

## 01a ACTS

Let's take a moment at the beginning of our study this evening to clear our minds, prepare our hearts, and seek the ministry of God's Holy Spirit as we study God's Word. Shall we pray? Father, we thank you for the privilege of studying your Word together. We recognize its importance in our lives.

We know that we cannot sustain a heavenly viewpoint. We cannot remember our heavenly citizenship. We have great difficulty in following your plan and purpose if we do not regularly expose ourselves to your Word, and not only study it, but also meditate upon it.

We pray that as we look at the Book of Acts this evening, that God the Holy Spirit will impress it on our hearts in such a way that it will serve as the basis for fruitful meditation, for growth, and for progress in your plan. We thank you for the country in which we live, the government that supervises and superintends through the authority you have delegated to it. We ask your blessing on our president, on our congressional leaders, on our military, and on all those who safeguard our freedom.

And we pray now that you'll give us insight and understanding in your Word. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.

Well, we begin a new study tonight, although in some ways it is the continuation of a study, because we begin volume two of Luke's two-volume magnum opus. This book in Greek is called Praxeis, which means Acts. And we haven't figured that out yet.

We're using our new microphone system tonight, of which I am thrilled and ecstatic and excited, because it enables someone else to help me ensure that our taping is done right and it's not subject to the vicissitudes and mental aberrations that afflict me when I'm trying to do all of the things that I do. So now I can concentrate on this, and I still have a few little wiring things to figure out, so I'll fill in the rest of it later. But this is our great new system, and I'm trusting that it will enhance the quality of our tapes.

We have a lot of new beginnings this week. We started our study of 1 Samuel on Tuesday night. We're studying the beginning of Acts tonight using our new sound system, and we're going to actually see the Israelites march out of Egypt on Sunday and begin their journey to the Promised Land.

So many new beginnings. In looking at the book of Acts, we know already, and we've been anticipating this, because we finished the 24 chapters of Luke in recent weeks, and that volume 1 concludes, of course, with the resurrection and notice of the ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ. Luke is going to review the ascension of the Lord in the first few verses of Acts and the 40 days that he spent with his disciples prior to leaving this earth.

He also is going to begin by addressing the purported destination or audience for these books. If you remember way back a couple of years ago when we began Luke, he wrote it, the first four verses of the Gospel of Luke, to someone named Theophilus. And he's going to address Theophilus again in the first few verses of this book, about which we will have more to say when we get there.

But by way of introduction, Luke is the transitional book of history in the New Testament. In much the same way that Exodus transitions us from the patriarchal age into the national age of Israel, taking Israel from being a tribe and a group of clans into being an actual nation under God. In the same way, Acts is a transitional book that takes us from the Old Testament age to the new and takes the apostles from their standing and their status as Old Testament saints and as followers of Jesus Christ in seeking to preach and bring in the kingdom of God under the Messiah to being the apostles who will preach the good news of Jesus Christ to Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and ultimately to the entire world.

So Acts is, as you might say, the fifth book of history contained in the New Testament. It is the first book that details the church age. It is an often overlooked fact that Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John describe events that take place in the age of Israel.

Jesus ministered his earthly preaching and healings and all the way up through the crucifixion, through his resurrection, and his ascension all took place in the age of Israel. None of that happened in the church age. In Matthew, Mark, and Luke, we have nothing of the church.

In John, beginning in chapter 13 and the extended upper room discourse that John records, we have Jesus first teaching to the disciples about their role as apostles. Although there are hints, and he predicts that there are going to be witnesses, for example, in Matthew 28-19, it is really in the last few chapters of John, specifically 13-17, where we first get a foretaste of what will take place in the church age. But Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John deal primarily with Old Testament truths.

This is very important, by the way. I was talking to someone who's helping us with some work down at the Criswell Legacy, which, as you know, is where my daily labors take place. And this is someone who is a student at Criswell College and is finishing up a degree there and fixing to go on to theological education elsewhere.

