



**Acts – Can I get a Witness?
Wk. 1 Wait for it...
By Pastor Jody May 08/14/2022**

Acts 1:5 & 8 ESV

The Promise of the Holy Spirit

1 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.”

8 But 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.”

[REVIEW – WHY ACTS?]

Luke is the author of the book of Acts who is also the self-entitled author of the Gospel of Luke. Acts is a continuation of Luke; it is written as a Vol 1 and Vol 2 meaning they are two different stories that teach about two main truths that when placed together almost cover the thrust of the meta-narrative of scripture. The story of Creation, Fall, Redemption, and Restoration, God’s plans for those 4 main points of history are all answered, explained, and portrayed in Luke’s 2 volume work. Let me sum it up like this, reading through Luke and Acts explains what you are seeing throughout the rest of the Bible.

[WHY – WHY NOW?]

That’s why when we left Luke back in 2021, even though it was over 2-year journey spanning 117 sermons, I thought it would be helpful to finish this story from Luke’s perspective. Let’s take a moment and review the perspective of man called Luke.

[WHO WAS LUKE?]



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Who was Luke that we should take him at his word? Not much is known of him outside of early church traditions, he was a **missionary from Antioch** that died in his 80s peacefully, and it was known that he was the traveling companion/disciple of Paul. Luke was known to be a physician (Colossians 4:14), he was educated, he was not a fisherman or tradesman like some of the other apostles/evangelists, and he put all his understanding of the Gospel into **52 chapters of scripture compiling a 1/3 of the NT**. To sum up, he was a **Gentile** scholar, a historian, a detective, a world traveler and a student of Paul who stayed with him till the end (2 Tim 4:11) when everyone else had left him; he was the best type of friend to have. In all of that he remained humble and never mentioned his name in his own writings. **[Lesson for us, one does not have to be known to be important.]**

He wrote this book though, addressing one man, **Theophilus**¹ (*one who is a lover of God*). He's mentioned here in **Luke 1:3** and **Acts 1:1** in the prologues, as the receiver of the book. The late R.C. Sproul commented that this term '**most excellent**' (in Luke 1) was a common title in the ancient world for nobility.²

"It was an official title for prominent persons of high social standing. Since it was also an ancient custom for authors to dedicate their work to a financial patron, who enabled them to publish their writings."

That means Theophilus was probably in the church, whom most likely funded Luke in the work, so writing to Theophilus is like saying "this book is dedicated to you."

[WHAT DID VOL 1 TEACH US?]

As we go into Acts though we need to quickly review what Luke taught us:

First, that what you are about to hear is taken from eye-witness accounts.

¹ There is a great deal of discussion surrounding this name, since its meaning suggests it could be symbolic. It is made up of two parts: theo, which comes from the Greek, theos, meaning God. Then the word, philaeo, one of the New Testament words for 'love'. Put those two words together, theos and phileo, and we discover that Theophilus means literally, 'one who is a lover of God'. - Sproul

² Sproul, R. C. (1999). [A Walk with God: An Exposition of Luke](#) (p. 13). Great Britain: Christian Focus Publications.



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Luke 1:2-4 ESV

²just as those who from the beginning were **eyewitnesses** and ministers of the word have delivered them to us, ³it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, ⁴that you may have **certainty** concerning the things you have been taught.

Second, the Gospel is not just for the Jews but for Gentiles.

The Gospel of Luke taught us about the Kingdom of God, its' inauguration, its' leader: Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ, the Messiah, the deliverer of the covenant of grace, a treaty between God and man. It records His deeds of courage, might and sacrifice, to bring two nations together making one, the church:

- It was His story of defeating the enemies of God beginning with the devil in the wilderness during a 40-day fast.
- Then an ongoing fight ensued on multiple fronts the with religious elite that were determined to keep God's elect enslaved and downtrodden.
- Sickness/disease of which he most likely wiped out in ancient Palestine.
- Along with demonic underlings which were cast out of His people freeing them from all sorts of torture.
- Then the fighting culminated with His final victory over death as He took on the sins of the world, paid for the crimes of treasonous people, and rose from the grave victoriously.

Thirdly, he established that there is a HS, and He moves through the church.

Luke 3:21-22 ESV

²¹Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heavens were opened, ²²and the **Holy Spirit** descended on him in bodily form, like a dove; and a voice came from heaven, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased."

Luke 4:1 ESV



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4 And Jesus, full of the **Holy Spirit**, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness ²for forty days, being tempted by the devil.

Keeping in mind these three things are important especially as one moves into Luke's second volume of Acts, because for us the tension is about to get racketed up. Reading Acts, we should keep in mind the same HS that was there is here now, His purpose is to influence God's new people, and these movements are always viewed by eye-witness accounts. It means we all have to live in this reality, that what we see happening in Acts should be a reflection of what we see in the life of the church today.

[WHAT WILL ACTS TEACH US]

1 In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus **began to do** and **teach**, ²until the day when he was taken up, after he had given commands through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen.

1. First thing we need to recognize is that the story of Luke was only the **BEGINNING!**

This is just the beginning of what Jesus will teach and what He will do. What we have to reconcile though is what we see in v. 2 "**until the day when He was taken up**". Our Lord has begun a work, but He did not finish it.

