with/interview eyewitnesses to Jesus' life and ministry
    - Acts is one of the most comprehensive histories of its time
      - It has been heavily studied and scrutinized
        - Deemed highly accurate in terms of
          - Geography
          - Political figures and officials in different provinces and cities
          - Consistent with known historical events
    - Why this matters?
      - It means that our faith is not built on:
        - Myths
        - Fables

- It is a reliable and accurate account of real people, real places, and real events.
- Write an orderly account for “Theophilus”
  - Theo (God)
  - Philus (Loved by or Lover of)
- Theophilus was possibly an individual
  - A Christian believer
  - A ruler or authority
  - Some say: Paul’s defense before Caesar
- Theophilus could be a general description of any follower of Christ who reads the books
- Acts 1:1-2 - *“In the first book, **O 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 who He had chosen.*
  - Addressed to the same person/people
    - Acknowledges the “first book”
    - In the first book I have dealt with all that Jesus **BEGAN TO DO AND TEACH...**
      - In other words, what it described... including the resurrection and ascension of Christ, he does not consider the END of Jesus’ ministry... rather it was the beginning of it.
  - The Book of Acts is the record of how the work of Christ continued through His church by the power of the Holy Spirit

### The Bigger Picture:

- Ezekiel was a prophet 600 or more years before the life of Jesus and the events described in Acts
  - He prophesied in *Ezekiel 36:35-37 – “I will sprinkle clean water on you and you will be clean... And I will give you a new heart and a new spirit will I put within you. And I will remove your heart of stone and put in its place a heart of flesh. And I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes and obey My rules.”*
  - Acts describes the beginning of the fulfillment of this prophecy as:
    - God pours His Spirit out upon His Church
    - Changes them from the inside out

- And causes them to become fruitful in His commission for them on the earth
- There is an important principle in this:
  - The Church isn't built upon religious observance or experience.
  - The Church is built upon an internal transformation by the Spirit of God

### **The Roadmap for Acts:**

- Acts 1:7-8 – “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”
  - Acts 1 – Wait for the Spirit
  - Acts 2 – The Spirit Comes and the Church is empowered
  - Acts 3-7 – The Church grows in Jerusalem
  - Acts 8-12 – Persecution begins and the Church spreads outward
  - Acts 13-20 – Christ is reaching the nations through His Church
  - Acts 21-28 – Christ's Gospel reaches Rome

### **Lessons from Acts:**

- The Church is empowered by the Spirit
- God uses ordinary people
- Opposition doesn't stop God's Work... in fact it makes it more powerful
- Jesus is STILL the One leading His Church... His ministry continues

### **Reflection Questions:**

- Where in my life am I relying on myself (my own ability and power) rather than the Spirit?
- Am I staying busy “doing stuff”... or am I being truly led by the Spirit of God?
- Am I actually open to where God is leading?

### **Final Thought:**

- The exact same Holy Spirit promised in Ezekiel and poured out in Acts 2 is actively at work in His church today.