And dealing with things in the book of Revelation and summing up the New Testament, and trying to figure out, well, why does the word ecclesia, that's the Greek word e-k-k-l-e-s-i-a, that is translated church in the New Testament, why does the word ecclesia occur numerous times in Revelation chapter 1 and chapter 2 and chapter 3, and then it disappears and does not get a mention in the book of Revelation all the way until the end of the book? And, of course, if you understand the way God works with different ages or different dispensations, as they are called, there is a reason for that. And it is

critically important. I'm surprised, actually, that more emphasis has not been placed on that in this individual's theological education because it's kind of a new concept, pointing out the fact that when the rapture takes place, we believe in a rapture that takes place before the tribulation.

We are what's known as pre-tribulationists, pre-tribulational rapture people, which only makes sense because what happens after the church is taken out of the way? God stops the pendulum on the church clock that has been running for nearly 2,000 years. It's going to stop. And the clock that had been ticking away the time for Israel that was stopped at Pentecost, which we're going to see in the very near future in Acts, that stopped there and it will begin to tick again.

And we know this, among other ways, not the only passage, but Daniel's prophecy of the 70 weeks. He says that there are 62 plus 7 weeks that have been appointed. And he goes through and he says that these 69 weeks are going to pass and then the Messiah will be cut off.

And then he goes straight forward into the great tribulational prophecies. So in a nutshell, seven years of the age of Israel have not yet happened. And from an Old Testament perspective, they were a continuum.

They were continuous and completely a part of that age. But God stopped that clock seven years shy of the end of the age. Well, when we leave, that clock will begin to tick again.

And anyone who comes to faith in that age is not going to be a church age believer. They are not going to be body of Christ. They're not going to be bride of Christ.

They are not heirs of the new covenants founded on new and better promises that you and I enjoy. And it's a straightforward, simple thing to state and to understand. But you would be surprised how much of the Christian world does not think in those terms and it creates a great amount of confusion.

But it makes sense. Think about it. What happens when you have 144,000 who come to faith in that time? What happens to them? There are 12,000 assigned to each tribe, right? Tribe of what? Tribe of Israel, because they are Israelites.

They are Old Testament saints. In Old Testament days, if you were a Hittite or you were Rahab the harlot, or you were some other person, a proselyte to God and to Israel from some foreign land, you were assimilated into Israel and you would marry into a tribe or you would take up residence in a tribal area of land, such as the hills of Ephraim or the hills of Judea. And over time, even if you had a complete nuclear family there and you lived apart, like Araunah the Jebusite or Uriah the Hittite or one of these, sooner or later your children would intermarry with the surrounding Israelites.

And whoever they intermarried with, they would be absorbed into that tribe. And he became a part of the nation of Israel. To be a God worshipper was to come to Israel.

This is why Naaman the Syrian general had to sort of ask for special permission, ask for an exception from the prophet to go back to Syria and continue to worship God from that distant location because he couldn't be two places at once. Well, we say all of that to say this. This book of Acts is the transitional book that takes us from that age of Israel that's detailed in the first four gospels into the age of the church.

And it is the transitional time where Jewish believers who started out as Old Testament saints and went through the experience on the day of Pentecost and received the baptism of the Holy Spirit, transfer their citizenship, transfer their covenant into the new age. And that is exceedingly important to understand because they are sort of a special case. They were Old Testament saints.

If Peter had been hit by a falling brick the day before Pentecost, he would have died and been saved, but he would have been an Old Testament saint. But he lived through beyond Pentecost for many years, all the way up to about 68 AD when he, according to tradition, was crucified upside down. And he is church age.

And his blessings and promises and all of his inheritance is under the terms of the new covenant founded on the new promises that belong to this age. By the way, it does not mean that our age and our promises are qualitatively superior. The Bible does say that our promises are new and better, but there will be Old Testament saints who have it all over most of us in the Millennial Kingdom.

