

...To Be Continued... - Acts 1:1-5
Notes, Family Worship, Bible Reading

Notes from the Sermon

We are starting a new series this week in the New Testament book of Acts. So as a starter, let me encourage you to find the study guide Pastor Mike has written for our church for this series, available on Koinonia or the Genesis Blog. We also want to encourage you to use this guide each week in both review and preparation for the sermons. Of course, the material in this section and the family worship below will allow you to grow as a disciple and lead your family in discipleship interacting with content from the sermon each week. Furthermore, if you look below you can see that we have the text for today and for next week listed so you can both review and read ahead for study.

Acts is an amazing book, and one that is so important for our understanding of our faith. Written by Luke, it is a sequel to the Gospel bearing his name. Both are written to a person whose name Theophilus means friend of God. This name may be a pseudonym, but either way he was probably an official of some sort in the Roman government, possibly even involved in the Apostle Paul's trial noted at the end of the story. He had been exposed to the truth claims and story of Christianity but was a skeptic. So Luke wrote his Gospel (story about the life of Jesus) to convince Theo of the things he had heard, and he writes Acts to show how the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus was already an event that was transforming the world, with the Gospel and the church spreading like wildfire in the Roman Empire.

These books are written in the genre of historical narrative. They are telling history as story with a goal to persuade the reader of the truth claims made by and about Jesus. Luke was a physician, well educated, and had a keen eye for writing history. Luke is known for his thoroughness, attention to detail, and accuracy as a historian. Over the last 100 years there have been multiple archeological finds which have verified Luke's precision as a historian. We should expect this, of course, because all Scripture is inspired by God (2 Timothy 3:16), meaning that the Holy Spirit is the author behind the author. Luke's goal then, was for his original hearer, and also all future hearers to understand that the story of Jesus and the spread of the Gospel is one being revealed by the One True Trinitarian God found in the pages of the Scriptures, and that our redemption is in Jesus Christ alone. He also wants us to be amazed at a phenomena that was happening in history right before their eyes, the spread of Christianity around the world at a pace that is nothing more than miraculous.

So Acts tells of basically a 30 year snapshot which is the birth of Christianity and the church. The outline for the book is given in Acts 1:8, the spread of the Gospel starting in Jerusalem, then to Judea and Samaria, and on to the ends of the earth. Jerusalem is the central city in Israel, representing the political, cultural, and religious center for the Jews. The story begins there. Judea is the region around Jerusalem. It would be like speaking of the city of St. Louis as Jerusalem and the metro area as Judea. Samaria is north of Jerusalem, but is inhabited by Samaritans, an ethnic group despised by and who also hate Jews. But the Gospel goes to people and places that the Jews will not. The end of the book then tells us the story of the Gospel going to the ends of the earth, as Christianity reaches every major city in the Roman Empire.

The story begins in Acts 1 with 120 people, having been with Jesus for forty days after His resurrection being commanded to go wait for the promised Holy Spirit. That's it, 120 followers of Jesus is how the story begins. But then, fifty days after Jesus crucifixion on the day of Pentecost (you will have to come in a couple weeks to know how I know it was exactly 50 days) the Holy Spirit is poured out on this group of 120 and the miracle begins. On the first day there are 3,000 people who believe. Just a few weeks later the church is numbered at 5,000 men, and just a short time after that the number is too big to count. The church is growing, yet comfortable in Jerusalem until persecution forces Christ's followers to leave the city. This sparks the explosion. By the end of the book, a short 30 years later the advance of the Gospel and growth of the early church is nothing less than miraculous. At every turn, jealous Jews and angry Greek and Roman officials are doing all they can to end this movement, but it can't be stopped. As we read toward the end we think that evil has thwarted the movement as the

missionary Apostle Paul is arrested and held for a couple years. Yet in the end, even this is part of the Divine plan as Paul is shipped to Rome where he is able to share Jesus to Caesar's guards and household.

The story of Acts ends there, but the grand story does not. Time does not allow me to share the whole story here, but know that every follower of Jesus and every church that has been planted has its history and roots trace back to the movement that explodes in Acts. And the story, as we study it is given for much more than information. This story, like all stories in the Scriptures comes with an invitation from God to join the story and live the mission. This is our task as we preach and teach through this amazing book.

Bible Reading for the Week

Daily Bible Readings

Sun	Mon	Tues	Weds	Thurs	Fri	Sat
Acts 15	Acts 16	Acts 17	Acts 18	Acts 19	Acts 20	Acts 21

Reading from this past week: Acts 1:1-5

Reading in preparation for this coming Sunday: Acts 1:6-11

Family Worship

Song - *Act Justly, Love Mercy, Walk Humbly*

<https://youtu.be/dk7lIf2LkKc>

Gospel Project

Unit: Away from the land

Story: God healed the people.

Big Picture Question: What is God like?

Answer: God is holy, good, and loving.

Scripture: Numbers 21

New City Catechism

Question #8: What is the Law of God stated in the 10 Commandments?

Answer: You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself an idol. You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God. Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Honor your father and your mother. You shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not give false testimony. You shall not covet.

Verse: Exodus 20:3

Scripture

Acts 1:1-5

- Luke references his first book, which is his Gospel story. Can you recite the basic story of Jesus' life? Why is this story important?
- What are some of the proofs that Jesus actually rose from the dead? Why is it important to know that our faith is actually grounded in real events that happened in history?
- What is the promise the first followers of Jesus were commanded to wait for? Why is this promise our key to having power to live God's mission in life?
- How are you connected to the story in Acts? Who brought the Gospel to you and how did you come to know Jesus?

Prayer

*Pray for our Acts series, that God would help us as a church, and you as a follower of Jesus join in on God's great story.

*Pray for our service at the Blevins Elementary Trivia Night this Saturday evening.