

Acts Chapter 1 (DDC) – September 21, 2008

- Last week we finished the Gospel of John, which we've been covering since January.
 - 25 weeks (not all consecutive) to get through John
 - I learned a bunch. Not just from the teachings but from the discussion before and after.
 - In fact... as I've discussed with many of you... when the Bible describes Church... in a lot of ways it looks like what we've been doing here.
 - Which I think is extremely cool.

Story regarding SNT and Act 2 Church

- So... now that we've finished the Book of John... where do we go next is the question.
- Well... we spent some time deliberating about this...
- Going back and forth between the book of Joel... John's epistles.... Revelation was even mentioned.
- But it was decided that instead we would move from John's Gospel to the Acts of the Apostles
- Which I have to admit... it really is a smooth transition from one book to the other.
(pause)
- Tonight we will be doing an intro to the book of Acts.
 - We will look at the author... intended audience....the historical context...
 - And then we will work our way through Chapter 1.
- I was going to spend some time talking about dispensationally why Acts is extremely important... but my notes were getting quite long.
- So I decided we can discuss it afterwards if you guys are interested.
(pause)
- Before we dive in... lets begin by praying.

Prayer:

- As I mentioned we will be starting Acts tonight
- Act is the 44th book of the Bible
- The 5th Book in the New Testament
- It contains 28 chapters for a total of 1,006 verses
- Which makes it the 3 largest book in the New Testament (following Luke and then Matthew)
- Acts is a historical book that covers the beginning of the Church
- Some highlights from the book of Acts include
 - Ascension of Jesus
 - The day of Pentecost and the pouring out of the Holy Sprit

- The first persecution of the church
 - The appointing of the first Deacons
 - The martyrdom of Stephen (the first martyr)
 - The conversion of Saul
 - The death of James
 - Peter's arrest
 - Paul's numerous missionary journeys to the Gentiles
 - Paul eventual arrest and trial before Rome.
- Lots of good stuff in store
 - I'm excited to jump in.
 - But before we do, as I said before lets build some context around the book of Acts first.
- (pause)
- Acts was written sometime between 60 and 70 AD
 - Written by Luke... who wrote the Gospel of Luke
- (pause)
- Luke was a gentile who was a physician by trade
 - He was a companion and good friend of the Apostle Paul.
 - He often would accompanied Paul on his missionary trips
 - Shortly before Paul was put to death... in his letter to Timothy he tells him that Luke was with him until the very end.
 - So they were very close.
- (pause)
- Luke was very detail minded as you would perhaps expect from a physician... and this is reflected in his writings.
 - You also find that Luke writes with a very skilled Greek style.
 - Much more skilled than some of the other New Testament writers.
- (pause)
- Luke wrote two books in the New Testament.
 - The Gospel according to Luke
 - The book of Acts (or the Acts of the Apostles)
- Acts picks up where the Gospel of Luke ends
 - Although they could be read back to back... they were penned as two separate treatises
 - And there were reasons for that that we won't go into now.
 - So who was Acts written to?
 - Who was the intended audience?
- (pause)

- Well if you look in verse 1 of Acts you will see this book is addressed specifically to Theophilus.
- Theophilus is also noted in the introduction to Luke (in Verse 3 of Ch.1)
- Both books are specifically addressed to Theophilus.
- So who is Theophilus?

(pause)

- The answer to that is not cut and dry.
- If you look at the name Theophilus it's a Greek name.
- The literal translation of the name means lover of God.

(pause)

- So some believe that believe that Theophilus is not a specific man.
- But rather Luke and Acts were directed to the “lover’s of God.”
- Interesting idea.

(pause)

- Well... others rejected that idea.
- They say based on the syntax of the Greek it was definitely directed to a specific person.

- There are several different conjectures regarding who he could be.
 - Some say Luke was formerly a slave (like many of the doctors of that day) and Acts is directed to his slave former master.
 - Some say he was a Greek publisher (publisher beings someone who copies written text) who was going to help Luke copy and propagate the text.