It is not like they were limited. There is this idea, the reason I bring this up, people that got the original Schofield reference Bible or people who read Lewis Barry Chafer's systematic theology back in the first part of the last century would see in the notes and in the explanation of the Bible this idea that in the Millennium and beyond, there will be an earthly people and a heavenly people. That Israel is the earthly people, the Church, the Bride of Christ is the heavenly people.

And the accusation and the criticism came forth, well, this is a bigoted and anti-Semitic theology. You are belittling the Old Testament and the Jews and Israel by saying they are these sort of common of the earth, earthly people. They are the vessels for common use.

And you are elevating the Church as the heavenly people, Body and Bride of Christ and so on. And you are saying they are qualitatively superior. Well, let's face it.

Jesus said John the Baptist was the greatest of the saints of the Old Testament. And yet the least in the kingdom is greater than he. And the Bible does say that we have a new covenant founded on new and better promises.

And that is easily misconstrued. But it does not imply that there is a quality superiority. It

means that there is a fullness.

There is a greater capacity for understanding. In the unfolding of God's revelation, we see things that Old Testament saints longed to see, that Moses could only see from the mountain at a great distance, over just almost over the horizon. The Old Testament prophets could see dimly through a glass darkly the things that we can now see very clearly.

They longed for their Redeemer. They longed for Christ. But they didn't know his name.

They didn't know very much about him at all. We have the historic record. And so our covenants are new and better because information is better.

It's the difference between radio and color television with stereo sound. It's just all the difference in the world. And yet the communication that comes across of God's character and God's purpose and God's love is the same in every age.

And God's blessings are equally magnificent for all of us. Having said that, we want to try to understand, what exactly does Acts cover? Acts covers actually about 30 years, roughly 30 A.D. to 60 A.D. Specifically, it's probably more like 31 A.D. to 62 A.D. or so. But roughly 30 to 60 A.D., about 30 years of history.

Extending from the resurrection and ascension of the Lord Jesus through the house arrest of Paul in Rome that you find in Acts 28. And the time there takes us also geographically from Jerusalem to Rome. Probably one of the most popular ways of outlining the book is to sort of let the book outline itself.

Look with me just quickly at Acts 1.8. What does Jesus say to the disciples, the soon-to-be apostles in Acts 1.8? He says, You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you and you shall be witnesses to me in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth. So, a popular way of outlining the book, and I have more to say about this verse when we get to it, especially the last few words and phrases there. But for now, think about this.

A popular outline of the book is that the idea, You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. This is the first and second chapter of Acts. Then, the gospel preached in Jerusalem occupies the next six chapters or so, from chapter 2 to chapter 8 verse 1. Then, the gospel being preached in Judea and Samaria is in Acts 8.2 through 11.18. You'll remember Acts chapter 8 is where you have Philip, and Philip has a preaching ministry in Samaria and also to the Ethiopian eunuch.

Then, beginning in about 11.19 through the end of the book, you have this idea of the uttermost parts of the earth because you begin to document Paul and his associates going forth to the Gentiles. So, that is one way, and it's a fair summary of the progress of the book. The forward movement and the outward ripple of the gospel does follow what

Jesus tells the disciples there in Acts 1.8. So, as you know, I'm not one for big, long introductions.

I could outline the book, but every time I've ever been in a study and somebody outlined the book, I forgot about it and never looked back anyway. So, I'm all in favor of noting who wrote it, who he wrote it to, when he wrote it, what it's about, and then dive right in. So, let's do that.

Let's take a look at Acts chapter 1, verse 1. Luke says, "...the former account I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach." I want you to notice right away, he has a little grammatical construction there that says, both to do and to teach. Okay? This is what they call a te-kai construction. And we're going to see it again in a few verses down.

But it makes sense, doesn't it? If you're going to have two things mentioned, you say both, just like we do in English, both to do and to teach. "...all that Jesus began both to do and to teach, until the day in which he was taken up, after he, through the Holy Spirit, had given commandments to the apostles whom he had chosen, to whom he also presented himself alive after his suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God." Just for fun, turn to the very end of Acts. Turn to the last page of Acts.

