

The Acts of the Holy Spirit

Acts 1:1-12

We are beginning a new journey today as we begin our study through the book of Acts. Within this book we find the birth of the Church and the spreading of the Gospel throughout the then known world.

Although the book is known as “The Acts of the Apostles”, Luke primarily zeros in on the work of only two of the Apostles: the Apostle Peter and the Apostle Paul.

Personally, I feel that a better name would be “**The Acts of the Holy Spirit**”, as we see His hand and power throughout the book – but more on that as we get into the book.

Acts can also be known as “**The Gospel According to Luke: Part Two**”, as this is the second part of a communication he wrote to someone called **Theophilus**. The name simply means *Friend of God or Lover of God*.

Some have said that it is possibly not even a man’s name, but a general description of the people Luke was writing to: **Friends of or Lovers of God**. However, they dismiss the descriptive language Luke uses in his **Gospel** record.

Turn to **Luke 1:1-4**.

As Luke begins his Gospel account, he addresses his writings specifically –

*¹ Inasmuch as many have taken in hand to set in order a narrative of those things which have been fulfilled among us, ² just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word delivered them to us, ³ it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write to you an orderly account, **most excellent Theophilus**, ⁴ that you may know the certainty of those things in which you were instructed.*

The name **Theophilus** is a conjunction of two Greek words **Theos** meaning a deity, a supreme deity, or God, Himself. The next word comes from **Philos**, a noun meaning a friend or one very fond of another. Nowhere else in all the Bible are these two words joined together as we have them in the writings of Luke. The name Theophilus is only

found in the opening verses of both Luke and Acts. There is one exception, found in the book of James 2:23 where Abraham is called a “friend of God”. But there the phrase was used to describe Abraham’s standing with God, and not used as a name like we find in Luke and Acts.

One other thing about **Theophilus**, Luke calls him **most excellent Theophilus**. This speaks of someone with high standing, perhaps even a government official. Some have speculated that **Theophilus** was a Believer looking for affirmation of his faith, so Luke set out to write an apologetic or evidence for Christianity in both his Gospel account and in his account of the birth and the spread of the Church. We see that fairly clearly in the opening passages of Luke, where he writes: *that you may know the certainty of those things in which you were instructed.*

Whatever the cause might be and whomever **Theophilus** was, we see in both of Luke’s writings, a well laid out *apologetic* or a clear explanation and precise description of the life and ministry of Jesus and the move of the Holy Spirit in birthing the Church and causing it to spread around the world.

Because there is no mention in the book of Acts about the Apostle Paul’s execution, it is believed that Luke wrote the letter prior to Paul’s death. Again, there is a lot of speculation, but it would be safe to say that the book of Acts was written between A.D. 58 and 60 - or less than 30 after the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

From what we know of Luke at that time, he was most likely with the Apostle Paul in Rome, thus the probability of him writing while Paul, although in prison, was available to interject his thoughts, memories, details, and past activities.

As we get into Acts 1 we find there is a smooth transition, from the ending of Luke right into the opening passages of Acts. Keeping your place in Acts 1, let’s look once again at Luke, but this time let’s go to the end Luke 24:44-53. Jesus is speaking to His Disciples

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⁴⁴ *Then He said to them, "These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the*

Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me." ⁴⁵ And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures.

⁴⁶ Then He said to them, "Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, ⁴⁷ and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. ⁴⁸ And you are witnesses of these things. ⁴⁹ Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high."

⁵⁰ And He led them out as far as Bethany, and He lifted up His hands and blessed them. ⁵¹ Now it came to pass, while He blessed them, that He was parted from them and carried up into heaven. ⁵² And they worshiped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, ⁵³ and were continually in the temple praising and blessing God. Amen.

Then when we look at Acts 1:1-11 we see pretty much the same, but a **more detailed account** of the events shared at the end of Luke.

Acts 1

¹ The former account I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, ² until the day in which He was **taken up**, after He through the Holy Spirit had given commandments to the apostles whom He had chosen, ³ to whom He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.

