

Acts Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION:

Acts is the only book where you have to know bit of geography, so you actually have some Google some maps. The time of writing is not quite clear but we know that when Luke wrote the Neroan persecution had not started; the temple had not been destroyed. So it is got to be somewhere between A.D. 60 to 63 and Luke who wrote the Book of Acts end with Paul in house arrest and we don't know how soon after house arrest was he killed. Was he killed with a Neroan persecution? There are some theories that say he lived and he actually got out of Rome because his accusers did not come to accuse him face to face, so he got released and then he was caught again couple of years later on and then only executed. So his fate is not known but the end of Acts is very odd. It ends with him in house arrest rather than being in a dungeon and from thereon we don't know what else happened. So it is probably A.D. 62 to 63.

The scheme of Acts is very simple. Acts chapter 1:8 tells you to share the gospel from Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and the ends of the earth. So the whole Book of Acts is structured after that.

- ✓ 1-7 Jerusalem,
- ✓ 8-12 Judea and Samaria
- ✓ 13 to 28 ends of the earth.

The first bit in Judea and Samaria in Israel itself. Apostle Peter plays the role front in center and then from the ends of the world, chapter 13-28 the apostle Paul takes over. So Jewish evangelism there is a transition and then the gentile evangelism and the dates of which is A.D. 33 which is basically just after Jesus's death to A.D. 36 and then it goes to Samaria and then it starts going out in A.D. 46 to A.D. 57 to the ends of the earth.

Dr Luke wrote two books and being a doctor he is precise. Why does he have two books? The reason why he has two books because in those days they don't books, they have scrolls. If your scroll exceed 35 feet, it is very hard to read. So you have to break the scroll into two, otherwise you got 70 feet scroll. So if we look at the two books side by side. How it ends and how it beginnings are the same.

Luke 1:1 Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us, **2** just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have delivered them to us, **3** it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, **4** that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught.

So Luke was written for Theophilus. Acts is also written for Theophilus

Act 1:1 In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach, **2** until the day when he was taken up, after he had given commands through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen.

Again to Theophilus that have a same line. Luke is very precise. He is very different from all the other writers. He uses the best most dramatic Greek literally style. He is very precise. He focuses on the historical aspect of things that is why he talks about eyewitnesses and ministers. If we look at the Book of Acts, it is all very carefully crafted. It is the best written literature in the ancient world.

The recipient, he wrote to Theophilus. Who was Theophilus, he could be a generic Christian leader, because if we translate Theo is God and Philio is love, so his name means the love of God or it could be Titus Flavius Clement who is basically the cousin of Emperor Domitian. So therefore because he is a cousin of the emperor and the emperor and emperor did not wanted to be associated with this sect, so they basically call him lover of God, Theophilus to hide his identity. The last possibility is that he could just be one of the Roman middle class. But if we look at the Book of Acts, Luke calls him most excellent Theophilus which got some title. By the time you reach to Acts, he calls him O Theophilus. May be before in the Book of Acts he was not a Christian. Once he becomes a Christian already, a brother, so he called him O Theophilus. So that is one of the theories. He writes to him to tell him all these things because if the gospel comes from the Jews, why is that entire mission, the entire Asia Minor, all the churches are gentile, hardly any Jewish Christians there. So therefore to explain to him Luke writes these things.

If we look at the end of Luke and the beginning of Acts they have some parity. So here you have the end of Acts, he blessed them, he parted from them, was carried into heaven and they worshipped and return to Jerusalem with great joy and continuing in the temple blessing God.

So here we actually see that the ascension is the one that is common between the two. Luke ends with the rising of Jesus Christ to the heaven and Acts begins with that. It binds the two together that Gospel of Luke tells you what Jesus did and taught in his ministry. The Book of Acts tells us how Jesus continues to do but through his disciples by the power of the Holy Spirit. So actually Luke tells you what Jesus did. Acts tells you what Jesus continues to do through the agency of the Holy Spirit and through the witnesses which he had which is basically all the disciples. While all the other religion founders have completed their mission in their lifetime and left the disciples to do the work, our savior continues to work through us actively.

