

Acts 1:1-11

A. Our faith is supported by well documented history (READ 1:1-2a)

1. Even though the book doesn't identify the author, there is no dispute that Luke is the author:
 - a. Luke wrote both the Gospel of Luke and Acts which make up 27% of the Bible
 - 1) Some of what he recorded in Acts was acquired through thorough research
 - 2) Much of it was from his own eye witness account
 - b. Based on Colossians 4:11-14 he was a Gentile and a physician which makes him the only Gentile author found in the Bible
 - c. He also appears to have been highly educated:
 - 1) His Greek vocabulary in the NT is extensive
 - 2) He has an excellent command of the Greek language, often appearing similar to classical Greek
 - 3) And, he had a vast knowledge of the Old Testament
 - 4) He never met Jesus during His earthly ministry and we know nothing of his conversion to Christ, but he traveled with Paul on his second and third missionary journeys, accompanied Paul to Rome, and was the only one who remained with Paul during his second imprisonment shortly before Paul was martyred (2 Timothy 4:11)
2. The text does reveal the recipient, however:
 - a. He was a man named Theophilus, and he was also the recipient of the Gospel of Luke
 - b. We know very little about him but Luke refers to him as "Most Excellent Theophilus" which has led some to conclude that he was a government official of some kind
 - c. However, that term was used to refer to anyone of high social status so he may have simply been a man of means or social importance
 - d. His name isn't specifically Jewish or Greek so it's not known if he was a Jew or a Gentile
 - e. It's also not known if he was saved, though it's clear from Luke's words in his Gospel that he had some knowledge of Jesus
 - f. The general consensus is that he was likely a god-fearing Gentile or a Jewish convert due to the amount of Scripture Luke includes in his Gospel and in Acts
3. This leads us to Luke's purpose in writing Acts:
 - a. The first thing we need to understand is that Acts is the second part of a two-volume set:
 - 1) Notice that Luke begins by referencing a "**first account**" which he had composed
 - 2) This is obviously a reference to the Gospel of Luke because he states it was "**about all that Jesus began to do and teach, until the day when He was taken up to heaven**" (1-2)
 - 3) Acts is the second account (or volume) and picks up where the Gospel of Luke left off and focuses on the founding and expansion of the Church (covers approx. 30 years)
 - b. Luke declares his purpose in writing these two volumes in his introduction to his Gospel (READ Luke 1:1-4):
 - 1) "**many**" others compiled their own accounts (might include Mark, Matthew, John), but Luke thought it "**fitting**" that he write his own "**orderly account**" (NET, ESV) based off his own careful investigation
 - 2) He relied on "**eyewitnesses and servants of the word**", as well as his own personal experience (mostly through Acts)

- 3) His purpose in writing the Gospel and Acts was so that Theophilus would “**know the exact truth about the things**” he had been taught (4)—So, Luke was providing the evidence or proof that Theophilus needed:
 - a) To either convince him to accept what he had been taught about Jesus
 - b) Or support what he had already come to accept
4. The amazing things about the Gospel and the history of the establishment of the Church is that they are not built upon religious myths, philosophy, human wisdom, wishful thinking or blind faith:
 - a. Rather, we have reliable historical documents, both Biblical and secular
 - b. We have eye-witnesses accounts of not only the events in the Gospels (READ 2 Peter 1:16-18) but Luke’s eyewitness testimony in Acts
 - c. We have archeological evidence
 - d. In other words, our faith is based on reliable, discoverable, and verifiable historical evidence

B. We have been commissioned and divinely empowered to witness Jesus Christ to the world (2b-8)

1. Luke informs Theophilus (and us) that in the 40 days between Jesus’s resurrection and His ascension, Jesus did two things (READ 2b-3):
 - a. He taught the Apostles about the kingdom of God
 - b. He gave them “**orders**” (commands)
 - c. These two go hand in hand as we see in Luke 24:44-48 (READ)—in summary:
 - 1) He opened their minds so they could understand the OT Scriptures
 - 2) He revealed how everything prophesied about Him in the OT had been fulfilled
 - 3) As a result, repentance and forgiveness of sins would now be preached to all nations
 - 4) They would be His witnesses who would now bring that good news to the nations (e.g. the orders)
2. Before they would set out on this mission, however, Jesus commanded them to wait in Jerusalem until God had fulfilled a very specific promise to them (READ 4-5):
 - a. The promise was that they would be “**baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.**”
 - b. Because of the reference to “**not many days from now**” we know that what Jesus described would take place at Pentecost
 - c. We will study the events of Pentecost in more depth in a couple of weeks, but for now I want to address two things related to the baptism with the Spirit:
 - 1) The first is, What is baptism of the Holy Spirit?
 - a) The Baptism with the Holy Spirit is mentioned a total of seven times in the NT but the first five of these don’t really tell us what baptism of the Holy Spirit is:
 - Only that all believers (Jews and Gentiles alike) will experience it
 - And that Jesus is the one Who does the baptizing with the Holy Spirit (Matthew 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33; Acts 1:5)
 - b) The two remaining verses provide us with our answer: Baptism with the Spirit is the moment at which we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit and become part of the body of Christ:

