

# *Acts 1.1-11—The Acts of the Risen Lord Jesus*

## I. Introduction

- a. I love to read...and that has not always been so for me. I've had to grow into liking some types of books that I thought I would never enjoy. I am a latecomer to reading fiction but I'm catching up. Some of the series I have read were already complete. So, I could start the next one as soon as I finished the previous book in the series. But it is a totally different experience to finish a book and wait for the author to finish the next book to see what happens next. That anticipation, if they are a good author, leaves you longing for more.
- b. Well, that's where we are at right now. We have recently finished the Gospel According to John, which left us hanging. You should be longing for more. You should be wondering what will happen next. The main character of the gospel story had died a cruel death but when we ended, the story was not yet finished. You are certain there's more to the story.
- c. Luke is the author of the Gospel that bears his name as well as the book of Acts. In fact, they are a two-volume work written to the same person. But the gospel story is the same from either of the four. So we launch into this second volume anticipating some answers to what will happen next.

## II. Main Point

- a. That gets us to asking ourselves what is the main point of those eleven verses that we just read and how does it begin to answer the question we were left with at the end of John.
- b. I think the main point is that the risen Lord Jesus continues to do and teach as the reigning King of the Universe from heaven through his apostles and disciples by the Holy Spirit. In fact, I believe that is the main point of the entire book, which is why it is entitled Acts or Acts of the Apostles.

## III. Outline

- a. Understanding Acts in light of the Gospel of John
- b. What should the title of the book be?
- c. Understanding Acts in light of the Gospel of Luke
- d. Acts 1:1-11 Observations

## IV. Exposition

- a. Why should we be longing for more after finishing the Gospel of John?
  - i. When we ended, Jesus was still there on the beach with his disciples. He had promised throughout his farewell that he was going back to the Father to prepare a place for them.
  - ii. He had promised the sending of the Holy Spirit in full New Covenant power. At the end of John, that had not happened.
  - iii. And he had commissioned the disciples to make him known through their proclamation of the gospel. In other words, continue to do and teach what you have seen me do.
  - iv. The book ended without seeing those things fulfilled. We need more to see that happen. The Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) were not the end of the story of what God was continuing to do in the world. He is still at work.
- b. What is the title of this book in your Bible? Yeah...Acts of the Apostles.

- i. While that is true, we must not think that Jesus is not still acting even though as we read, he had ascended into heaven. Some have suggested the title should be Act of the Holy Spirit because of the major emphasis on the Spirit. Again, while that is true it is still incomplete.
  - ii. The best way to think of this book is this: The Acts of the Risen Lord Jesus through his apostles by the Holy Spirit. Jesus began ruling and reigning as King after the resurrection and he continues to do so through his disciples by the Holy Spirit.
  - iii. In other words, while it was obvious that Jesus was the main character in the Gospels, we must also see Christ as the main character in Acts. The Gospels explained Jesus' work on earth and Acts explains Jesus' work on earth from heaven.
- c. We need to understand the purpose of Acts in light of the Gospel of Luke, the first book.
  - i. When the book of Acts begins, we are introduced to a character in the story we know nothing about. His name is Theophilus. It will be helpful to read Luke's introduction to his gospel for help with this.
    - 1. (Lk. 1:1-4) "Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us, <sup>2</sup> just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have delivered them to us, <sup>3</sup> it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus <sup>4</sup> that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught."
    - 2. It appears that Luke had been teaching Theophilus about the gospel story. The stated purpose of these two books in verses 3 and 4 helps us know this: "...to write an orderly account for Theophilus that he may have certainty concerning the things he had been taught."
      - a. Luke went to great effort to write these accounts down for Theophilus (just one person). Of course, he was carried along by the Holy Spirit in this work.
      - b. Luke is carrying out the very purpose for which the Bible was written—that you might know God and worship Him forever through the finished work of Christ and then make him known to others.
      - c. Luke is doing what a typical Christian ought to be doing.
        - i. John told us that the Word was with God and the Word was God and the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.
        - ii. In other words, Jesus came to make God known! That's what Luke is doing with Theophilus.
    - 3. It is essential to note that Luke compiled this story from eyewitnesses and ministers of the word. Eyewitnesses are very important. We want to hear from those who saw these events happen. Praise God they were recorded orderly for Theophilus so that we too could know for certain the things we have been taught.
  - ii. The beginning of Acts briefly retells the ending of Luke's Gospel. Let's take a look at that before we launch too far into Acts because it says that Jesus met with the disciples during a forty-day period.

