

Acts Ch. 1 and 2

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[0 : 00] Thank you.

Just taking it as it has been written, week by week, looking at verse after verse after verse and trying to get the big picture in the whole story from the text of Scripture.

Over the last three weeks or so, we've been really looking at just three verses, a small number of verses in Acts chapter 2. But this is all a prelude to the fact that we're going to go through the entire book of Acts.

And one of the nice things about being able to be a pastor of a local church, there's many nice things about it. But one of the nice things about it is that I can say, you know, we're going to spend the next five years.

You know, maybe Jesus will come. That would be fantastic. But if he doesn't come and God gives me strength, we're going to go through the whole book of Acts over the next five years. And so this week and next week, these three weeks, we're going to sort of fill in the rest of Acts chapter 1 and 2.

[1 : 27] And then we're going to take a break and go back to 1 Corinthians because we're doing 1 Corinthians over three years. And then we're going to, you know, look at the cross and the resurrection. And we're going to look at John.

And we won't maybe return to the book of Acts until the fall. But we're going to be looking through the book of Acts. And as Heather was reading very well this morning, I realized that that was the old scripture list, not the new one.

So we got a preview of what we're going to be reading, looking at next week. This week, we're looking at Acts chapter 1 to 11. And I invite you to take your Bibles. And I think it's page 942 of your Pew Bibles.

Page 942 of your Pew Bibles. I'm going to be using my personal Bible this morning. So occasionally, you'll notice a slight difference in the wording.

I'm using the English Standard Version. And you folks in the pews have the New King James Version. But, of course, you should always feel free and encouraged to bring your home Bibles with you.

[2 : 35] You know, one of the wonderful things about bringing your own Bible to church is, you know, it will help you later on when you're doing your own private devotions.

And you're going through the text and you're always getting it in the words that you have in your own Bible. Maybe if I mention that the way a word is translated literally and it's just slightly different than the word in your Bible, you can take a pencil or whatever and just make a little mark in the columns.

And the other thing, of course, is it's just really good to feel comfortable with your own Bible that you use in your own private devotions and bring it into church and just, you know, just get familiar with it. And so I encourage you to bring your own Bibles. But, of course, we do have the pew Bibles there for you to read and follow along in. But this morning, I will look at, I'll be using my Bible as I read, but Acts 1, 1-11.

And this is how the book begins. In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and to teach. I just want to put your finger there for a second.

[3 : 44] I just want to mention something. What this book says right off the bat, some of you who are really familiar with the Bible might instantly recognize that the book of Luke begins almost with the exact same word.

In fact, if you go back and read the beginning of Luke, you'll see that Luke writes the book to Theophilus. And he writes the book to Theophilus because he wants to explain to Theophilus the

very, very central facts of who Jesus was and what he accomplished.

And so with the very first word of chapter 1 of Acts, what we see is that really Luke and Acts is one book in two parts with the same author.

And this is really, it will become even more significant in a moment when we're going to look at this word proofs or infallible proofs in your version of the Bible. But just as we begin to get in it, Acts describes the birth of the church.

It describes some significant events in the very, very, very first disciples, in the very, very first churches being planted. It describes Christianity entering Europe, not with invading armies, but with a couple of men talking to some women at a place of prayer.

[4 : 59] And, you know, in a couple of, you know, a little while down the road, we get this wonderful story of Christianity entering Europe. It's all in the book of Acts. But the important thing to note here is to note Luke's purpose.

Luke's purpose is to tell us that the church is founded on the person of Jesus Christ and nothing else. That, in fact, the story of Jesus and what he did and what he accomplished upon the cross and in his resurrection is the absolute bedrock of the Christian faith.

If that goes, we are wasting our time here this morning. We should all be at Starbucks having a coffee and reading The Sunday Citizen or something better.

And that's what we should really be doing. But the story of the church is completely and utterly based on what happened to Jesus. And as we're going to see in a moment as well, that the very same, in a sense, guide and character of Jesus is to be the guide for us.

You know, sometimes Christians get puzzled over, like, why is it that Jesus sometimes asks questions? You might remember the story in the Bible of the woman who has a flow of blood for many years and she touches Jesus and Jesus knows that somebody's been healed, but he doesn't know who's been healed.

[6 : 19] And he said, who touched me? And sometimes Christians puzzle and say, you know, if Jesus is God, how is it that sometimes he has to ask a question? Well, the answer in a nutshell is that this, that Jesus, God, the Son of God, that Jesus lived a life in perfect obedience to his Father.

And his entire life was guided and directed by the Holy Spirit. And so literally sometimes, I mean, Jesus didn't always just know what was going on around him, but Jesus lived his life in complete and utter obedience to the Father.