(pause)

- Personally... I've done the research and I don't have a strong opinion either way.
- Although I tend to lean that this was directed to someone specific... not just generally lovers of God.
- I tend to think had he wanted to address it generally to “lovers of God” he would have just written that.
- Thus I'm left assuming Theophilus was a specific person.

(pause)

- Nevertheless, like the epistles... Acts was written to be circulated among the church.
- Writings from the early church clearly confirm Luke's intent.

*The way I like to think about this...(tell story regarding studies we do for City's).
They are addressed specifically to someone but are intended for all to read.*

- So the conclusion being...
 - The book is specifically addressed to Theophilus

- And the intended audience (based on historical record and tradition) is the Church (we're the intended audience).

(pause)

- Well needless to say Acts is an important book in the Bible.
- In fact if you pulled Acts out of the Bible... more than perhaps many of the other books it would leave a humongous gap.
- Acts works as a bridge between the Gospels and the Epistles

(pause)

- Just to give you a feel for this:
 - The last recorded fact about Jesus in Matthew is the Resurrection... which is also recorded in Acts Ch.1
 - In Mark the last recorded act of Jesus was the Ascension... which is also recorded in Act Ch.1
 - Luke ends with a promises from Jesus to send the Holy Sprit... that is repeated in Acts Ch.1.
 - The Gospel of John ends with Jesus promising his second coming... Acts Ch.1 includes that promise.

- So the end of the Gospels is the beginning of Acts.
- There is a very clear line there.

(pause)

- Well following Acts there are 21 epistles
- Which are the instructive correspondence from the Apostles to the early church
- These epistles were written during the events recorded in Acts.

- So Acts gives us a framework to move from the Gospels
 - To the death and resurrection of Jesus
 - to ascension...
 - pouring out of the holy spirit...
 - beginning of the Church...
 - to the epistles

- It pulls the whole New Testament together.

(pause)

- Well as we begin studying Acts I think it's important to have kind of a big picture outline of the book in our minds.
- I like what J. Vernon Magee says... "Before you can study the Bible with a microscope... you need to study it with a telescope."

(pause)

- The structure of Acts is summarized in Chapter 1 verse 8.
- Before Jesus ascends into heaven... he tells his disciples.

Act 1:8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

- Jesus says.
 - First that they will be his witnesses in Jerusalem
 - Next that they will be his witnesses not just in Jerusalem but in Judea and Samaria
 - And lastly to the ends of the earth
- The spread of the Gospel.
- Well that's the outline of the book of Acts.
 - Ch. 1-7 Covers the spread of the Gospel in Jerusalem
 - Ch. 8-12 Covers the spread of the Gospel in Judea and Samaria
 - starting with Paul and Barabbas being sent to witness to the Gentiles
 - Chapters 13-28 Covers the spreading of the gospel to the uttermost parts of the earth...

(pause)

- It's interesting... do you ever wonder why Jerusalem is God's chosen City?
- Seems like kind of an odd place to be the chosen land.
- Way back in his promise to Abraham... why would he choose that land?

(pause)

- Next time you look at a map look at where it is located.
- It is dead center in the middle of all the trade routes for the civilized world at that time.
- And because of that the Gospel spread with extraordinary speed.
- It was a very strategic on the part of God.
- In fact I have a map that shows the spread of the gospel.
- It spreads out in all directions from Jerusalem along existing trade routes.

(pause)

- And it's interesting there is a direct line from that initial spread of the Gospel... to us here right now.
- We are the recipients of that.
- Those events were the start of a stream of events that ended in you and I being saved.

*Tell story about trying to understand what the Church should look like
We are given a picture of the church*

- So this book is very important book to us.
- And it is pertinent to us and our church right now.

(pause)

- Well in the beginning of Acts... Luke starts off by tying the Gospel of Luke to this new treatise that he is writing.
- So he refers to his former book.