You may say pastor have you not heard of the famous proclamation on the Cross, "**It is Finished**" (Jn 19:30). I would answer yes, I have heard it and rightly understood that to mean, that Jesus, His initial visit and the reason He came the first time was done BUT that **does not mean** Jesus was finished with all that He intended to do.

Luke begins to reveal though that Jesus had a second part to His game plan. It's in the very next phrase – "*after he had given commands through the HS to the apostles He had chosen.*"



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First, we need to understand that the plan was **initiated by the Spirit** and because it is God's will, **Jesus will not abandon** it. We already read in Luke 3 the HS was with Him (post baptism), and in Luke 4 the Spirit leads Him (into the wilderness). You need to keep this in mind, Jesus has lived his entire ministry under the control and leadership of the HS, and that did not stop as long as He was here on the earth. He is continually in submission to the will of His Father being delivered by the Spirit. Tell me how important does that make it for us that we should live the same way? Does your life reflect an obedience like that?

Secondly, the **choosing** of the Apostles was performed **under the influence** of the HS as we see here in chapter 6:

Luke 6: 12-16 ESV

¹²In these days he went out to the mountain to pray, and all night he continued in prayer to God. ¹³And when day came, he called his disciples and chose from them twelve, whom he named apostles: ¹⁴Simon, whom he named Peter, and Andrew his brother, and James and John, and Philip, and Bartholomew, ¹⁵and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon who was called the Zealot, ¹⁶and Judas the son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.

I think that what we can learn from these first few verses is that you can **trust the HS to make the right choices!**

Right now, you may be facing some tough choices in your life, and my question for you is are you under the guidance of the Spirit, are you seeking God in continual prayer, are you subjecting yourself to the Spirit's guidance?

- Are you thinking of a new career choice, first have you prayed about it?
- Are you thinking about moving because the money is good, have you prayed about it?
- Are you thinking about voting for a certain candidate come November, are you praying about it?
- Are you thinking about taking out a loan to further your business, are you praying about it?



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- Are you thinking about schooling and a new career choice, are you praying about it?

My point is, have you prayed to God about it, because if you are His then **His Spirit will direct you** in your comings and goings. AND this is something you should want to do because He has a **perfect track record**. He led Christ perfectly through His ministry, He led Him to pick the men that would help Him get to the cross, and He picked the perfect path to and through the cross so Jesus could complete His work. Let me ask you, **why wouldn't you trust Him with your life?**

Following in the good example of our Lord - Perhaps you need to except Jesus today and be baptized so you too may receive this wonderful helper, for He has a tremendous track record as to helping people complete exactly what God wants for someone's life!

You may be, "Pastor, you're coming on a little strong! Trusting something I can't see to get me through life!" I know it is a big request but listen I am not asking you to do anything that Jesus would not do. I am merely giving you the best example I can give, a man that trusted not in what could be seen, but trusted in what He could not see, to do the impossible, live for God's glory, ALONE! That was just the beginning, trusting the Spirit to accomplish what the Father wants, but you may need more evidence, well Luke is going to give you more:

2. Jesus presents his life as **proof**.

³He presented himself alive to them after his suffering by many **proofs**, appearing to them **during forty days** and speaking about the kingdom of God.

Jesus doesn't offer to you anything more than His life, which for you, just like Jesus was not there to see the OT unfold before His eyes, is something you cannot witness first-hand. **You have to take the Spirit's Word for it**. You have to take the witness accounts of it as Luke recorded them. You have to trust that it was just as it says it was. You have to trust the Bible to be sufficient for this, you have to trust that it is inerrant in this retelling of these



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events. Luke wrote it for you thinking about people just like you, it was too good to be true for him as well, that's why he sought out eye-witness accounts of the life of Christ. All that Jesus did was attested to by multiple witnesses. What were these **proofs?**

The clue comes from **Luke 24: 44-47 ESV**

44 Then he said to them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." **45** Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, **46** and said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, **47** and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.

Luke told us in v.3 that Jesus took forty days to tell them this. He broke it down, He spelled it out, He explained it all just like a SAT prep book. Jesus is good like that, the longer you hang with the man, the clearer He will make it for you.

It struck me as I was thinking on this during the week, that Jesus took forty days to explain all these things. Do you remember after He was led into the wilderness for forty days, without food, without shelter, the only thing He had was God's presence in the HS and the memorized OT. With that He withstood the temptation to have everything: desires for hunger, desires for power, desires for the easy way. **Some of us can't stand a bad day of work, we cave into temptation as soon as we get home.** Jesus trusted the Spirit, and His life is proof of that.

Now for forty days instead of starving to death the Apostles feast on the bread of life. They gorge themselves on the resurrected Christ, they get a taste of what it will be like for us one day to live in the presence of a resurrected and glorified Messiah. For Forty days they fattened on His presence while He was with them, they learned His secrets, they learned His interpretation of the OT, they learned how He pieced it all together, and they were strengthened.