And sometimes the Father wanted Jesus to know what was going on in a person's mind or what was happening at a great distance. And other times, the Father didn't want Jesus to know that. And Jesus never fretted over this. He just lived in obedience to his Father. And so sometimes the Holy Spirit would, in a sense, minister to Jesus and say, Jesus, this is what is going on in these people's minds.

This is what it is that you have to go. This is where you have to go next. And so as we're going to see in the next few verses, that not only is the church to be completely and utterly based on the life of Jesus, but also that our ministry is to be a continuation of his ministry and that our guidance is to come from the Holy Spirit, just as the Jesus was guided by the Holy Spirit in his entire life of ministry.

[7 : 51] So let's just continue. I'll start verse one again. In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach until the day when he was taken up, after he had given commands through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen.

To them he presented himself alive after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during 40 days and speaking about the kingdom of God.

You just sort of want to put your fingers in the Bible there, and I just want to say a few things.

There's something really important that just was said here, and we don't realize it because we're reading a translation of the Bible from Greek.

You know, in the time that the Bible was written, there were two types of Greek. There was high classical Greek of the great Greek writers and of the great Greek poets, and it's what really educated people would speak.

And then there was street Greek. And the New Testament is not written in high classical Greek. It's written in street Greek. I think with the exception of 2 Peter.

[9 : 00] All of the New Testament is written in street Greek, common Greek. And one of the things which is so significant about what I just read is that Luke uses in Greek, all of a sudden, a technical word, a learned word, a word that goes back to it that Aristotle encapsulated when he was

describing how to speak, how to win arguments, and how to present an argument.

And it's the same word that's used when Greek historians are trying to write, in a sense, scientific or really, really accurate history to bring out the significance of something.

And when they're trying to bring out the significance of something and show why, you know, this thing happening and this thing happening and this thing happening means this, and it's really important that we understand it, they use the word here, which we translate as proofs, and which in your Bibles, in the New King James Version, is translated as infallible proofs.

And so what Luke is saying here is something very, very significant. He's saying that, you know, Luke was a pagan who became a Christian through the ministry of St. Paul.

Luke never knew Jesus. Luke was like you and me. He never saw Jesus in the flesh. He, like you and me, became a Christian as a result of the ministry of the early Christians.

[10 : 26] And what Luke is saying is this, I spent years talking to Mary and talking to Jesus' brothers and talking to Peter and talking to John Mark and talking to all of these people.

And I've spent years in their company and I've asked them detailed questions and I am a doctor by training. Paul calls him the beloved physician. And I am used to careful observation and careful diagnosis.

And I applied my skills and I applied what I've learned from my educated background to interview these people. And that when I've written my gospel and when I've written this book of Acts, I have not just taken a whole pile of rumors and a whole pile of innuendo and a whole pile of speculation and a whole pile of mystical visions.

I have, in fact, searched for the actual words of Jesus and what actually happened. And out of all that has happened and all that has said, I have tried to present to you those central true points that will lead you to the conclusion that you should reach.

And that's what Luke is saying when he uses this word proofs. He's using a technical, philosophical, historiographical. I can't say that very well.

[11 : 45] But you know what I mean. He's using a very, very technical word to communicate to you that, you know, these things really happened and this is what it points to.

The earth has been invaded by Almighty God. And he has invaded the earth. He has invaded the earth not to punish you, not to show off, but he has invaded the earth in the person of his son, Jesus Christ, to save you.

He has come as Christ and as Lord. He has come for you. You can share it in his triumph. And, in fact, in a few moments in verse 4, when it says, and while staying with them, I think in your version it says, and they were assembled together.

In fact, the Greek word which is translated there is a word that implies eating. In other words, Luke is saying, you know, Jesus didn't just sort of, you know, a couple of people didn't, you know, they weren't, you know, sort of starved because they'd been too depressed and too grief-stricken to eat and too caught up with religious hysteria.

And after a couple of days of this, they've had a couple of visions of Jesus. Luke is saying, no, that's not how it happened at all. Just as what I've been telling you about the life of Jesus is absolutely true, I want you to understand that from the 40 days of Jesus' resurrection to the time that his earthly ministry comes to an end with his ascension, for 40 days, time after time, Jesus met with people and they saw him.

[13 : 24] And in fact, they even gathered around the table with him and they ate with him. And so they know that he really conquered sin. They know that he really conquered death and hell and all hostile spiritual powers.

And not only did he spend time with them and prove that he was alive and that he was completely and utterly physical, he taught them. He taught them. And so, and so that what you're getting in the Gospels is this, that Jesus spends 40 days with the apostles teaching them about the kingdom of God, teaching them about himself so that as they're looking back over the three years that they've known him, they say, that's why Jesus said that time and time again.