Acts chapter 28. We're going to find that Paul, in verse 30, Acts 28, 30, "...Paul dwelt two whole years in his own rented house, and received all who came to him, doing what? Preaching the kingdom of God." The book opens and the book closes with the preaching of the kingdom of God. "...preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no one forbidding him." Jesus taught his disciples.

He began the doing and the teaching. And then he handed the assignment to his apostles. And the apostles are going to pick up and carry on that work of doing and teaching.

And this is what you find the apostle Paul doing at the close of the book. I read what I think is a very good remark about the title of this book. As I mentioned, the Greek word is *proxes*.

Which is the idea of the actions or the activities of someone. It was used in secular Greek to talk about the historical record of someone's rule or reign in government. And it is often, if you look in your English Bible, it probably says something like the acts of the apostles.

But if you look at this book, as we're going to, you find that very few of the apostles are mentioned in it. John, the apostle, is only mentioned about three times in Acts. Philip has

half of a chapter.

But basically, a better title for this would be some of the acts of a few of the apostles. Because it's really about two apostles, Peter and Paul. Peter is in the first half.

Paul is in the second half. And all the rest of it is sort of backdrop and setting. But you essentially have the foremost apostle to the Jews, which is Peter, and the foremost apostle to the Gentiles, in fact, the apostle of the Gentiles, which is Paul.

So this is some of the acts of a few of the apostles. That'll be our title. Feel free to change that right there on your Bible page.

The former account I made, O Theophilus. If you look at that, you know by now from the smattering of Greek that comes across into English, we know what theos is. That's the Greek word for God.

And philos, as in Philadelphia, city of brotherly love, philos is a word for love. So Theophilus literally means the one who loves God. Was Theophilus an actual individual? Or is this sort of a dear reader title? I personally think it is certainly pregnant with meaning.

If it was an actual individual, it is quite a harmonious or providentially apt name for him to have, because this book is addressed to those who love God, who want to know more about God. If you remember Luke's first prologue back in Luke chapter one, he stated specifically that the reason he was writing, he says, many have taken in hand to set in order a narrative of the things that have been fulfilled among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word delivered them to us. Who would that be? Peter, Andrew, James, John, Philip, Bartholomew, Simon, etc.

All of the twelve apostles. Paul, of course, out of time. Just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word delivered them to us, it seemed good to me also, this is Luke, having had complete understanding of all things from the very beginning, to write to you an orderly account, most excellent Theophilus, that you may know the certainty of those things in which you were instructed.

In order that you will know the history. He's going to set them in order. He's got them documented.

And Luke is by far the most historical of the New Testament writers. This is not a well-known fact, but Luke is the only New Testament writer who mentions Roman emperors by name. Nobody else in the New Testament ever mentions a Roman emperor by name.

Luke does it on a couple of different occasions. He mentions Augustus at the beginning of the Luke account. And he's going to mention Claudius at the end of the Acts account.

I think it's at the beginning of chapter 28. And, of course, in between, you'll remember that he mentions Felix and Festus and many other Roman notables. And it is possible to tie the gospel record and the record in Acts to Roman history because of the appearance of these individuals in certain places at certain times.

So he sets these things in order, and he states his purpose in Luke 1.4. So that you may know the certainty of the things in which you were instructed. He says, look, you've heard these things communicated verbally. Here's the documentation.

Here are the eyewitness accounts that I have gathered. Here is my firsthand testimony from the things that I have seen, my own self. And Acts is very famous.

There are three or four sections that we're going to see where he says, as the apostles did this, and as Paul did that, and as they went here and they went there, then it suddenly lapses. And he says, and we embarked, and we sailed for Troas, and we disembarked, and we went and met Lydia, and we did this, that, and the other. These sections tell us those times when Luke was actually accompanying Paul on his missionary journeys in the second half of the book.

And we know from the testimony of the Word of God that Luke was a companion of the Apostle Paul. If you go, for example, to Colossians 4.14, we find out two things about the author of Acts. Paul says, as he's, you know, toward the end of letters, he often gives greetings.