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Family here at the beginning of Acts I have to ask you to do something you may not be comfortable with, **I need you to trust a man you have never seen!**

I need to ask you in the face of unsure economic times, in the face of inflation, in the face of market collapses, in the face of a declining housing markets, in the face of interest rate hikes, I am going to ask you in the face of those very tangible and visible signs to trust in a person whom you have not seen. Listen to His words:

John 20:29 ESV

“Have you believed because you have seen me? **Blessed** are those who have not seen and yet have **believed**.”

Blessed doesn't come from ignorant bliss, Jesus says happy is the man that puts His trust in the truer reality of knowing ME! Content is the man who knows me!

Family will you accept the proof that Jesus gives in Scripture, is it sufficient for you? Or will you trust more in what you can see? A physical corporeal existence is not more real than a spiritual presence. You may believe only in what you see but I know the one that controls all things, and all of life demonstrates the reality of God.

Jesus nailed it in Jn 3 when He recognized the problem all people have, you can't **CONTROL what the HS does!** Jesus told Nicodemus it is like the wind it goes where it wants, it operates on its' own time, and there is nothing you can do to influence it, BUT yet you still must trust God! The only option we have is to get on the same plan as Jesus, pray with confidence, obey His Word, and TRUST that His Spirit will guide you in all ways.

Nothing moves in this world without first being declared by God, Jesus' life is proof, will you accept that? If you do that then it means you are about to come into a different type of relationship with Him than before:

3. Jesus gives the **orders** because He knows what you need.



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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; ⁵for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.”

Jesus alone knows what you need and those that call themselves disciples, wait on Him. They listen to Him, they show that they have learned from their past mistakes. These are men that deserted Christ on the night of His crucifixion. These will become men though that will walk bravely into their own deaths. Something has changed! They have become men that will hold the lines when Jesus says hold...

Jesus orders them do not leave Jerusalem, you are to wait. Wait for what? **Wait for a promise** - what's this promise!? Luke points back to an earlier reference from Luke 3:15-17 where JB states that God will **baptize with His Spirit!** You will be put under, to be underneath the influence, to be overwhelmed like Jesus was, by the living Spirit of God. The suggestion alludes to what must have been an incredible thing to hear - **Jesus, will we actually be able to do what you do?** What's this promise?

Ezekiel 36:25-27 ESV

²⁵ I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. ²⁶ And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷ And I will put **my Spirit** within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.

The promise of old is that God's people, those saved by faith, will be cleaned. The evidence of it will be a new heart, you will have a new spirit, giving one new desires, giving one new abilities to follow those new desires. We will have hearts of flesh that are warm, that beat strong, that produce life, that pump real life sustaining energy into limbs so that we can actually accomplish something for God and not just for ourselves!

The person with a heart influenced by God's Spirit is a person that sees now...



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I don't want to dig too deep into it today but let me give you the key to the book of Acts, where is Luke going with this, what is His purpose for writing this second volume for Theophilus:

⁸But 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."

Jesus wants the disciples to wait, they are about to get something that will change the world, they are about to carry on what Jesus started, what He began to do, what He left for them. He tells them to wait for the HS, He is going to bring you power, specific power, power for a reason – to be a **WITNESS** for the world.

The book of Acts is about the beginning of a **PROCESS**. It's not just a story about twelve men that took the message of their leader into the world. It is about the 12 men that told a handful of people, that told a handful of people, that told a handful of people, that kept doing that over the centuries. It's about their story, the first church's story, it is about a people that first generation of Christians baptized in the HS, that received changed hearts to do one thing, **WITNESS!**

As I said in the beginning church, there is something here for us to recognize. Acts is not just about what happened 2,000 yrs. ago it is the beginning of an ongoing event, the birth and growth of the church. It is our story Highlands, we are now called to WITNESS, for we now get to tell the story of Luke, that the Christ has come to redeem His people. Those that are His when they hear it, they will believe, and those that are not His will not, because it is the power of the Spirit that makes one believe, your job is now to give a witness to it.

[CHALLENGE APPLICATION]

Today let me point you in the right direction.

- Not sure about what the Gospel is, what it really means? **Read Luke**, read the study notes on it, and then watch the sermons again.



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- Secondly, **practice prayer as if your life really depended on it.** Put yourself in Christ's shoes, go to God in prayer understanding that He has declared a way to go, and you want to do what He wants. Start with every major decision in your life and make a commitment to pray it through before you act.
- Thirdly, want to test it, then ask someone close to you to **pray with you about the matter**, and let's see what the Spirit tells them? Are you willing to take the advice of other people who bear witness to God's influence in their lives?

Family I pray that you discover through this journey in Acts that you are not just a fan/spectator, but you are a player in this game, and that you too can learn how to be a witness, empowered by the HS, for the Kingdom of God.

[PRAYER]

[COMMUNION]

[BENEDICTION]

Go in the name of the Father, that sends the Spirit to empower for the work of the Gospel to be a Witness.

Go in the name of the Son, that was empowered by the same Spirit to give proof of God when we would believe Him not.

Go in the name and power of the Holy Spirit, that gives you the heart of flesh, causing you to live for Him as a witness wherever you may go.