That's why he did that. That's why this is so significant. That's why, you know, the fact that he likes a particular type of homus shouldn't be in the Gospels. But the fact that he, that he did this should be in the Gospels.

Like, you know, the fact that he had this view of, like, Jesus was the one who taught them for 40 days and he taught them and they listened to him with fresh ears because he had conquered sin

and death and hell and had shown himself alive and they listened.

They listened. Let's continue with our reading. Verse four, and while staying with them, in other words, he spent much time with them, even ate 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 for John baptized with water but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.

[15:07] Just want to pause here for a second as well. Some of us in this room are charismatics. Some of us maybe are worried about charismatics.

Maybe someday all the charismatics can gather in a corner and we can say, oh, they're the charismatics in the congregation and then the, you know, some of us will be surprised.

No, just joking. You know, people sometimes get worried about the Holy Spirit but one of the things which I love about this passage, it's the first thing that struck me this week as I began to read the text.

I read the text every day at least twice apart from looking at commentaries as I prepare to do my sermon and, you know, the way that Luke here, the way that Jesus describes the Holy Spirit is this wonderful phrase, the promise of the Father.

Now, you know, some of us might be worried about, you know, maybe being too open to the Holy Spirit and maybe it sounds a little bit kooky and maybe sometimes people who are really open to the Holy Spirit do kooky things and talk kooky ways but I want to say to you this, if you just, instead of thinking of something which might frighten you, if you just listen to this phrase and say, the Father has a, the promise of the Father, Jesus' desire is that you and I will be open to the promise of the Father.

[16:27] Isn't that just a wonderful way to understand the Holy Spirit? That you and I, Jesus' desire for you and me is to say, Father, I want more and more of your promise.

I want the promise of the Father more and more in my life, in my strengths, in my weaknesses, in my day, in my plans, in my memories, in everything that makes me me.

Father, your promise, may I have more and more of that. And that's how Jesus describes the Holy Spirit, the promise of the Father. Isn't that just so beautiful? Verse 6, and when they had come together, this is a second type of encounter now that Luke is describing, and when they had come together, they asked him, Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?

I don't have time to do it, but Calvin in his commentary said there are as many errors in this question as there are words. And Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?

The apostles are expecting that Jesus is just going to no longer be hidden, but break out, destroy the Romans, destroy the idols, destroy the temples, and just rule.

[17:39] Jesus answers like this, it is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority, 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.

Just want to pause here for a second. I grew up in a church background that always had prophecy conferences, and I have this really delightful man that I, you know, my real office is the second cup at the corner of Rito and Dalhousie, and there's this wonderful man, I think he works as a dishwasher, and he saw me reading my Bible, and he speaks to me every day now when he's there, and he's a very, very devout Christian.

He's always, every time he reads the news, he only reads the news in terms of how it will fit in with the second coming of Christ, and I just listen to him. It's just really nice to have somebody there who, you know, who just loves Jesus, and I know he prays for me while I'm working on my sermons and stuff like that, and he's a great guy, very simple guy, but a great guy, and, you know, it is appropriate for us to do some reading and to always be reminded of the fact that Jesus will come again.

It's very, very important, but at the end of the day, we don't know when he's going to come back. I mean, that's what Jesus says to us directly right here. It's not for us to know. It's not for you and me to know.

I mean, it might be that before I finish this sermon, Jesus will come back. Wouldn't that be fantastic? But it might be that he will not come back for centuries.

[19:30] And on one level, we as Christians have to always wait. We have to always try to live our lives mindful of the fact that at any moment Jesus might return. But on the other hand, we have to plan our lives and make our lives saying, how can we pass on the gospel to our children and to our children's children and to our children's children's children?

You know, and we have to both have this constant willingness to be open to the fact that Jesus might come today. And may it be so, Lord.

And we also have to say, how can we, you know, what plans can we as a church be making to help communicate and send the gospel on from generation to generation and to the ends of the earth? And Jesus here has just said, you know, you know, Sinclair, you don't know when I'm going to come. So let's get upon your duty. And this text of scripture then, Jesus says, you know, you're going to receive power of the Holy Spirit.

When God says that we're going to receive power, what that tells us is that we don't have enough of our own. You know, he doesn't say, gosh, look how talented Sinclair is and look how talented the people of St. Albans are.

[20 : 44] Let's give them a task they can accomplish by themselves. In a sense, Jesus doesn't even pay any attention to that. He says, George and the people of St. Albans, I want you to fast and pray and I want you to read my word and I want you to be open to whatever big goals and big projects I want to give you and I want you to seek my will and then I want you to step out in faith and do it because you know what?

I'm always going to give you something. If you're listening and if you're obedient, I'm always going to give you something more than your power and more than your wealth and more than your time and more than your numbers, I'm always going to give you stuff like that because I don't want you to rely upon your own power.

