

**both to
do
and
teach**

Acts 1:1 – 3

~ As your personal guide in our Spiritual Safari expedition through the entire Word of God, I have now led us through each of the four Gospel accounts; and in each Gospel record, the Lord Jesus Christ showed Himself to the disciples after His death and burial. Honestly, because I always am honest with you dear readers, it is against my natural judgment to continue this so-called safari presenting my teaching of Acts, but the Lord has told me to continue to write today - and He has made a way - so, I am obligated by love. As I write this report, I believe I understand how Jeremiah felt when he said, "...I will speak of His Name no more; but the Word of the Lord burned in my bones as a fire." Well, perhaps we should continue because this book of Acts is sometimes called the fifth Gospel; it is definitely a continuation of the Gospel of Luke – and Luke is the author. Sir William Ramsay stated Luke is the greatest of all historians, both ancient and modern. So, if I quit now, the Gospel presentation wouldn't quite be complete.

Our safari through Acts is a whopping thirty-five report collection detailing the early history of the church. Acts spans a time period of about thirty years of Biblical history. We see the birth and subsequent persecution of the church; the spreading of the Gospel; the first missionary's going forth; the account of the first martyr, and the first council. For those who read these reports, it will be a rich and exciting review of Scriptural history; filled with action, suspense and deep emotions.

Another interesting and quite remarkable observation to note is that the last recorded fact in Matthew is the resurrection; in the Book of Mark, it is the ascension of Jesus into Heaven; in Luke, the last recorded fact is the promise of the coming of the Holy Spirit; and in John, it was the promise of the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ! All four of those facts are located right here in chapter one of Acts. It's as if the Holy Spirit poured all

of the main Gospel truths into a funnel and ran them into the jug of this new book. From here, they open up into a vast spiritual savannah.

The great apostolic missionary commission instituted by Jesus Himself in the four Gospels is confirmed and reaffirmed in Acts. This section of Scripture is a foundation upon which all of the epistles are built, and it is also a bridge between the Gospels and epistles. If we didn't have Acts, there would be a yawning chasm of uncertainty and unanswered questions when comparing the Gospels and the balance of the entire New Testament. If we didn't have this book at this time and in this place, we would be missing critical information, and nothing could replace it.

We have examined a whole lot of the Old Testament in our safari lately. After we concluded the Gospel of John, we considered Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges and Ruth in an Old Testament marathon. Of course, our safari traverses back and forth between the Old and New Testaments; but there was a very definite reason we considered the books previously as we did. Let's just leave it at this: the Bible is supernatural, friends. Acts records the origin of the spiritual body – the church; Genesis recorded the origin of the universe. Let's all pray for wisdom, judgment and discernment in Holy Writ before we continue, shall we?

The key verse of Acts is verse eight of this first chapter. We will examine that verse in our second report. "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." Our Spiritual Safari does not divide the books of the Bible as a normal Bible study would because we are not interested in a theological perspective – only spiritual. Interestingly, Acts doesn't have an ending – it just drops off with Paul in his own hired house in Rome. That's because the Book of Acts continues to be written from Heaven as I write this report and as you read it. I believe God still has Luke up there writing as fast as he can. So, maybe you and I will be found in Luke's book – who knows? I hope so. If we DON'T make the continuation of the book of Acts, we can rest assured we will be found in whatever book God keeps regarding what we are doing for Him today. At the end of the Bible, it says very clearly the "books" plural are going to be open. That should frighten and alarm ALL of us; irrespective

of what good little Sunday school boys and girls we imagine ourselves to be.

For the two or three of you dear readers who sincerely desire to study the Bible with me this way - it's not complicated. As I said, I intentionally steer clear of theology and doctrine. I try to keep the language simple and on an eighth grade reading level – for the most part. The Bible is not to be presented in some high and scholarly manner, in my estimation. I definitely do NOT approach the Bible with a philosophical bent; I only attempt to teach all of it in its historical, geographical and spiritual context – without OVER- spiritualizing our message because that is another great danger. To put it simply: I try to keep it simple! I happen to know the Holy Spirit can speak to us and through us that way. I receive comments from people in all parts of the world and from all walks of life; from the professor in university to the teenage girls in foreign country's that can barely read the English language. They all testify I am understandable – and you have no idea how much I thank God for that. It happens to be the nicest thing anyone could say about my reports – because I believe the Word of God MUST be presented simply in order to be understood. So many teachers have overcomplicated the Bible, over-spiritualized everything and, I am convinced, they do so because they are totally ignorant of it. It seems to be a cover up. So many of them seem to misread when Jesus said, “feed My sheep” – they think Jesus said, “feed all the animals on earth!” Jesus didn't say to feed the dogs, friends – but that's what people seem to want to do with the Word of God. I don't. I'm only feeding sheep. His sheep.