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 Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen:

The Holy Spirit is very important. The work of the spirit is the key theme in Acts. The Holy Spirit in Acts always aids in proclamation and enabling, nothing moves without the Holy Spirit. Actually the whole book of Acts is about the work of the Holy Spirit. There are five

factors that drive the church that you can see in this first chapter and these are important for us as a church to basically drive home in our heart. This should actually drive the way we run church.

- ✓ It is always gospel driven
- ✓ It is spirit driven
- ✓ It is vision drive
- ✓ It is prayer driver
- ✓ It is leader driven

Gospel Driven:

3 He presented himself alive to them after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God.

It is gospel driven because he needs to tell you that this gospel is actually based on an actual event. The actual event is the death and the resurrection. Many proofs, the Greek word is *Techmaren* which means that which causes something to be known in a convincing and decisive manner. It is in a continuous sense. So basically the whole focus, the 40 days before he goes back to get glory with his father he spends time showing them proof, continuing growing proof. Why proof, because proof is the basis of your faith. Other religions have theories, if I follow the fivefold path or the Buddhist eightfold path or the Hindu five pillars then theoretically I should reach Nirvana. They teach the theory. Actually Christ is not talking about theory, he is talking about actuality. So what is he doing? He is telling them about the resurrection. Why? If I talk about resurrection today most of your people here will roll up their eyes, they cannot accept resurrection. So they have never seen resurrection, but you thought that the people in those days are as gullible as you, they were not. They were influenced by Greek philosophers. Epicurus says, *therefore death the most fearsome evil is nothing to us seeing as he exist death is not present, when death is present we do not exist*. Which means everything is nothing in the end. Plato says, *there is immortality of the soul based on reincarnation but there is no resurrection*. Hercules was supposed to be burnt, his body was burnt and then he had a spiritual resurrection, you cannot see him. The Pharisees and Sadducees are the main theological groups in Israel, one believed in resurrection and one did not believe in resurrection. The Sadducees believe for the persistence of soul after the death penalties on the other world or rewards they will have none of that, which means there is nothing after death. The Pharisees says every soul is imperishable but the soul of the good alone passes another body while the souls of the wicked suffer eternal punishment and this is at the end of time. When God comes then there will be resurrection. Nobody talks about resurrection before God comes. It is totally alien. So therefore they were just as skeptical as us about the resurrection. So therefore he presented himself alive after his sufferings by many proofs. So every day he is standing there and everyone poking the side, poking the leg because he is going to tell them how many times you want to put your finger inside until you actually realize that Jesus is real. I am sure Thomas is not the only one who poked inside. So there are many proofs. So the whole idea of Christianity is actually based on a historical event that has got many proofs as it were.

Karl Popper who was basically a very influential philosopher brought out this idea, **what is un-falsifiable is unscientific**. Our minds are all very scientific. We only believe in what is science and so therefore if we look at the resurrection, is it a falsifiable piece of information. If we look at Jesus had a spiritual resurrection, he died, and his body decay but he spiritually rose again. Is this a falsifiable statement or not? We cannot falsify this. Let say somebody died and then his soul went to heaven, can you say he did not go, we cannot. Buddha says I went to heaven but you cannot see. It is not falsifiable. So it is not scientific. If we look at Jesus Christ physical resurrection, falsifiable. So scientific theory demands that whatever you put forward it has to be falsifiable in order to be proven by scientific matter to be true. So therefore if Jesus rose from the dead and you have got historical scientific proof Jesus did rise from the dead therefore you will have eternal life. So the whole idea of our faith is actually based on a physical event that happened 2000 years ago.