(pause)

- Then he proceeds to kind of fill us in on the last things that were recorded in Luke.
- So the Last thing in Luke is the first thing in Acts.

(pause)

- Well the Gospel of Luke ends with Jesus (risen from the dead) appearing to his disciples telling them to wait in Jerusalem until they are given the Holy Spirit
- And then after that Jesus ascended up into heaven
- That closes the Gospel of Luke.

(pause)

- Let's open our Bibles to Acts Chapter 1 and we will see that Luke reiterates the last things that were recorded in his Gospel
- So...starting in verse 1... Luke says:

Act 1:1 In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach

Act 1:2 until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen.

- So again he ties the books together.

(pause)

- Now something to notice is the word began..
- It says "I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach..."

- The word began is important.
- Why didn't Luke write the ministry that Jesus finished?

(pause)

- Simply because Jesus' ministry is not finished.
- Not even close.
- So Luke kind of takes on this premise in the first verse of Acts
- He says "the events recorded in Luke are the Beginning of Jesus Ministry."
- I think it's noteworthy.
- Jesus left... he ascended... and yet it is the beginning of his ministry.

(pause)

- When we get to Chapter 28 of Acts we will find that Acts really is an unfinished book.

- There's not really any sort of adequate ending.
- It just kind of stops.
- Why is that?

(pause)

- Well I would submit that:
 - From the first verse we learn.... Jesus' ministry had just begun
 - When we get to the end of Acts we can see... Jesus' ministry hasn't ended.

(pause)

- So how is Jesus' ministry occurring?
- Through the Holy Spirit
- And that's what we get to talk about next week.
- It's Jesus' Christ at work by the Holy Spirit through his Apostles and his followers

(pause)

- So Luke begins Acts by referencing his Gospel
- And then giving us the breath of information recorded in his gospel.

The he goes on to say:

Act 1:3 After his suffering, he showed himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God.

- After Jesus rose from the dead there was a period of 40 days that Jesus showed himself and taught his followers.

(pause)

- So why is this period of time so important to us a Christians?
- Why would Luke mention this here at the beginning of Acts?

(long pause)

- It's because this is the great pearl of our faith.

(pause)

- The risen Jesus is our sign.
- Him appearing to us provides proof that he is God.
- We aren't asked to believe without reason.
- We are given a sign.

(pause)

- I love the way the KJV says it... he gave them infallible proofs.

(pause)

- The fact is... it is incredibly difficult to deny the resection of Jesus
 - All you have to do is open up a history book.
- (pause)

- Something incredible happened.
 - Something unexplainable apart from the resurrection.
- (pause)

- A bunch of scared disciples saw the risen Lord
 - They went from being tucked away hiding.... Afraid to come out...
 - To boldly teaching and proclaiming the gospel
 - So bold in fact that they gladly went to their death for the Gospel
- (pause)

- Deaths that were horrific.... crucifixions, being burned alive, being fed to the lions
- (pause)

- People don't endure that for a lie.
 - And the gospel spread like wild fire.
 - They knew... because they had seen.
- (pause)

And I love what Paul says:

1Co 15:3 For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance^[1] : that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures,

1Co 15:4 that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,

1Co 15:5 and that he appeared to Peter,^[2] and then to the Twelve.

1Co 15:6 After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living...

- The inference being... if you don't believe this... go ask them they are still alive
- (pause)
- And now ... we have the luxury of technology which affords us the ability to really research this and look at the history
 - And its incredible
 - It is undeniable.
 - It's truth.
- (pause)

Talk about trial (3 or 4 people agree that a crime was committed) etc.

- I think it's real shame when people only preach the death of Jesus.
- Obviously that is important.

- But it is through the resurrection that we are given power.
- We are given faith and confidence that this is truth
(long pause)

Well Luke goes on in verse 4:

Act 1:4 On one occasion, while he [Jesus] was eating with them, he gave them this command: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about.