I want you to rely upon me. That's what God keeps saying. I want you to rely upon me. You know, you folks, you don't need more of me. You need more of Jesus.

You don't need more of me. You need more of the Father. You don't need more of me. You need more of the promise of the Father, the Holy Spirit. And you don't need more of each other. You need more of God. And so, you know, when the word power here is used, Jesus is saying, God can give you the resources.

He can give you the power to accomplish his projects. And his projects and his will is always going to be beyond your power. get on your knees.

[22 : 12] You know, get on your knees. That's what the text is saying to me and to you. Get on our knees. And the other thing which is so wonderful about this text is that we're called to be witnesses.

To be witnesses. That's really, really a wonderful thing. You know, because some of us aren't very philosophically inclined and some of us aren't very, very good at archaeology and some of us don't know Greek.

Probably none of us other than Dave knows Greek. And, you know, none of us maybe are really good at this and really good at that but, you know, all of us can say, this is who Jesus is.

This is what he wants to do for you. Like, all of us can be witnesses. And not only can we all be witnesses but this text is in a sense also causing us saying, God wants to keep kicking you out of the church.

Because as I've said, some of you who are regular members here, you're maybe familiar with this line of me, is that Christianity is not a come-to religion but a go-to faith.

[23 : 17] Christianity is not, let's get things inside these walls the way we like them and then we can just wonder when people are going to come. That's not what Christianity is.

Christianity is not a come-to religion but a go-to faith where we are to take, we are to think of those first and second and third steps that we are to make to our neighbours.

And not only to our neighbours but our neighbours in Toronto and our neighbours in Vancouver and our neighbours in Asia and our neighbours in Africa. We are to take, we are to think through and pray through those first steps towards our Muslim neighbours or our Buddhist neighbours or the Goths or the people who have lots of metal stuck in inappropriate places in their bodies at least for some of us old people like me and we are not to say when on earth are they going to come to their senses and come to us.

That's the mindset of a come-to religion. Jesus calls us to a go-to faith and maybe in many cases it calls us to begin to pray for our Muslim mechanic and our Buddhist doctor and the Goth who serves us coffee at the Starbucks and that maybe God is saying you know what George I've called you to that mechanic and that doctor and to go to that coffee place so you can begin to pray for them that they will come to know Jesus and maybe as we are praying about how they can come to know Jesus then maybe he's going to convict you of some big hairy goal or some brand new thing that we can do that's well beyond our power and then you know folks we're to roll up our sleeves and get on

our knees and say okay God let's try to do this because we can't do it in our own strength. So that's what Jesus says you're to be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth and when he had said these things as they were looking on he was lifted up and a cloud took him out of their sight the cloud in a sense it's an image of the Shekinah glory of the Old Testament it is an image of Jesus entering into God's glory and at the same time the fact that the cloud after Jesus has reached a certain point blocks our sight of him and while they were gazing into heaven as he went behold two men they're both angels stood by them in white robes and said men of Galilee why do you stand looking into heaven this Jesus who has taken up from you into heaven will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven later on in the liturgy folks we're going to say Christ has died Christ has risen Christ will come again and just as Jesus Christ came and walked amongst us and in a physical form and just as after he had tasted all there is to taste of death he rose triumphant over sin and death and the evil one and he ate with the disciples and he talked to the disciples and the disciples touched him and he ascended bodily into heaven

[26 : 31] Christ has died Christ has risen Christ will come again someday the same Jesus will return may it be today let us pray Jesus we thank and praise you that out of love for us you set aside your glory and your splendor out of love for us you set all of that aside and took upon yourself the humble form of a servant that you took upon yourself our human nature and walked amongst us we thank and praise you Jesus that you tasted all there is to taste of suffering and trials and temptations only you never lost perfect communion with the Father you never disobeyed him you never rebelled against the Holy Spirit but in all of your trials and temptations and sufferings you remained in obedience to the Father and open to the moving of the Holy Spirit we give you thanks and praise Jesus that you died upon the cross and on the cross you bore in your body and in your person all of my sins and the sins of the people in this room and the sins of the whole world all that separates us from the Father you bore in your body and in your person we thank and praise you

Jesus that you did this out of love for us and that out of love for us you tasted all there is to taste of death and that out of love for us you rose triumphant over sin and death and the evil one on Easter Sunday we thank and praise you that out of love for us you taught the apostles and convinced them of your triumph we thank and praise you Jesus that out of love for us the Holy Spirit is sent abroad into the world and abroad into our hearts teaching us to say yes to Jesus yes to his triumph and victory yes to him as Savior yes to him as Lord loving Father may you send your promise upon us more and more and more that all that we are might be one yes to you in Jesus' name we pray Amen which are will be a

God bless you thank Sah ■■■■ is spared