He says, Epaphras, who is a bondservant of Christ, greets you. He labors fervently for you in his prayers so that you may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God. I bear him witness that he has a great zeal for you and those who are in Laodicea, those in Hierapolis.

Luke, the beloved physician, and Demas greet you. So we know at the time that Paul is penning the letter to the Colossians that Luke is with him, and we also find out that Luke is a doctor. We also know from the end of Philemon.

Philemon, verse 24. Philemon's only got one chapter, so all I have to do is give the verse. He mentions the fact that he is accompanied by Luke in Philemon 24 as well.

He says, Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, greets you as do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke, who are my fellow laborers. So even though a lot of books are disputed and a lot of scholars say, we don't really know who wrote this, and there have been a few people try to float the idea that maybe the we sections were someone else's diary, maybe John Mark or someone kept a diary, and then some later person. Forget all that.

Luke wrote Luke. Luke wrote Acts. We know that.

So we don't have to go into all the gory details. You'd be amazed at the stuff you have to wade through sometimes when you're researching the background of a book. It's just tiresome.

It's a lot easier to take scripture at its word than to try to second guess everything. Well, now the prologue to Acts, the prologue to volume two, Luke says, the former account I made, O Theophilus. You remember he called him Theophilus in the first one, and he says, O excellent Theophilus.

Well, this term excellent is only used of Roman high class people, Roman aristocracy. You find it used a couple of other places in Acts when Paul is addressing Felix, and he says, O most excellent Felix. He does that a time or two.

And then when he's addressing Festus, he says, most excellent Festus. And he's beginning sort of a formal speech in front of someone who ostensibly outranks him. And so it's a term of respect and a term of honor for someone in the Roman world, someone who is a Greek speaking person.

So when he calls Theophilus, he says, most excellent Theophilus. This is an account that is delivered with respect. He's not talking down and saying, well, let me tell you, little Christian Gentile peons who don't know anything, everything that happened about Jesus.

It is something that is offered with respect the way that Paul delivered his sermons in front of Felix and in front of Festus. And so you have that idea here when he says, the first volume that I wrote, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and to teach until the day he was taken up, presented himself alive and so on. And then he just melds right into the account here.

He says he gave them many infallible proofs. He was seen of them during 40 days and being assembled together with them. In verse four, he commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the father.

Now, this command, obviously, and we studied this in our last lesson in Luke, was given after the disciples had made a trip to Galilee and had gone fishing and had eaten a meal with Jesus on the shore of the sea and had gone up in the mountain and received sort of their new commission as apostles up there. Then they returned. And there's plenty of time in the month and a half that he lapsed between the resurrection and the day of Pentecost.

These 40 days in which Jesus appeared, he appeared to them in Jerusalem after having appeared to them in Galilee first. And then they were to stay in Jerusalem and not return to Galilee anymore because they need to be there for the Feast of Pentecost. Jesus wants the gospel preaching to begin in Jerusalem.

So he commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, to wait for the promise of the

father. That's promise with a capital P because it is the Holy Spirit, which he said, you have heard from me. John truly baptized with water.

You shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit. Not many days from now. One of the unique features of this generation of believers is that although they were saved, their baptism of the Holy Spirit did not happen at the point of their salvation.

It happened afterward. We, in this age, subsequent to that first generation, when we come to faith, we immediately receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit. And we don't get tongues of flaming fire.

We don't speak in other languages. We don't heal. And our shadow does not fall across people.

And everything gets well. Those were marks and signs and manifestations. But we are baptized.

Baptism is identification. It is immersion in a thing. It is a change to a new status.

And all of those take place. We studied that in fundamentals with the 24 things that happened at the point of salvation. Baptized with the Holy Spirit.

Not many days hence. Therefore, when they had come together, they asked him saying, Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel? Now, this is a much more. This is one of the most intelligent questions.

The disciples ever asked Jesus. You go back and review the questions they ask. Oh, he's mad at us because we didn't bring any bread.

