

The Second Act

Acts 1:1-11

Introduction to The Acts of the Apostles...

_____, an educated man, a physician, and a first-rate historian, is the human author of **The Acts of the Apostles**, which is his **second great literary act**. **The first act** of his two-volume set is **The Gospel of Luke**, which gives the account of Jesus' birth, ministry, death, resurrection, and ascension. **Acts** picks up where his gospel ended, but with more detail leading up to the ascension, and then gives us the true account of the beginning of the early church and its unstoppable spread to all peoples—to Jews first, then to Samaritans, and finally to Gentiles.

Both books, **Act One** and **Act Two**, were written to a Gentile named Theophilus, but is intended by the Holy Spirit for all Christians of all times. In his Gospel account, Luke calls him, "*most excellent* Theophilus" (Luke 1:3), which suggests that he was an important Roman official who was converted to the faith. Likely Theophilus was Luke's sponsor who covered his expenses so he could research and write his two-volume set. The date of the writing of Acts was about 30-years after the Lord's ascension, around A.D. 62, shortly after he wrote Volume one.

Among all the NT books, Acts stands out as unique, for it is the only historical sequel to the Gospel accounts. It's the only book that describes the birth and expansion of the Church. The first church was exclusively Jewish, but God's intention was to save people from every nation. And in this account, Luke explains how following Jesus became a universal faith. In only about 30-years, Christianity spread from Jerusalem to Rome. Also, in this book, there's a great emphasis on God's sovereignty. In spite of intense opposition on every side, the Gospel of Jesus Christ and its acceptance spreads further and further out in the world. The church started in a little corner, and by God's sovereign power and direction, nothing could _____ it, as it spread from the Jews to the Gentiles, and from Jerusalem to Rome.

In Acts 1, we see what must take place before the Holy Spirit descends on the original disciples so that the church is miraculously breathed into existence. It's the bridge between the Gospel of Luke that records "all

that Jesus [in His human body] began to do and teach” (1) and Acts 2-28 that records all that He continued to do and teach through His spiritual _____, the church. Let’s begin today to bridge from the Gospels to the Acts of the Apostles. Before the church, it’s **first things first**.

First things first:

1. The _____ (1-3).

Verses 1-2: Already we see the sovereignty of God in **The Acts of the Apostles**—the apostles were sovereignly chosen.

Verse 3: *Tekmerion* in the Greek, translated, “convincing proofs,” is used only here in the NT, and it’s exceedingly important, because it means “that which causes something to be verified in a decisive way.” It refers to evidence that’s so overwhelmingly credible, that evidence could be effectively used a court trial. Jesus had to convincingly prove to His followers that His resurrection was real.

In order for them to move on with His work in the world, they had to know without a shadow that they were serving a risen Lord. Otherwise, they would have _____ mission and _____ message—there would be no Good News to share with the world.

Jesus convinced them many times over: He’s not the one who *was*; He’s the One who *is*. Which means the original disciples and you and I belong to the spiritual body of Christ that carries on the _____ and ministry of Jesus Christ. What He *began* in the Gospels, He continues working and teaching through His people, the Church!

2. The _____ (4-5).

Jesus ordered them to stay in enemy territory and wait for the promise the Father gave them through Him. **Jesus in John 16:7:** “I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper [the Holy Spirit] will not come to you. But if I go, *I will* send Him to you.” If Jesus remained in His physical body, He could only be in one place at one time. It was only in going away that He could fulfill His last word in **Matthew’s Gospel**, when He said, “Behold, I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (**28:20**). It was through the baptism of the Spirit that Jesus could keep that promise.

Baptism here means “to unite with.” When we are baptized by the Spirit at salvation, we are “united with Christ and Christ is united with us.” So everywhere we go, Jesus Christ goes with us. We are never _____ because of the promise and the fulfillment of the promise. So it’s **first things first** *before* the disciples can carry on the life of Jesus.

3. The _____ (6-8).

Verse 6: They’re still thinking that Jesus would break the bonds of Roman dominance and would literally reign on the earth. They’re still expecting **The Millennial Kingdom Now**.

Verses 7-8: That’s what **Jesus’ Now Kingdom** on earth will look like. Verse 8 sets the stage for all that follows in the book of Acts. It’s not political power—get off that bandwagon, church. Look at the verse: “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” Who’s witnesses? Jesus’ witnesses. What’s a witness? A witness is a person who _____ what he has seen and heard *from personal experience*.

Also, the Greek word for *witness* and for *martyr (martus)* is the same word. To be a witness means to be convinced, committed, and loyal, no matter the _____. And isn’t that exactly what we see in the Acts of the Apostles. Men and women who are all in. This is to be our occupation and preoccupation! “Jesus, because I know You, I’m all in!”

Verse 8 will actually become the **Table of Contents** for Luke’s **Second Act**: “You will be My witnesses in Jerusalem” is seen in Acts 1-7. “You will be My witnesses in all Judea and Samaria” is in Acts 8-9. And, “You will be My witnesses to the end of the earth” happens in the rest of the book, Acts 10-28. Ordinary people, people like you and me, were suddenly empowered by the Spirit to become extraordinary witnesses that spread **The Way of Jesus** throughout the world, and in time reached us in the 21st century, because the Spirit of God came upon them, to carry the life of Christ throughout the church age.

But it began in Jerusalem. No matter where we live, our witness must begin at home. However, we can’t be so short-sighted that we don’t extend it to the ends of the earth. Oswald Smith was right when he said, “The light that shines farthest will _____ brightest at home.”

Acts is the story of the first church. But it's our story too. It's the story of our beginning and the reason for our continuing. It's the true story of *His commission* and *our mission*: "We will be His witnesses."

4. The _____ (9-11).

Verse 9: It's the cloud of God's shekinah glory, the visible sign of God's presence, glory, and approval. As the apostles gaze into heaven, having just witnessed the promised ascension of Jesus, they're once again awestruck by the power and glory of their awesome Savior.

And thus, with the ascension of the Christ, His bodily ministry on earth comes to a conclusion. Which means that the continuing work of the living Lord will only continue on earth through His spiritual body, the Church. Jesus just placed in the hands of His followers the work He began. It was up to them then, and it's up to us now. As convinced witnesses, we must carry on the life and work of Jesus Christ!

Jesus had to be alive. And He had to ascend, so that He could send the Third Person of the Holy Trinity, just as He promised. The parting was absolutely necessary. And now the Father and the Son indwell us through the baptism of the Holy Spirit at the point of our salvation.

Jesus lives!

When we, Jesus' followers say, "Jesus lives!" we mean He truly lives. We serve a risen Savior whom we intimately know. For through His Spirit, He lives within us. And we have all we need to be His faithful witnesses.

Do you sometimes, or is it at all times, feel ordinary? Me too. And that's a good thing. Because the living Lord comes to us in the power of the Holy Spirit and says, "I choose you to be My witnesses." "But Lord, what do we tell those who don't know You?" "Because you personally know Me, tell them what you know about Me: that I died for their sins, that I was raised, and that I ascended on high. And if they believe in Me, they too can be ordinary people who forever possess the extraordinary power of the Holy Spirit. Simply tell them that, because I am forever with you, **and you are my witnesses!**"