

We've laid the groundwork for **a hopeful, forward-looking vision** carried by a church **grounded in a Christian worldview**; **ready to take captive every thought and pretension in the culture that sets itself against the knowledge of God.** The people of God armed with a biblical worldview become the remedy to what ails our fearful, sin-sick and idolatrous culture. Now we'll examine the most hopeful book in the New Testament—Acts of the Apostles.

Background: Luke was a travelling companion of Paul and features **prominently in Paul's journeys** and ministry.

- Acts was written by Luke whom Paul refers to in Colossians as a **Physician**. Luke is likely a former slave.
- The Book of **Acts is the Sequel to the Gospel of Luke** and provides a critical link between the four Gospel accounts and the Letters of the Apostles to the church for instruction.
- Certain large sections could also have been prepared as an Amicus brief for Paul's trial.

The Purpose: To strengthen the convictions and faith of the reader by documenting the birth, growth, and global expansion of the Church due to the bold proclamation of the Gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Luke punctuates his narrative with **6 summary statements about the growth and expansion of the church.**

1. After Peter's Spirit-enabled Sermon on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:42-47)
2. After the Church prayed for boldness to proclaim the Gospel in miraculous power (Acts 4)
3. After the cleansing of the Church of false members (Acts 5:11-16)
4. After the Apostles' trial before the Sanhedrin (Acts 5:42)
5. After the first Deacons were selected (Acts 6:7)
6. After the Death of Stephen (Acts 8:4)

Acts 1:1-2 "Indeed I produced the first volume, O Theophilus, concerning all that Jesus began to do and teach ² until the day he was taken up, after he had left directions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen. ³ After he had suffered, he presented himself alive to them also with many irrefutable proofs, appearing to them over a duration of forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God."

Transition: Let's make some observations about Luke's purpose in writing
The Book of Acts...

1. It strengthens our conviction and faith through reading the book.

So he says in Acts 1:1 “Indeed I produced the first volume concerning all that Jesus began to do and teach”—and he links this account to the first one...

Luke 1:3 With this in mind, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, I too decided to write **an orderly account** for you, most excellent Theophilus,⁴ so that you may know **the certainty of the things** you have been taught.”

We come to know with certainty the things we’ve been taught about Christ as we read the Gospel account of Christ.

So Luke wants him to read it. Reading Scripture was a long-held value in the Judeo-Christian Faith.

Nehemiah 8:1 They asked the scribe Ezra to bring the book of the **law of Moses** that the Lord had given Israel.² On the first day of the seventh month, the priest Ezra brought the law before the assembly of men, women, and all who could **listen with understanding**.

They key is to listen with a view to understanding what we are reading, or hearing.

8:5 Ezra opened the book in full view of all the people, since he was elevated above everyone. As he opened it, all the people stood up.⁶ Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God; and with their hands uplifted, all the people said, “Amen, Amen!” Then they knelt low and worshiped the Lord with their faces to the ground.

The presence of God’s Word among them causes them to rise in respect at its reading—and then a full on worship service ensues.

Notice that the Word of God is central to their experience of God in worship. Don’t let your experience of God become untethered from his Holy Word and the sound doctrine of Scripture.

NEXT...

8:7 The Levites, explained the law to the people as they stood in their places.⁸ They read out of the book of the law of God, **translating** and **giving the meaning** so that the people could **understand** what was read.

The Priests don’t just read the book—they explain its meaning, translating the sense of it so that people could grasp it. Exposition.

When you have a congregation that shows up with a heart that wants to understand the message, and raucous, God-honoring worship where the Truth of God is central to our experience of God; and teachers who work hard at explaining the text—you have a prescription for increasing certainty; strengthened conviction and faith because of the right handling of the book.

John 6:63 “The **words** that I have spoken to you are spirit and are **life**.” We are faithful to read the book, seek understanding of the book, explain the book—but ultimately it’s the *words of Christ that bring life*.

Luke is clear on his purpose—I wrote this two-volume set to fortify your faith; to ground your certainty in God’s Word.

The book of Acts was written...

2. To remind us of the Gospel. Scholars have suggested many major themes on the book. To be sure there are lots of great themes we'll be able to unpack along the way. Narrative layers that will enrich us, encourage us, challenge us and provoke us to love and good deeds.

But make no mistake about it—the central theme of this book is the Gospel—Good News of Jesus.

Look carefully at verse three...³ **After he had suffered, he presented himself alive to them also with many irrefutable proofs, appearing to them over a duration of forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God."**

There are two OT characters or types brought together in Luke's presentation of the Gospel—these characters run like two interweaving threads right through Luke and Acts.

Luke 20:9 and the Parable of the Tenants is the key. The land owner sends his **servant** who is mistreated and beaten and then sends **his Son** who is killed by the people.