- 1 Corinthians 12:13: **“For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.”**—in this context and everywhere else in the Bible except Acts 8 this happens to every believer at conversion
 - Acts 11:15-17: **“And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them just as He did upon us at the beginning. 16 "And I remembered the word of the Lord, how He used to say, 'John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.' 17 "Therefore if God gave to them the same gift as He gave to us also after believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could stand in God's way?"**
 - It is the point at which we become **“partakers of the divine nature”** as Peter says in 2 Peter 1:4, and the point at which the Spirit takes up residence in us in order to empower and equip us to serve the body of Christ with special giftings or manifestations of the Spirit
- 2) The second thing I want to address regarding baptism with the Holy Spirit is, Why was it so important that the Apostles had to wait for it before beginning their mission (READ 6-8)?
- a) When Jesus instructed them to wait, they assumed they were simply going to wait for Him to restore the kingdom to Israel as promised in the OT
 - b) However, while God indeed has fixed a time to restore the kingdom to Israel, that time had not arrived (it will come when Christ returns)
 - c) Instead, between the ascension of Jesus and His return, the Apostles along with all of Christ’s disciples would serve as His witnesses, bringing the Gospel to the world
 - d) In order to do so, they/we would need divine help and it would come through the power of the Holy Spirit—so they needed to stay in Jerusalem and wait for Him to **“come upon”** them:
 - Reread v. 8
 - Read John 14:16-17, 25-26 and 16:5-15
3. Jesus not only commissioned the Church to be His witnesses until He returns, but He empowered us to carry out this mission by giving each one of us the Holy Spirit—this is seen in the major themes threaded through the book:
- a. Two of the most prominent themes are the preaching of Jesus as the Christ and the multiplication of disciples—this is our purpose/commission (see Matthew 28:16-20)
 - b. Another prominent theme—in fact, probably the most prominent—is the work of the Holy Spirit who is referred to 55 times (this amounts to over twice per chapter):
 - 1) Some have suggested Acts should be referred to as the Acts of the Holy Spirit
 - 2) While Peter, Paul and others get all the attention throughout Acts, it’s the Holy Spirit who is guiding, directing, empowering, convicting throughout the book:
 - a) He filled the Apostles at Pentecost and enable them to speak in different languages (2:4)
 - b) He emboldened Peter, Stephen, and Paul during their preaching, even when facing arrest, imprisonment, beatings, and even martyrdom (4:8, 31; 7:55-60)
 - c) He led Phillip to the Ethiopian eunuch and even snatched him up and transported him to another city (8:29)
 - d) He built up, comforted and caused the church to grow (9:31)

- e) He directed Peter to Caesarea and convicted the gentiles of the truth of the Gospel (10:19-47)
 - f) He set aside Paul and Barnabas for the mission to the gentiles (Acts 13:2)
 - g) He gave the Apostles the ability to heal people and perform miracles (13:52)
 - h) And this is only a few of the examples!
- c. What Luke provides for us throughout Acts is a reminder of what our mission should be as a Church and how the Holy Spirit guides, directs, and empowers us to carry out this mission

C. Our mission will not be complete until Christ returns (READ 1:9-11)

1. It's not all that shocking that we find the Apostles "gazing intently into the sky" as Jesus ascends into the clouds—after all, it must have been an amazing and almost unbelievable sight
2. However, the words of the two angels suggest a mild rebuke which is described by Darrell Bock in his commentary this way:

"The mild rebuke is express in the question, 'Why do you stand looking into heaven?' ...The idea is that they should not be surprised that the risen Jesus is lifted up into God's presence. His departure means that they now have work to do. Jesus's command means that they are not to give into the heavens idly, awaiting his return, but engage in the task Jesus has given them to do in the meantime." (p. 69)

3. There is something else here, though, and it's the promise that Jesus Christ will return and He will do so in the same way in which He ascended (see 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17; Revelation 1:7)
4. Our mission as the Church won't be completed until we see Him returning in the clouds to rapture His church and take us home

Conclusion

1. As we go through out study, we will see these three realities play out:
 - a. We will see how our faith is not some fairy tale, but the result of actual historical events
 - b. We will see how the Apostles and other believers risked their lives to bear witness to Jesus Christ in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and beyond, and how the Holy Spirit empowered them to do so
 - c. We will see how nothing but the return of Christ was going to stand in their way of completing this mission
2. One last thing and it relates to how we are going to approach the book--there are a variety of ways to outline the book:
 - a. The simplest outline is to see it somewhat thematically and primarily having two parts:
 - 1) Gospel spreading among the Jews and mostly Peter's ministry (1:12-7:60)
 - 2) Gospel spreading among the Gentiles and mostly Paul's ministry (8:1-28:31)
 - b. However, it appears Luke structured Acts to show how the events fulfilled the pattern of Jesus' command to the Apostles in 1:8:
 - 1) The Church begins in Jerusalem (1:12-7:60)
 - 2) The Church spreads to Judea and Samaria (8:1-9:31)

- 3) The Church expands to the “remotest parts of the earth” (e.g. Rome; 10:1-28:31)
- c. For our purposes, we are going to work through the book in three parts:
- 1) Acts 1:1-9:31 which covers the Gospel’s impact primarily among the Jews in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and the surrounding region
 - 2) Acts 10:1-21:16 which covers the Gospel’s spread to the Gentiles and Paul’s missionary journeys
 - 3) Acts 21:17-28:31 which covers Paul’s journey to Rome