⁴ And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, "which," He said, "you have heard from Me; ⁵ for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

⁶ Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, "Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" ⁷ And He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority. ⁸ But **you shall receive power** when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and **you shall be witnesses** to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

⁹ Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. ¹⁰ And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, ¹¹ who also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing

up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven."

¹² *Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey.*

We will look deeper into these words as we move into the chapter, but for now I simply wanted you to see the **continuity** of Luke's writing. His first letter, the Gospel account, the *former account* was all about *all that Jesus began both to do and teach,* ² *until the day in which He was taken up.*

In Acts, he now moves from there to give an account of the **fulfillment** of Jesus' prophecy to the Disciples, "*you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.*"

As the earlier writing is a very concise summary of the Gospel account, this last letter is a very concise summary of the book of Acts – the indwelling work of the Holy Spirit and the continual mission of spreading the Gospel message *in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.*

In verse 3 Luke sets the scene for **Theophilus**, as he shares with him once again the **evidence of the resurrection of Jesus –**

³ *"...(Jesus) also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during **forty days** and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God."*

We could go through the Gospel records of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, seeing how each one of them records events and appearances of Jesus following the Resurrection.

- From His first appearance to Mary at the tomb;
- The experience of His presence with the two men on the Road to Emmaus;
- The visitation to ten of the Disciples in the Upper Room;
- Then some eight days later we have His reappearance in the Upper Room just for Thomas' sake.

- Then John's Gospel record tells us of His appearance to the Disciples at the Sea of Galilee, sitting and having breakfast with them and then restoring Peter.
- Then finally to all of them again on the day of His Ascension.

The Apostle Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 15 of a **variety of Post-Resurrection sightings of the Lord** –

1Co 15

⁵ *and that He was seen by Cephas (Peter), then by the twelve.* ⁶ *After that He was seen by over **five hundred brethren at once**, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep.* ⁷ *After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles.*

These are the events and situations Luke refers to as he writes to **Theophilus** as proofs of Jesus being alive after the resurrection, demonstrating “*many infallible proofs, being seen by (the disciples) during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.*”

It is as if Luke is saying:
*“Theophilus, our God lives...
 Jesus is alive... and we have living proof!!”*

As He shared the times with the Disciples for those forty days, Jesus also challenged and encouraged them, *not to depart from Jerusalem, but to **wait for the Promise of the Father**, "which," He said, "you have heard from Me;* ⁵ *for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."*

*He said, “You heard about this from Me.
 You heard about this promise from the Father.
 Now you need to wait for it.”*

Do you remember just before His arrest and crucifixion, on the night He was betrayed, as He shared with the Disciples in the Upper Room? In John's Gospel record, in chapter 16 we read where He told them of the coming of the Holy Spirit (beginning in verse 7) –

John 16

⁷ *"Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is **to your advantage** that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you...*

¹² *"I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. ¹³ However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.*

¹⁴ *"He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you.*

¹⁵ *All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare it to you.*

Back here in Acts 1:5 as Jesus told them that they would be **baptized**, the word Jesus used has a very clear meaning. According to Kittles *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, the Greek word **baptízō** (*baptízō*) means "to dip in or under," "to dye (as in changing the color of a whole clothe)," "to immerse," "to sink," "**to drown**," "to bathe," "wash."¹

So, with all due respect to my "sprinkling" Brothers, I feel it is very clear that *to baptize* means to immerse -- completely.

Jesus is telling the Disciples that a **very powerful thing** was going to happen to them. They already had the Holy Spirit abiding within them. John 20:21-22 tells us very plainly how the Lord met with the Disciples after his resurrection –

²¹ *So Jesus said to them again, "Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you." ²² And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit."*

The Holy Spirit had been **with them**, now He was **in them**, but **as they tarried there in Jerusalem**, Jesus promised them in Acts 1:8 –

⁸ *But you shall **receive power** when the Holy Spirit **has come upon you**; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."*

¹ Gerhard Kittel, Gerhard Friedrich, and Geoffrey William Bromiley, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1985), 92.

