

I'm A Christian, Now What? (Part 1) – Acts 1:1-14

Acts 1:1-5. We just started a new series in this book last week, under a new theme – *Compelled*. B/c that's what people *were* in the book of Acts.

From the apostles, to the disciples, to the church. They were compelled by *Spirit*, compelled by the message, and compelled by the truth.

And I hope and pray that you will be as well, as we study this.

Compelled to pray. Compelled to share. Compelled to go. And compelled to *know*. That's the emphasis *this week*. That we would know what we should as Christians. That we would no longer be content to know just enough, or just a little, but everything we possibly can. Especially about Jesus.

In fact, that's what Luke *assumes* in these first few verses. That we know what in the world he's talking about. Take a look – v1.

In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach, 2 until the day when he was taken up, after he had given commands through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. 3 He presented himself alive to them after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God.

4 And while staying with them he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, "you heard from me; 5 for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

When someone becomes a Christian, repenting of their sin and believing in Jesus, they often ask or wonder, "What now? I'm a Christian, now what?"

Others, having walked with Christ for many years, are *still* asking. Or *should* be.

And part of the answer is found in v1-5. Where Luke speaks of things that happened *before* the events of Acts, and assumes we know them. Things about Jesus.

So the first answer to "Now What?" is to . . .

1. Know the facts about Jesus.

That's where you *start* as a Christian. And we find 7 of those facts in these verses alone. 7 main categories, that not only increase our understanding of what Luke is *saying* . . .

But increase our *faith* in the one of whom he speaks. That's where it's at.

Knowing the *facts* about Jesus, bolsters our *faith* in Jesus.

So that it's not based on some ethereal *feeling*, like so *many* mistakenly rely on these days, but on facts. Real events, in a real time. Know the facts.

Starting with . . .

• His ministry timeline

The *order* of what he did and said. Which Luke lays out for us, but not *in* order.

And yet, he assumes we're tracking. So let's see if we can sort it out.

He starts with the bookends, the beginning and *end* of Jesus' ministry. Namely, his **works and teaching**, and his **ascension**. A little graphic here. Look at v1 again.

I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach [that's his works and teaching], until the day when he was taken up [his ascension].

All of which Luke covered in his *gospel*. Jesus' ministry here on earth.

And those are the *bookends*.

➤ Then, he starts working backwards. Saying in v2 – [Jesus] *was taken up after he had given commands*. So he gave **commands** of some sort, sometime *before* he ascended.

And did so, *to the apostles whom he had chosen*, v2b. Apostles, referring to men he had personally commissioned to *deliver* his message.

So he **chose apostles** sometime before he gave them commands, and that, sometime before he ascended. It's part of his timeline.

➤ Then, in v3, he adds another piece. Saying that Jesus *presented himself alive*. Referring of course, to his **resurrection**.

Which obviously came after his *suffering*, his **death on the cross**. That's what it says. *He presented himself alive to them after his suffering* (3a).

And did so, same verse, *by many proofs, appearing to them during 40 days* (3b). Call it **40 days of proof**. Another part of his timeline.

He just keeps tossing out different events, expecting us to know how they fit. 40 days. And during that 40 days, it says at the end of v3, he was *speaking about the kingdom of God*. Call it **preaching**. The timeline's filling in.

➤ But there's one more part in v4.

And while staying with them he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem [more commands], but to wait for the promise of the Father.

That's the last part. The **promise**. He gave them a promise, just before he ascended.

Which he articulates in v5 – *For John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.*"

It's a promise. Given just before his ascension. (**Summary**)

(Final PowerPoint layout: **Works and Teaching** → **Apostles Chosen** → **Death on the Cross** → **Resurrection** → **40 days of Proof** → **Preaching** → **Commands** → **Promise** → **Ascension**)

That's the *timeline* of Jesus' ministry here on earth. It's very general and very broad, but a timeline nonetheless.

Which helps us understand the flurry of facts Luke throws out, and follow his train of thought.

And as a Christian, that's where I need to start. That's what I need to know.

➤ But don't stop there (**Diagram of First 2 Concentric Circles**) in your pursuit of knowledge.