- He says... don't leave Jerusalem.
- Wait for the gift that the Father has promised.
- So what gift is He talking about?
(pause)

- This no doubt is referring to the promise that God gave through his prophet Joel:
- In Joel Chapter 2, God promises:

Joe 2:28 "...

I will pour out my Spirit on all people.
Your sons and daughters will prophesy,
your old men will dream dreams,
your young men will see visions.

Joe 2:29 Even on my servants, both men and women,
I will pour out my Spirit in those days.

- The promise of the Father is that a day is going to come when God is going to pour out His Spirit.
- And each believer will receive this new dynamic from God.
- The Holy Spirit

Jesus goes on in verse 5:

Act 1:5 For John baptized with^[1] water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."

- You will be immersed with the holy spirit

Act 1:6 So when they [the disciples] met together, they asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?"

- So they ask Jesus...Is now the time?.
- Are you going show your power and overthrow Rome and restore Israel?
(pause)

- Jesus kind of brushes their question aside.

Act 1:7 He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority.

- That's not for you to know guys.

Act 1:8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you...

- So he directs them back to what he had previously told them.
- And tells them... when the Holy Spirit comes on you... you will receive Power
- It's interesting he doesn't say, "you as a Christian are going to be weak and tired and fearful."
- No he says you will receive POWER when the Holy Spirit comes on you.

Paul Says:

2Ti 1:7 For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.

(pause)

- So why does God give us his Holy Spirit?
 - For that matter why so we receive power?
 - To just enjoy ourselves?

Act 1:8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

- We receive the Power of the Holy Spirit to be a witness for Jesus Christ.

(pause)

- The word witness in Greek is the word martus
- We get our word martyr from it.
- The Greek definition is similar to martyr.

(pause)

- A witness is one who not only proclaims what he believes,
 - he lives what he believes,
 - he is what he believes,
 - he believes it so strongly, that if necessary, he'll die for what he believes.
- You can't stop him because He's not afraid to die for what he believes.
- That's what a witness for Christ is.
- And we receive power from the Holy Spirit to become that.
- To become something that we couldn't do by ourselves.

(pause)

- In Acts Chapter 21 Paul is in Caesarea getting ready to go to Jerusalem.

- It says in Verse 10

Act 21:10 After we [the people traveling with Paul] had been there a number of days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea.

Act 21:11 Coming over to us, he took Paul's belt, tied his own hands and feet with it and said, "The Holy Spirit says, 'In this way the Jews of Jerusalem will bind the owner of this belt and will hand him over to the Gentiles.' "

- So he's warning Paul if goes to Jerusalem he will be bound and turned over to the Gentiles

Act 21:12 When we heard this, we and the people there pleaded with Paul not to go up to Jerusalem.

Act 21:13 Then Paul answered, "Why are you weeping and breaking my heart? I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus."

- He was a witness.
 - And through the Power of the Holy Spirit he wasn't worried about the consequences.
- (pause)

Do you ever wonder why people were converted in such huge numbers under such terrible persecution?

Why would you want to be a Christian then?

I was discussing this with my brother... Tell story

(pause)

- It's interesting if you look in Ch.1 Vs.8... where did their witness begin?
- (pause)

- It says in Jerusalem.
- At home.
- Sometimes the hardest place to be a witness is right at home.
- But... that is the first place God wants us to be a witness.

Act 1:9 After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight.

Act 1:10 They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them.

- We assume they were angels.

Act 1:11 "Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven."

(pause)

Jud 1:14 ... "See, the Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands of his holy ones
Jud 1:15 to judge everyone, and to convict all the ungodly of all the ungodly acts they have done in the ungodly way, and of all the harsh words ungodly sinners have spoken against him."

Rev 1:7 Look, he is coming with the clouds,
and every eye will see him,
even those who pierced him;
and all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of him.

Mat 24:26 "So if anyone tells you, 'There he is, out in the desert,' do not go out; or,
'Here he is, in the inner rooms,' do not believe it.

Mat 24:27 For as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.