They were to receive **dýnamis** (*dýnamis*) [supernatural ability, power]. This is the same word we get our word *dynamite* from. This was a supernatural empowering by God for the work of the ministry.

As Luke closed out his Gospel account, he wrote these words of Jesus' instruction for the Disciples –

Luke 24

⁴⁹ *And, behold, I send the **promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.***

To be **endued**, is the word **ēnduō** (ἐνδύω) *en-doo'-o*; from Strong's Concordance we find it is "*the sense of sinking into a garment.*"² It is the work of the Father, clothing you or immersing you, or *baptizing you with the Holy Spirit...*, **enduing you with power from on high.**

But we need to understand, what is going to take place in the Upper Room (Acts 2), wasn't just for the twelve..., **it was for the Church as a whole.**

We will see the action and activity of the Holy Spirit in the lives of Believers all throughout the book of Acts. It is an empowering work... empowering us to be the witnesses of Jesus Christ locally, regionally, nationally and around the world.

Unfortunately, because of a grave misunderstanding, it's this work of the Holy Spirit that **so many are fearful of.** But we need to understand and not be fearful of the words and the actions of Jesus. We need to understand that according to the Word of God, these Believers already had the Holy Spirit **abiding within them.** This abiding comes at the point of salvation... it's the seal of our salvation. But Jesus was saying they were now going to be **immersed** into or by the Holy Spirit and they shall **receive power when the Holy Spirit has come (epi) upon them.** That is when they would be **endued with power from on high.**

What does this mean? What kind of craziness is this all about?

² James Strong, *A Concise Dictionary of the Words in the Greek Testament and The Hebrew Bible* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2009), 28.

We will **see it more clearly as we get into Acts**, particularly in chapter 2 when a bunch of Disciples who had **been fearful and locked away**, afraid they too would be arrested; now **come out boldly** in the public arena and proclaim salvation through Jesus Christ.

Peter told the multitudes gathered in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost –

Acts 2

³⁸ *"Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹ For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call."*

⁴⁰ *And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, "Be saved from this perverse generation." ⁴¹ Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them.*

This boldness Peter demonstrated was a part of the **promise of the Father**. This is what the words and the promises of Jesus were speaking about -- *endued with power from on high*. This is the purpose and ministry of the Holy Spirit. He empowers the lives of Believers for the work of the ministry.

And Jesus told them that after they had *received power when the Holy Spirit had come upon them*; they would *be witnesses to Him in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.*"

This is what we will see as we move further into Acts.

- Sometimes that witnessing was purposeful, other times it simply happened at the moment – but they were vessels ready to be used.
- Sometimes the movement from one area to another with the message of the Gospel was planned and thought out,
- Other times it was simply as the Holy Spirit lead and directed them
- But they were willing to move when the Spirit said move, or stay when the Spirit said to stay.

Throughout this study we will see the Acts of the Holy Spirit as He empowers and gifts the followers of Jesus to continue to spread the message of the Gospel to the ends of their known world.

Acts 2

⁹ Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. ¹⁰ And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, ¹¹ who also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven."

¹² Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey.

**** Are you looking forward in faith to that day when our Jesus will *come in like manner* as He went into heaven?

And Lord, haste the day when *our* faith shall be sight,
The clouds be rolled back as a scroll;
The trump shall resound, and the Lord shall descend,
Even so, it is well with *our* soul.

My prayer is that as we go through this study and as we see the "Acts of the Holy Spirit" working and moving in the lives of the Church, we ourselves would be stirred to jealousy, desiring to be filled with and immersed by the Holy Spirit... to be endued with power from on high... that we would have the empowering work of the Holy Spirit to be witnesses in Casa Grande..., Pinal County..., and to the uttermost parts of the world.

⁹ Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. ¹⁰ And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, ¹¹ who also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven."

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