Now, at the risk of contradicting myself, we actually do outline three or four books on safari; and this is one of them - but I am only going to mention eight striking and special features in Acts that, if you notice them, make this book extremely meaningful:

(1) Prominence of the Lord Jesus Christ: *In this first chapter, Jesus has ascended back into Heaven, but He is still at work in His ministry! The only thing that changes is His physical position. Here on earth, His headquarters was in Capernaum; but as we begin here, they are back in Heaven at the right hand of God, His Father and our Father.*

(2) Prominence of the Holy Spirit: Christ promised several times He would send the Holy Spirit after His ascension back to Heaven in the Gospel of John. This is the age of the Holy Spirit that we live in - the Age of Grace. The great fact of this age is the indwelling of the Holy Spirit - first Corinthians chapter six verse nineteen.

(3) Power of the church: read this paragraph very carefully. The power of the early church displayed in Acts is **TOTALLY ABSENT** from the contemporary church on earth today – all churches. You can just write that down, my friends. I happen to know what I am talking about; and if you don't believe it, then you are not grounded in reality and, frankly, you might as well stop reading. All of this talk about revival just happens to be a bunch of malarkey! The church is completely impotent at reaching the lost man today. Forget revival – it ain't happening here, and it ain't happening in your church, either. There is no power in the modern church – none of them – at all.

(4) Prominence of the church, visible and invisible: the church is a new institution in our safari now. We're going to consider the church as we haven't examined it previously. We haven't even really mentioned the church heretofore, because the Bible has only mentioned it briefly and in passing.

(5) Prominence of places: Acts begins in Jerusalem and ends in Rome. I would refer you to and cite Dr. Ramsay who has thoroughly checked the many places referred to in Acts and has verified the accuracy of this section of Scripture.

(6) Prominence of persons: Dr. Luke mentions 110 persons by name in Acts. My personal estimation is that by the end of the first century, there were literally millions of believers in the world. The early church experienced genuine and phenomenal growth in the first three centuries; growth that has not been seen since. Growth has slowed, stagnated, and what we have in our churches today are mostly a bunch of make believers playing self-righteousness and perhaps two or three legitimate saints that are led in here and there. That's the way the Lord Jesus said it would work out, too, by the way. We'll get to the epistle of Jude soon enough, where Scripture will

literally traumatize some of us. If we read Jude and don't begin to question our own salvation with a blanched soul, then something is radically wrong with our relationship to Christ.

(7) *Prominence of the resurrection as the exclusive centerpiece of all Gospel preaching: our churches today have only one Easter sermon each year. Most of them don't even get the Gospel out on that day - let alone any other. Well, every sermon we read in Acts is going to be an Easter sermon surrounding the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. The death, burial and resurrection of Christ are the central themes of all preaching from this section of Scripture forward, beginning with Peter's sermon on the Day of Pentecost, and never changing in any epistle. Peter said, "... what is taking place is because Christ is in Heaven."*

There are myriad hobby writers writing about the Bible and, in the process, manufacturing pure nonsense. Some of them verse-grab prophecy snippets while others exploit particular facets of a truth and split theological hairs until nothing edifying remains except some self-boastful position for them. But if you REALLY want a worthy doctrine, let me suggest the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God combined with the Word of God as the authoritative and inerrant revelation of Christ Jesus. The Lord Jesus said, "if I be lifted up I will draw all men unto Me." Well, the ONLY way to "lift Christ up" is in His resurrection. Raised from the dead is the message; and I cannot over-emphasize that. If the resurrection message is not mentioned, then I don't care how much one speaks about Jesus – or about how lovely He is – they're not reaching anyone with the Gospel. How important this is. I can tell you with very definite certainty this is the entire problem in the modern church. Well, the Book of Acts is going to bear down on that fact so hard our spiritual pencil lead may break.