- So the angles confirm what is said many other places in scripture.
 - When Jesus comes for the second time **all** will see.
 - And it will be in a like manner to the way Jesus ascended.
- (pause)

Act 1:12 Then they returned to Jerusalem from the hill called the Mount of Olives, a Sabbath day's walk^[2] from the city.

Act 1:13 When they arrived, they went upstairs to the room where they were staying. Those present were Peter, John, James and Andrew; Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew; James son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James.

Act 1:14 They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers.

- I would note this is the last mention of Mary the mother of Jesus.
- From this point on there is no further mention of her in Acts or in any of the epistles.
- There is no mention of her death or of her miraculous ascension into heaven as some teach.
- I believe we can infer that the rest of Mary's life is not crucial to our understanding of the gospel because she is no longer mentioned.

(pause)

- It also mentions Jesus' brothers were gathered.
- That would be James and Jude and possibly other brothers who were sons of Joseph and Mary.

(pause)

- And it says they are gathered in an upper room.
- Some teach this is the same upper room as the Last Supper.
- Others believe this is a room in the temple precincts where the early church met.

(pause)

- The important point being... after Jesus had ascended... these are the first meetings of the early church.

Act 1:15 In those days Peter stood up among the believers^[3] (a group numbering about a hundred and twenty)

Act 1:16 and said, "Brothers, the Scripture had to be fulfilled which the Holy Spirit spoke long ago through the mouth of David concerning Judas, who served as guide for those who arrested Jesus--

Act 1:17 he was one of our number and shared in this ministry."

- So Peter in typical fashion stands up and says "there is a prophesy that the Holy Spirit spoke through David regarding Judas
- Peter continues in verse 18 and describes Judas' fate.

Act 1:18 (With the reward he got for his wickedness, Judas bought a field; there he fell headlong, his body burst open and all his intestines spilled out.

Act 1:19 Everyone in Jerusalem heard about this, so they called that field in their language Akeldama, that is, Field of Blood.)

- Now if you read in Matthew it says once Judas heard that Jesus had been condemned he was "Seized with remorse"
 - So he tried to return 30 pieces of silver to the priests.
 - Well the priests said they wouldn't take the money back because it was blood money.
 - So Judas throws the money at the priests... and leaves.
 - Well they take the money and buy a field which is intended for burring foreigners.
- (pause)

- Well Judas goes to that field.
 - The field that was bought with the money that he received for betraying Jesus
 - And then we are given this rather graphic picture of what happens next.
 - Presumably, he must have climbed into the tree with a rope.
 - Tied one end of it around his neck.... the other end around the tree... and jumped.
 - And it gives graphic account that he basically popped.
 - His body was dismantled and his insides burst and fell to the ground.
- (pause)

- Well Peter continues... and we begin to see what he is getting at here.

Act 1:20 "For," said Peter, "it is written in the book of Psalms,

" 'May his place be deserted;

let there be no one to dwell in it,'^[4] and,

" 'May another take his place of leadership.'^[5]

- Now first I have to be kind of impressed with Peter's knowledge of the scripture.
- Several times in the Gospels and Acts... Peter shows that he is well versed in the Old Testament.

(pause)

- Here he is quoting from two different Psalms.
- From [Psalm 69:25](#), and [Psalm 109:8](#).
- And putting the two together he decides these are prophecies concerning Judas.

(pause)

- Peter concludes in Verse 21

Act 1:21 Therefore it is necessary to choose one of the men who have been with us the whole time the Lord Jesus went in and out among us,

Act 1:22 beginning from John's baptism to the time when Jesus was taken up from us. For one of these must become a witness with us of his resurrection."

- Well from the disciples Jesus chose twelve to be apostles.
- Through out the Bible the number 12 is symbolic of human government.
- So it makes sense Peter assumes since there are only 11 remaining Apostles... and it is prophesied that Judas would be replaced it must be their Job to appoint another one.

(pause)

- The requirement that they were looking for is it must be someone who had been around from the time of John's baptism all the way to the ascension.
- It must be someone who had seen the risen Lord.