1. We know that while Jesus traveled to meet the Eleven disciples, he encountered two disciples on the Emmaus road. (Lk. 24:27) "<sup>27</sup> And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself."
2. He left these two after they recognized him when he blessed the bread they were about to eat. They ran to tell the other disciples about what had happened.
3. As they finish telling the disciples, Jesus appears and stands among them scaring them half to death.
  - a. (Lk. 24:36-40) <sup>36</sup> ¶ As they were talking about these things, Jesus himself stood among them, and said to them, "Peace to you!" <sup>37</sup> But they were startled and frightened and thought they saw a spirit. <sup>38</sup> And he said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? <sup>39</sup> See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me, and see. For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have." <sup>40</sup> And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet."
  - b. This was the first appearance to his disciples.
  - c. We know that Thomas was not there for this first visit and Jesus returns again as we read in John.
  - d. Paul tells us 1 Cor. 15 that Jesus met with over 500 brothers at one time. Certainly, all the appearances are not recorded but we know he had much to teach them before his ascension.
4. (Lk. 24:44-49) <sup>44</sup> ¶ 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." <sup>45</sup> Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, <sup>46</sup> and said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, <sup>47</sup> and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. <sup>48</sup> You are witnesses of these things. <sup>49</sup> And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high."
  - a. Up until this point, the disciples have been unable to understand how everything that had happened fit together.
  - b. In Acts, Luke tells us he spoke to them about the Kingdom of God. Jesus poured into them during those forty days all that the Scriptures had been pointing to.
  - c. But this time they get it. Why? Because Jesus opened their minds to understand the Scriptures. They would have never figured it out without Jesus opening their eyes.
  - d. We will never figure it out without Jesus opening our eyes. A primary task of the Holy Spirit is to illumine our minds to understand the Scriptures. We must think over his word and trust the Lord to give understanding.
  - e. All that the bible speaks of concerning Jesus must be understood for the purposes of God.

- f. God's word is the authority for his people. Those who walk by the light of the word prosper in their walk with him.
    - g. Those who walk their own way are destroyed.
  - d. Let's take a more detailed look at verses 1-11.
    - i. Just to be clear, the Book of Acts is not describing a new religion but rather the continuation of what the God who created the heavens and the earth is still doing. Yes, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is keeping his promises that he made to Abraham concerning his Son, namely, Jesus Christ. To be a son of this family, one must repent and believe in the finished work of Christ.
    - ii. Observations
      - 1. The first observation I want to point out is in verse 1—*began* to do and teach.
        - a. That means, there's more that Jesus is going to do and teach.
          - i. A quick sample: In verse 24, Jesus shows them who is to replace Judas. In chapter 2, people are being saved by Christ as the apostle Peter preaches whoever calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved. He pours out his Spirit from heaven in 2:33. He adds to his church in verse 2:47. He grants repentance and forgiveness in 5:32. He personally stops Paul on his way to imprison Christians in chapter 9. And he opens Lydia's heart to believe in chapter 16.
          - ii. And guess what, Jesus is still doing and teaching right now.
        - b. Let me ask a question. How have kingdoms and nations advanced throughout history? In other words, how have they added to their number and power?
          - i. Most of the advances we have read about come by way of war. A nation defeats the army of one nation and then takes possession of its people and resources.
          - ii. There are other ways to be considered but how would have ever guessed that a kingdom would advance and grow by doing and teaching?
          - iii. The apostles go about teaching the entire Bible and calling people from every nation to repent and believe in Jesus. He is their access to God's Kingdom.
          - iv. If it was necessary for them to know all that Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms said about Jesus and the things to be fulfilled then that's what they will go and teach.
            - 1. And we should too.
      - 2. The second observation makes clear that the continued mission of God is dependent on the resurrected Jesus. Jesus presented himself alive "after" his suffering.
        - a. "Death always ends the rule of earthly kings" (Bret). But not with Jesus. Jesus' death and resurrection begin his rule and reign. All other kings and presidents and nations will come to an end. All of them. Yet, to Jesus' Kingdom there will be no end!