So the real issue is you will have a falsifiable statement. This is how Christianity started, Christ was killed, Jesus rose publically from the tomb, publically showed himself to the people, the people told everybody what they saw. So if you go back into the Book of Acts, you will see how people present the gospel, every single time when they present the gospel Paul or Peter will tell them Jesus rose from the dead and that is the single most important thing. Nobody else rose from the dead. Other religions also start with un-falsifiable statements, private dream about God, private angelic encounter with God, private idea about God and one person told everybody what he saw in all other religions. Eightfold path will lead to nirvana, is this falsifiable? We cannot prove it wrong because we have not met anyone who came from Nirvana. If you blow yourself and you get 40 virgins, now is it a falsifiable statement? Have you proven that a guy cannot go to heaven? You cannot because it is up there, whatever happen up there you don't know he may be in hell. With 40 virgins he may be in hell. So it is not a falsifiable statement and therefore it is a fate statement, it is not a fact statement. So many of these people will go to a cave. Mohammad went to a cave and Gabriel spoke to him. The only miracle in Islam is the Quran. There are no other miracles in the life of Mohammad and he basically he went to the cave and Gabriel spoke to him. Who knows as he was in the cave on his own? Nobody knows. So it is totally different from Christianity, one people telling everybody everything.

If we look at Bahá'u'lláh, who is basically in charge of Baha'i faith. Also angel spoke to him, one man encounter and he started a new faith from Iran. Joseph Smith started the Mormon faith. So he had an encounter in the forest. Again angel spoke to him and gave him the Book of Mormons and he wrote it all down, one fellow do and nobody else saw and you could have take his word for it. I mean all these religions are based on the word of one person who has a faith which is not based on the historical event is not falsifiable. So he appeared to more than 5500 people at one time, most of whom were still alive though some have fallen asleep. 40 days of Jesus teaching there, 40 days of Jesus walking around and telling everybody that he is alive. You cannot falsify that. It is based on bedrock fact.

All other religions will describe various ways, some people say all the religions point to God. There is a difference between Christianity and all other religions. All other religion tells you how to go to God, they all have prophet, they found a philosophy, and they found a way.

Christianity is different. Jesus says I am the mountain and the mountain come down to you that is completely different. So don't you let anybody tell you, all the Christianity is same, all the religions are same, and all lead to same God. It is completely different. All other ways the religion tell you how to get to God. God tells you, you cannot get to me only I can come and get you that is completely different. So he grounds them in truth.

3 He presented himself alive to them after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God.

So he explained to them everything about the kingdom of God that is going to come into the world and this is Luke chapter 24, the last bit of Luke and tells us what he is doing there.

- 44 Then he said to 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 and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled."
- 45 Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures,
- 46 and said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead,
- 47 and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.
- 48 You are witnesses of these things.
- 49 And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high."

So basically Jesus prepares their minds, it opens up their Old Testament, the prophets, the psalms and the Law of Moses and explains to them how all these things are about him. He opens their mind to understand scripture. He opened themselves to the gospel event, suffer, die and the third day rose again. What does this mean in the light of the whole Old Testament? It is not only that it happened, it not only he rose but it was predicted beforehand. So he opens their mind. So therefore the gospel is basically a truth that our minds have to be open. So in the last 40 days of Jesus he gave Bible Study, the whole Bible telling you about Jesus. So Bible Study is very important. So never ever forget that you have to open your mind, you have to work hard and get the gospel driven to your mind.

Spirit Driven:

4 And while staying 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;

5 for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

So not only open up their mind he also asked them to wait for the Holy Spirit because you will be baptized in him. So there is a tension between some churches, truth versus spirit. You actually need both because John says God is spirit and those who worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. The truth is not you are sincere; the truth is the truth about God written in the Bible that is what the truth is about.

John 16:13 When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. **14** He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you.

Which means all the things which Jesus had opened their mind and taught them, this part of scripture talks about me when the spirit comes it takes the truth from here and it drives it down into your heart. So when you actually come to Bible study we open up your mind, but when you go back home the spirit hammers home that truth into your heart. We need both, you cannot have a situation when you come to the church and you only depend on truth but it does not go down here and it does not change your behavior. Only the Holy Spirit can do it. It is a supernatural function. We are in a supernatural religion, it belongs to Spirit. So somebody liken the whole process as they were fire and in the fire you must have logs. Logs are like spiritual truths, Jesus was sinless, Jesus died for me, Jesus loves me, all the beautiful logs you put down there and then the Holy Spirit comes and ignites it. So when you are singing and worshipping it should be like this. Christianity is based on fact, so everything must have fact. If you are emotionally affected by CNN news and you cry and all that, you are an emotional person you have nothing to do with the spirit. The spirit uses the truth. You must have the truth. Without the truth you cannot grow.