Pull out a bit and place it within the larger timeline of *God's salvation history*. From Abraham in the Old Testament to Paul in the New.

And then (**3rd Circle**) place all that in *God's overall plan* of creation to restoration – Genesis to Revelation. Know it all! (**Summary**)

B/c knowing the facts, knowing the truth – increases your faith; bolsters your trust. That's the first category to know.

2nd, is . . .

• His **works and teaching**

Know the facts about Jesus' works and teaching.

Or as Luke said it in v1 – *all that Jesus began to do and teach*.

Like the works of miracles he did. To authenticate his claims and authority. Or his works of compassion to alleviate suffering. His works of forgiveness to remove guilt. His works of healing to eliminate sickness. His works of grace to relieve oppression. Jesus was *constantly* at work. And as a *follower* of Christ, a *disciple* of Christ, a Christian, it's important to know those works. So that once again, your faith isn't based on feelings, but facts.

And the same is true of his *teaching*. That too is important to know. Like his teaching that we should repent and believe. And live his way. Have his mind. Love our neighbor. Bless our enemies. If you're a Christian, it's vital you know his works and teaching. Otherwise you'll never love him like you should, never follow him like he wants, and never know him like you can.

3rd, know the facts about . . .

• His commands

Straight from v2 – *he was taken up, after he had given commands*. Commands.

But before we get there, look at the *next 4 words – through the Holy Spirit*. Meaning, according to the Spirit's guidance and strength. Or based on the power and leading that comes with his presence. So that even *Jesus* was compelled by the Spirit.

And so were the apostles. The Spirit prepared them to *receive* his commands, by giving them a *desire* for them. Yet another way he compels us.

And you know the Holy Spirit is at work, when. When a message is *delivered* through the Holy Spirit, and *received* through the Holy Spirit. Both/And.

➤ Back to the commands. *He was taken up, after he had given commands* (2). That could refer to *all of* Jesus' commands, over the course of his entire ministry; or to those he gave just before he *ascended*. And I think it's the latter. His commands to *go* like he had gone, *preach* what he preached, and make disciples. I think Luke is referring to *those* commands, b/c that's what the book of Acts is all about.

The first, to go like he had gone, is found in **John 20:21** – “*As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.*” Jesus commands us to go like he did.

The 2nd, to preach what he preached, is found in **Lk 24:47-48**

Repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed [preached] in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. [48] You are witnesses of these things [this is for you]. He preached repentance and forgiveness, and so should we.

Preach what he preached.

And 3rd, is The Great Commission – Mt 28:19.

Go therefore and make disciples. Followers and learners. People who follow Jesus as Lord, and know his way. Including the facts of his life.*****

Jesus gave us 3 commands. And if we're going to obey them, we have to know them. Know the facts about Jesus' commands.

4th, know the facts about . . .

• His death and resurrection

V3a – He presented himself alive to them after his suffering. Suffering, referring to his death on the cross for our sins. After which, he rose again. His resurrection. Those are the facts.

And they're important to know, b/c our entire *faith* rests on them.

Take away Jesus' death and resurrection, and we got nothin'. No forgiveness, no salvation, no life, and no hope.

He suffered and died so we could be forgiven, and rose again so we could too.

Fail to know that, fail to grasp that, and you're doomed. Know the facts.

And keep applying them to your life by faith.

Keep preaching the gospel of Jesus death and resurrection to *yourself*.

The good news that you're forgiven. And righteous in God's eyes. One of his own. And loved. *That's* what we should do as Christians.

Know the facts of his death and resurrection, and apply them to your life.

5th, know the facts about . . .

• His post-resurrection appearances

V3 – He presented himself alive to them after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days.

His appearances and proofs by which he demonstrated his actual, physical, bodily resurrection – are a *massive* set of facts we can't afford to miss.

In fact, they deserve the consideration of those who *aren't* Christians, just as much as they deserve the *attention* of those who are.

B/c they *prove* our faith, *solidify* our faith, and remove our doubt. They're important.

➤ So I did something this week I've never done before. I went through the Bible and listed out all the proofs by which he presented himself alive. And found it overwhelming.

He really *does* live. And our faith is *not* in vain.