(pause)

- When Paul was asserting his apostleship one of the things he says repeatedly is that he has seen the risen Christ.
- The Bible presents that as a perquisite to being an apostle.

(pause)

- Now I've been in discussions with people regarding whether there are Apostles today.
- My opinion is that there are not.
- At least not in the same capacity as in the New Testament.
- And that's simply because none of us have physically seen the risen lord.

(long pause)

- So Peter feels they need to replace Judas.
- Going on in verse 23

Act 1:23 So they proposed two men: Joseph called Barsabbas (also known as Justus) and Matthias.

Act 1:24 Then they prayed, "Lord, you know everyone's heart. Show us which of these two you have chosen

Act 1:25 to take over this apostolic ministry, which Judas left to go where he belongs."

- So they come up with two choices to replace Judas.

- Joseph
 - Matthias
 - And then they pray about it.
(pause)
 - First I would note... I think it can be a real mistake when we give God two choices.
 - And that's simply because more often than not... both choices are wrong.
(pause)
 - In my opinion... Peter like many times before is acting rashly here.
 - It was prophesied that Judas would be replaced.
 - So he takes it upon himself to do it.
 - You may not agree with me regarding this... that's ok.
 - I've heard good arguments on both sides.
(pause)
 - But as I see it... Jesus picked the 12 Apostles
 - And he didn't ask Peter's help to pick the replacement for Judas.
(pause)
 - I think when we get to Acts Chapter 9 we get to see who God picks to replace Judas.
 - And that's the Apostle Paul.
 - So when Revelation 21 when it is describing New Jerusalem... and it says the names of the 12 apostles will be written on the foundation... I believe Paul's name will be there.
 - That's my opinion – we can discuss this afterwards if you would like.
(long pause)
 - Once they had narrowed it down to Joseph and Matthias... it says
- Act 1:26** Then they cast lots, and the lot fell to Matthias; so he was added to the eleven apostles.
- Now when it says they cast lots... I've read this in the past and assumed they voted.
 - That is not actually the case.
(pause)
 - When they say cast lots... it was basically rolling a dice
(pause)
 - Now it's easy to say... what a dumb way to discern Gods will.
(pause)
 - My response to that is casting lots may be an imperfect way to discern God's will.

- But compare it to some of the ways Christians use today?
 - Often we rely on things as fickle as emotions, circumstances, feelings, carnal desires...
- (pause)
- In the Old Testament, the Israelites had a similar way of discerning God's will.
 - The priest would ask questions of God for the people through the Urim and the Thummim. (Erum and Thewmum)
- (pause)
- If you read in Exodus chapter 28 God tells Moses that the Urim and Thummim should sit in a pouch on the breast plate above the priests heart.
 - So what is the Urim and Thummim.
- (pasue)
- Well the names mean "Lights and Perfections."
 - And there is some disagreement regarding exactly what this was and how it worked...
 - But, many experts believe they were a pair of stones, one light and another dark
 - Each stone indicated a "yes" or "no" from God.
- (pause)
- So the High Priest would ask God a question, reach into the pocket above his breastplate, and pull out either a "yes" or a "no"
 - Do we go to war... Yes or no.
 - So here the disciples are doing the same thing.
 - They are throwing the dice to see which of the two God had chosen to replace Judas Iscariot.
- (pause)
- Well The lot fell on Matthias.
 - Who Matthais... I don't know.
 - This is the only time he is mentioned in scripture.
 - He's someone I'll be interested to meet him in heaven.
- (pause)

Closing

- I think one of the reason Chapter 1 ends in the Disciples casting lots to discern God's will is because it really emphasizes the events in Chapter 2.
 - In Chapter 2 God pours out his Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost.
 - We are no longer left casting lots to discern God's will.
- (pause)
- Instead we are endowed with the Holy Spirit.

- Which through the Holy Sprit Jesus works through us... to accomplish his will and to build his Church.

Closing Prayer

Note Regarding Discussion