6 So when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?"

7 He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority.

8 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."

So here they are thinking after all this 40 days of Bible Study and then Jesus going to bye-bye, and they say Lord will you restore the kingdom of Israel, which means they completely misunderstand. They think the kingdom of Israel, the kingdom of God is earthly that means it is earth bound, it is ethnically restricted only for Jews and lastly it is geographically restricted only for Judea and Jerusalem. Jesus said in Luke 17,

20 Being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, he answered them, "The kingdom of God is not coming in ways that can be observed,

21 nor will they say, 'Look, here it is!' or 'There!' for behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you."

So they are always thinking of God is like Christian country like America or England. Kingdom of God is inside you. It is in the midst of you. They failed to understand that. Whenever there is a man or woman or child that says Jesus is Lord that is where the kingdom of God is. It is invisible, you cannot touch it, and you cannot stop it. Mahatami Gandhi was actually going to a church one day and then one of the elders of the church kicked him out, we don't have black people in this church and after that he never stepped foot in a Christian

church anymore. The Jews are like that ethnically restricted which is not what they meant to be. So they misunderstood the first coming of Jesus and the second coming of Jesus. So they thought that Jesus will come to end everything and restore Israel.

Vision Driven Church

The vision is this

8 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."

This is the vision of Jesus Christ. When he leaves you he only ask you to do one thing to be his witnesses. This means not to do not to spread the church, he just ask you to be my witnesses and then Jesus will do the rest. So it spreads all over Asia Minor Acts 1-7 Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria and then the ends of the world. God's mission is to the world. It is spiritual kingdom. It does not mean that spiritual kingdom is something someone has hid in the clouds or you just have to go and basically meditate. Spiritual kingdom is a spirit enabled kingdom. The spirit moves people's hands and feet. So it is actually an active kingdom. It is not a kingdom where you sit down and think about all the theories about Jesus Christ, it actually forces you to go out and minister to people; it is a spirit driven kind of kingdom. What works is the power lies in ideas. The spirit empowers the gospel and the gospel changes life. So everywhere we go the power is in the gospel and the spirit takes the gospel and sow into the heart and transform lives and you cannot stop it, you cannot do laws to block it. There is nothing that can actually hinder God's work. Gospel was spread by normal ordinary people. Tertullian wrote in 1862, Christianity have grown so much. He said of but of yesterday but we have have filled every place among you — cities, islands, fortresses, towns, market-places, the very camp, tribes, companies, palaces, senate, forum; we have left nothing to you but the temples of your gods." Christianity rate is about 40% per decade. By the time 350 years after Christ, there are 56% of the population of the empire have already become Christian in the space of 300 years, which is like 3-4 generations. The vision of Christianity has been totally accomplished. It is the only religion in the entire world that is truly universal and worldwide.

Lamin Sanay wrote a book some years ago and talk about whose religion is Christianity. If we look at Islam 96% of it is actually where it is founded. Islam is culturally bound. Hinduism 98% is near where it was found. If we look at Buddhism 88% was near where it was found it, in Asia. If we look at Christianity completely different, 25% in the Caribbean and Americas, 20% in Europe, 22% in Africa, 15% in North America, 15% in Asia and growing. China is supposed to be largest Christian nation by the time 2030 comes along. Which other religion will give you in 100 years in Africa, a population of 9% Christian to a population of 50% Christian in one century. Korea 0% Christian in 1900s. Within one hundred years population is now 40% Christian in one century. It is a truly global mission, it is truly global faith. It has covered the entire span. Because it is a universal religion or faith by true God. It is not culturally bound.

Prayer Driven:

9 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.

10 And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes,

11 and said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven."