(8) *Prominence of Peter in the first section of Acts, and Paul in the last section: There is a strange omission of the other apostles. The emphasis in Acts is the ministry of THESE two men - and no one else. Dr. Luke was well acquainted with the ministry of both of these men. Many seem to erroneously assume there is some contradiction between Peter and Paul; well, that simply isn't so. I'm sure Luke, Paul and Peter had many talks and*

discussions on myriad occasions. I'm sure they discussed many things that are not recorded.

TITLE: The proper title for this historical book of Acts has always been a supreme problem for some strange reason. I use the American Standard Version 1901 Old Scofield Study System; and if you can get a copy of this Bible I would certainly recommend it.

~ "The Acts of the Apostles" — *Authorized and Revised Versions*

~ "The Acts of the Apostles" — *Codex Vaticanus (MSS)*

~ "The Acts of the Ascended and Glorified Lord" — *Robert Lee*

~ "Words Concerning Deeds" — *Bantu title*

Acts 1:1, 2 gives the key to our problem: "The Lord Jesus Christ at work by the Holy Spirit through the apostles" – those human instrumentalities seem to encapsulate it. That is the title I would give it, personally. So, with all of that background, let's begin the text in Jerusalem with Jesus and Luke and examine even more carefully those things we have reported previously on safari - as in, the Gospel accounts....

1 The former treatise have 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 that he through the Holy Spirit had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen:

3 To whom also he shewed himself alive after his suffering and death by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God:

~ The "former treatise" is the Gospel of Luke; and Theophilus means "lover of God!" However, this cannot be watered down to mean just ANY lover of God; no, Luke knew this man who loved the Lord. Well, in the Gospel of Luke, Jesus began to do and teach. Here, Jesus is continuing to do and teach. Right down to this very moment we see Christ "doing and teaching" - and that will continue until He takes the church out of this world. Just because Jesus has been taken up doesn't mean He isn't

continuing His ministry at the right hand of God the Father. The only difference is that from the vantage point of the Throne, He is working through the Holy Spirit! The Holy Spirit has now given commandment unto the apostles whom He had chosen. This is the same rank and file we have in our physical army; the Lord Jesus Christ commands the Holy Spirit Who commands the apostles who commands you and me through the Word of God where we are presently. Verse two is, actually, a very remarkable statement.

As in the Gospel of Luke, we are given another periodic sentence as our opener. This encompasses all of the first four verses – they all comprise one sentence. Well, there are ten recorded appearances of the Lord Jesus after the resurrection. This post-resurrection ministry of Christ has more importance and more bearing on the lives of Christians today than the entire three-year earthly ministry accounts in the four Gospel records. The “Kingdom of God” includes not only His purpose in the church, but it reaches far beyond to re-establish the house of David! Paul said, “.... though we have known Him after the flesh, we know Him no longer after the flesh.” You and I do not know Jesus as a man Who walked here two thousand years ago. We know Him as the Man in the Glory – and the modern-day church has totally lost sight of Him. As I type this report and as you read it, Christ is in Heaven and is as real as raindrops.

Following is a statement from a self-proclaimed life-long church member who had gone through every imaginable ritual and sacrament known to the church - and who honestly believed they were a saved Christian: “.... only after coming to the Word of God properly, correctly and completely did I discover I didn't even have a clue Who Christ was.” Well, Jesus did walk here on earth two millennia ago, and Christ is in Heaven today – and in both cases, we can come to Him and know Him as our Savior and Lord.”

The problem with "unbelief" in our heart does not rest on Bible facts, because those are verifiable and available. I wonder how many people reading this report right now doubt the battle of Waterloo and that Napoleon fought there; or that the Battle of the Bulge ever happened? Quite frankly, I believe both of those happened, but I have no evidence for either one of them. Someone wrote something down - it may or may not

be true. Well, Scripture gives me ten thousand times more evidence for the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ directly in my own life than I have about any of those other people, places or things - yet I accept them as historical facts. I received that evidence because I asked God to show Himself real to me; and then I had faith when He did. See, the problem is that our natural tendency is to run away from God in disobedience – just like Adam and Eve. The problem is NOT an intellectual problem; the diagnosis is sin in your life you refuse to give up. The problem, my atheistic friends, is with YOU – not with the Word of God. If you truly want Christ to show Himself alive through many infallible proofs – He will. Why not take Him up on His offer and verify Christ for yourself today? Today may be your last tomorrow ~