Suffering Servant (Isa 40-55; 61): we learn from Luke's Gospel that Jesus is the suffering Servant of Isaiah 40-55.

This servant of the Lord is chosen, anointed, and sent by God on behalf of his people and the nations. But he is mistreated, beaten, not believed, and killed.

Luke cites these Songs of the Servant in reference to Jesus

- Lk 2 (Isa 49:1–6)
- Lk 3; 9 (Isa 42:1–4)
- Lk 4:14–18 (Isa 61)
- Lk 22:63 (Isa 50)
- Lk 22:37; 23; 24:27; Acts 8:32-33 (Isa 53)

Royal Son (Ps 110; Isa 9:5-7; 52:12-53:12; Ps 22; Ps 2; 2 Sam 7:8-29)

Luke 24:44-47 "He told 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, the Prophets, and the Psalms must be fulfilled." ⁴⁵ Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures. ⁴⁶ He also said to them, "This is what is written: The **Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead the third day,** ⁴⁷ and **repentance for forgiveness of sins** will be proclaimed in his name to all the nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

The Gospel is the royal announcement that the worlds rightful King has come, led a sinless life, died a substitutionary death, and has risen from the dead to defeat sin, death, and hell. And now offers salvation to all who believe that proclamation.

Luke's two-volume set reminds us of the centrality of the Gospel—the Good news That God's Son-king reigns supreme through an act of horrific and unimaginable, victorious suffering for you and for me.

3. To prove that the Gospel is true. Again, a carefully reading reveals Luke's motives.

³After he had suffered, **he presented himself alive to them also with many irrefutable proofs**, appearing to them over a duration of forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God."

This means that Jesus's suffering (his passion) was such that the trauma of it left no doubt that Jesus had been physically killed through crucifixion.

What convincing proofs did Jesus supply them?

- **His own resurrected body.** These were **(1) Bodily Appearances.** Jesus said "a spirit doesn't have flesh and blood as you see I have". **(2) Cumulative—Jesus had to show them many convincing proofs that it was really him bodily risen.** This suggests that the Apostles are psychologically predisposed to not believing it. Their disbelief due to the fantastical nature of the event has to be overcome through convincing evidences. **(3) It is on the basis of this hope of resurrection that Christianity rises or falls.** If Christ has not been risen then our hope and faith have been in vain.
- **The testimony of fulfilled prophecy.** **Jesus fulfills numerous specific, individual passages which prefigured the Messiah—but he also fulfilled sweeping themes like Suffering prophets and the Suffering Davidic Son.** Jesus had to reteach the Disciples the Bible through the lenses of the Cross.
- **The Witness of the Holy Spirit.** How does God reveal the truth of the Gospel? Through the preaching and testimony of the original Apostles (God's Word) and through the inner witness of the Holy Spirit.
Acts 5:30-32 "The God of our ancestors raised up Jesus, whom you had murdered by hanging him on a tree. ³¹ God exalted this man to his right hand as ruler and Savior (Royal Son), to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins (Suffering Servant). ³² We are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey him."
The Apostles were eye-witnesses of Christ's life, death, and resurrection—and this is what the Holy Spirit testifies to. The disciples had God's Holy Spirit to convince them of all that he had spoken to them.

Jesus appeared to them for nearly 50 days providing them with many convincing proofs he was alive—then Poured the Spirit out on them on the day of Pentecost. The testimony of the Gospel (along with all of the arguments and evidence) comes first—then the Spirit confirms the testimony.

Luke is going to provide us with many good reasons to believe. To open our hearts to the work of the Spirit and to obey the Gospel by trusting in Christ and walking with Christ.

Application:

1. We must read the book.

- Read it daily. Develop the habit of reading God's Word.
- Read it eager to discover its truths.
- Read it with an open mind and an open heart.
- Read it in faith and prayerfully. Expecting God's Spirit to teach you and to bring greater conviction
- Read it in community. With other believers as you instruct each other in the Word.

(Acts 1:1-8)

2. We must be reminded what's so Good about the Good News.

- If the Gospel of King Jesus's salvation is central to the book—then let's follow God's design—why would we want to be taken away from the Bible's own governing interests?

3. We must be convinced of the truth and able to share it with others.

- Have we taken the time to reinforce our own faith with apologetic and reasonable arguments and evidence?
- If Jesus suffered and is now alive—can you demonstrate through arguments and evidence? Are we prepared to not only share the Gospel but show that it is true?
- Are you aware of the major prophecies that Jesus fulfilled in the Old Testament? Isa 7; 9; 11; 40-61; Ps 2; Ps 110; Ezek 34
- Pray in faith that the Spirit will bear witness to their spirit of the truth of the proclaimed and preserved message.