Or, you know, should we send the people away to villages? I mean, they've had a lot of questions that I'm sure they weren't proud of later. But this is a good question. The Lord is resurrected.

He's accomplished salvation on the cross. So does the kingdom come now? It's an excellent question. He said to them, it is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has set in his own authority.

This puts us in mind of Ecclesiastes chapter three, doesn't it? And for everything, there is a season and there's a time for every purpose under heaven. It uses two different Hebrew words for time and season there. And we have the same thing here.

We have kairos and kranos. And this is the idea of appointed time, a specific time like an alarm going off. And also seasons when a process will go on.

There are certain punctiliar actions that will take place. And there are certain trends and processes that take place over a season or a period. Both words are used here, kairos

and kranos.

It is not for you to know the kairos and the kranos, of course, these are in plurals, which the Father has set in his own authority. But here's what you do need to know. You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you.

And you shall be witnesses to me in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth. The power word here, there are five different Greek words for power. This is dunamis, from which we get dynamic, dynamite and so on.

The U in Greek turns into a Y when it comes over into English. Well, what exactly is dunamis? The easiest way to summarize it is dunamis means capability. Dunamis is the kind of power that gives you an ability or a capability.

It's not exousia, authority. It's not iskuras, strength, in the sense of sort of muscular strength, being able to push and pull and move and act. This is capability or ability.

They are going to have an ability or a capability that they do not currently have when the Holy Spirit comes upon them. Why is this important? Well, the answer to that question is the point of this first lesson. Because what has come in this transitional time, what is going to be documented in the Book of Acts is the new capabilities that come to the people of God in this age.

They are capabilities, they are abilities that were not universal to the people of God in Old Testament days. The Spirit was not yet given because Christ was not yet glorified, John says. But Acts, among other things, is going to document the kinds of abilities and capabilities that come with the baptism of the Spirit, the coming of the Spirit.

And you and I have that. We have abilities and capabilities that were unavailable in Old Testament days, in patriarchal days. And, of course, from those to whom much is given, much is required.

We have a greater potential. We have greater opportunities in this age than ever before. And it is critically important for us to understand who we are, what has been given to us, and how it is implemented.

How do we seize and lay hold of this great potential? Jesus told these eleven, you will receive this dunamis, this dynamic, this ability when the Holy Spirit has come upon you. Now, for them, it is going to give them the ability to be witnesses. We are going to see throughout the Book of Acts that this baptism of the Spirit goes far beyond giving one the ability to witness.

This is going to be the primary mission for this set of eleven believers. But, unfortunately, it has come to pass in church history and down to the present day, traditionally, that this is now the mission for every believer. And if we all try to do what

Jesus commissioned the eleven to do, we have accomplished our purpose and our goal.

And it is a tragic limiting and compressing and diminishing of the capability, the dunamis power that God has given to us in the Spirit. And the whole Book of Acts is going to explain and illustrate these great capabilities. And that is what we are going to be watching for as we go through.

But we are on the right track because the first key element in understanding those capabilities is to study the Word of God and see what it says. And the ministry of the Word of God to us teaches us what these capabilities are and what they are for. You can read the owner's manual for a new car.

And they have got these now with the power rear door and the power sliding doors on the sides and the power mirrors and the power running boards. And it may have a lot of capabilities. But if you don't know what they are for, it doesn't do you a lot of good.

Some people have buttons on their dashboard. They never have figured out what they are for. And there is a capability there, but they never used it.

Or they might use it wrongly. You know, there is a guy that has the Hemi, the Dodge Hemi. And he pulls up next and he has got the race car.

And he says, hey, watch this. And he pushes a button. The parachute pops out.

Well, then the light turns green. And of course, he can't go anywhere because he has got this big drogue chute out the back. Not only do we have to understand the capabilities and know what they are for, but also know when to deploy them and when not to.

And this is what comes to us with growth and with growing in grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Well, we are off to a good start here. We are going to pause and take our break.

When we come back, we are going to look closely at this commission in Acts 1.8. And that is what we will pick up when we resume.