- b. That's why resurrection is essential to the mission and Jesus made that certain through many proofs over a period of 40 days.
    - i. No resurrection...end of story. However, the resurrection demands more. It was just beginning. Indeed, the very plan of God when He called Abram out of Ur is continuing through his Seed—Jesus.
    - ii. And the disciples that are sent out to continue this would not risk their lives for a dead Jesus. No. He is alive and they go out knowing that resurrection awaits them too.
  - c. During those days, he tied all the loose ends together for them concerning the Kingdom of God. This is an OT hope. Therefore, he made it clear to them that he came to fulfill all that Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms (which is another way to say OT). The sermons in Acts always point back to the promises made.
  - d. Again, teaching is the means to advance the Kingdom.
  - e. What we believe and teach is dependent on history facts not experience.
3. The third observation is the all important coming of the Holy Spirit.
- a. Yet, how will Jesus advance his Kingdom from heaven? The simple answer is, by the power of the Spirit of God.
  - b. This is the New Covenant promise that was made possible through the work of Christ.
  - c. A primary role of the Holy Spirit is made front and center in verse 8. Power through the Spirit is given to those who have repented and believed in Jesus. And they become his witnesses.
  - d. Advancement of the Kingdom of God in the power of the Holy Spirit through followers of Christ by means of teaching and doing.
    - i. Power does not come by way of military might but by the indwelling Spirit who is all-powerful.
  - e. I think an example on into the story will help us see how teaching (making disciples) in the power of the Holy Spirit advances the Kingdom of God.
    - i. Take note of what Paul did in Ephesus in (Acts 19:8-10) <sup>8</sup> And [Paul] entered the synagogue and for three months spoke boldly, reasoning and persuading them about the kingdom of God. <sup>9</sup> But when some became stubborn and continued in unbelief, speaking evil of the Way before the congregation, he withdrew from them and took the disciples with him, reasoning daily in the hall of Tyrannus. <sup>10</sup> This continued for two years, so that all the residents of Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks.
    - ii. There's lots of fake Christianity these days. People have long felt the pressure to produce...succeed. I've heard stories from an old pastor who went to preach a revival and found out the pastor was

baptizing anybody who would do it no matter if they believed the gospel or not. He was building his own little kingdom.

- iii. I was a part of evangelist group that was speaking in schools and they minimized the gospel as “do you want to go to heaven? Just pray this prayer” and it didn’t matter if you repented of your sins just so long as we had the numbers...the hands raised...the cards signed...we could report big numbers that were false.
- iv. This kind of fake Christianity is harming the church. And while that grieves me, I know that Jesus is building his church and advancing his Kingdom through those who proclaim the whole council of God in the power of the Holy Spirit.
- v. Indeed, it went from Jerusalem, to Judea, to Samaria and to the ends of the earth.

V. Response

a. How might you respond?

- i. This gathering is for the equipping of the saints to do the work of the ministry. If you are here and you are convicted that you may have been sold a false gospel or a false idea of what it really looks like to follow Christ then please come talk to me. There are so many people who have never repented. They said a prayer thinking that would fix them and secure them for eternity. Praying is great but did you repent and are you still believing? Do you have the Holy Spirit? Does the Holy Spirit convict you of sin? Does the Holy Spirit empower you to be a witness for Christ to unbelievers? If not, come to Jesus. Confess your sin. Lay it all down. All of it. Take up your cross and follow Jesus.
- ii. For the saints: doing and teaching is how the Kingdom of God advances. We must preserve those things and keep focus on the task to the praise and glory of God’s grace.