And I want you to see that list, so that you *too* can be pleasantly overwhelmed. You too can rest assured. Or maybe consider these facts for the very first time, and believe.

Here's the first. And let me encourage you to just watch and listen. You can download my notes later, on our website.

➤ The first proof of his resurrection, is . . .

The empty tomb (Jn 20:1-2; Lk 24:2-3).

Jesus' appearance to Mary (Jn 20:14-17).

His appearance to the other women (Mt 28:9-10) – Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Mary the mother of James (Lk 24:9-11).

His appearance to Cleopas and his friend on the road to Emmaus (Lk 24:13-32).

His appearance to Peter – *somewhere* in the midst of all this (1 Cor 15:5; Lk 24:34).

His appearance to the disciples without Thomas (Lk 24:36-38).

The holes in his body (Lk 24:39). Another proof that it was really him.

His ability to eat (Lk 24:41-42). B/c dead men don't.

His personal instruction to preach and lead with authority (Jn 20:21-23).

His appearance to the disciples with Thomas (Jn 20:26-29).

His appearance by the Sea of Galilee (Jn 21:1-14).

More personal instructions and eating (Jn 21:15-23).

His appearance to over 500 people at one time (1 Cor 15:6).

His appearance to James, the *brother* of Jesus (1 Cor 15:7).

His appearance on a mountain in Galilee (Mt 28:16-17).

His personal instruction to make disciples (Mt 28:18-20).

His appearance and ascension on the Mt. of Olives (Acts 1:6-12).

His appearance to Paul (Acts 9:1-9).

18 different proofs of his resurrection. Most of them *personal* proofs. (**Summary**)

Compelling us to believe, and assuring us of his life and love.*****

Know the facts about Jesus' post-resurrection appearances, and doubt no more.

6th, know the facts about . . .

- **His preaching**

He presented himself [end of v3] . . . *speaking about the kingdom of God.*

The *kingdom of God*, referring to his sphere of rule and reign.

His rule and reign *now*, in the lives of those who *know* him; and *later*, over those who *don't*. When he returns.

It's now and yet to come, the kingdom of God.

And though we can't know for sure, it's possible that his preaching about it just before he returned to heaven . . .

Was intended to explain the impact of his death and resurrection *on* it. How those things *affect* his kingdom, and secure it, and bring it about.

I say that, b/c that's what the apostles went on to *write* about in the New Testament.

Telling us it's a kingdom of light and life for those who *know* him, but a kingdom of judgement and condemnation for those who *don't*.

But it started with Jesus and *his* preaching. And we'd do well to know the facts.

Especially since those were some of his last words.

We'd do well to know his preaching, and advance his kingdom.

Know the facts.

And then 7th, last, know the facts about . . .

- **His promise**

V4-5 – 4 And while staying with them [the apostles] *he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father* [another command], which, he said, “you heard from me; 5 for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.”

At the beginning of Jesus' ministry, before he died and rose again and ushered in the New Covenant, John the Baptist immersed people in *water*.

And did so at that time, to mark their repentance and set them apart as God's own.

But when *we* believe and repent, on *this* side of the cross, we're immersed in the *Holy Spirit*. Just like Jesus promised.

Marked and set apart by his all-consuming *presence* in our lives.

Which our water baptism only *shows*. Outwardly.

John used *water* to mark and set apart, while God uses his *Spirit*.

John's baptism was external, ours is internal.

John's was momentary, ours ongoing. The *Spirit* never leaves us.

John's baptism showed repentance on *our* part, while the *Spirit's* baptism shows *forgiveness* on his. The moment we repent and believe.

Jesus promised it, and we have it. (**Summary**)

➤ Those are the facts. At least the ones Luke refers to.

And knowing them is a big part of what to do, if you're a Christian.

So that you don't rely on the *feelings* of faith, but the proof.

Firm in the day of adversity, instead of shaky.

Sure in the darkness of doubt, instead of fearful.

Strong in the face of opposition, instead of weak.

Now that you're a Christian, know the facts.

Pray – Lord, spur us on in these things. Give us a greater and greater hunger for your Word. We want to know you, and know about you, more and more.

We give now of our tithes and offerings, asking that you would use them to the utmost.