So there was an ascension. This is John 20:16

16 Jesus said to her, "Mary." She turned and said to him in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means Teacher).

17 Jesus said to her, "Do not cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'"

She was clinging to him because she was afraid to lose him. But she did not realize that ascension is very-very important. St Augustine said these words. *You ascended from before our eyes and return back grieving to only find you in our hearts.* Jesus said if I do not go to your father I cannot send you another counselor which is basically the Holy Spirit. So now we have actually two counselors. One is Holy Spirit within our heart which gives you the presence of Jesus Christ and two Jesus Christ standing at the throne room of God. Jesus Christ is going to be head of all things for the church. We know for those who love God all things work together for those who are called according to his purpose. How does he do that? He can do that because he is a throne room. When you are in a throne room control room and Jesus Christ, you know he controls everything. So therefore the model which Jesus is using to overcome the world is the cross. Using evil to destroy evil. So Jesus Christ is interceding for us all the time.

Hebrew 7:25 Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.

He is always interceding for us because the ancient throne rooms are always court rooms. Nowadays we have court rooms but in older days we do not have court rooms, they are always at the king dispensed justice. So if Jesus Christ is in throne room where he is staying, you cannot punish him, you know why I said. So therefore it is very important for him to ascend. So this is why prayer is important. He is our advocate. So they went up there and they started to pray. Why did Jesus make them wait for about couple of months until Pentecost, because he wants you to depend, he wants to realize it is all his message and his power. So therefore you got the theory, wait for the spirit to come on and then you go. So the waiting for the three months is important it makes you depend entirely. To really hammer home the point that the church growth cannot happen unless it is given by prayer. So everything that we do should be driven by prayer. So they came back from the Mount of

Olives where he was ascended and all of these were in one accord. They devout themselves to pray with the woman and Mary the mother of Jesus. Every major redemptive event in Acts are always accompanied by prayer.

Leader Driven:

Judah went out due to his acts and therefore they have to vote for somebody else. They casted lots.

21 So one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us,

22 beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us—one of these men must become with us a witness to his resurrection."

23 And they put forward two, Joseph called Barsabbas, who was also called Justus, and Matthias.

24 And they prayed and said, "You, Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which one of these two you have chosen

25 to take the place in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place."

26 And they cast lots for them, and the lot fell on Matthias, and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.

This is not just gambling. What happens is that you actually have a selection process. You got all these people and they must have qualification. Their qualifications are spend time with apostles, spend time and witness baptism, ascension and witness the resurrection. These are the criteria. If you don't have this criteria you cannot be short listed so after all of this criteria they short listed two fellows. Two fellows equally good, they do not know what to do with them. So they cast lots. Casting a lot is not wrong.

Proverbs 13:3 The lot is cast into the lap but its decision is from the Lord.

Why do they have to fill last vacancy because of the 12 tribes, which is very important idea of the 12 tribes because if we look at the Book of Revelations it has Jerusalem 12 gates, 12 angels, 12 tribes, everything is 12. So basically the Lord wants the full complement symbolically of the apostles to share the gospel is driven. So these are apostles they are directly chosen by Jesus experience of Jesus life and resurrection that are directly taught by the Holy spirit and the disciples given the Great commission and power to be witnesses. Now the apostles are different from us. They have unquestioned authority of teaching which means when Paul wrote the bible you cannot contradict it. He says, **If anyone thinks he is a prophet or spiritual he should acknowledge that the things I am writing to you are a command of the Lord. If anyone does not recognize this he is not recognized.** Which means Paul is saying, I am writing this you think you are a prophet, you think you are spiritual you compare

to this. If you pass then you pass, if you do not pass you are out. So the standard is the Bible. It is the apostle who writes.

2Th 3:14 If anyone does not obey what we say in this letter, take note of that person, and have nothing to do with him, that he may be ashamed.

15 Do not regard him as an enemy, but warn him as a brother.

16 Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times in every way. The Lord be with you all.

So the standard is basically apostolic authority only with the apostles. There is a very dangerous movement nowadays in churches, a whole bunch of people calling themselves apostles and because they are apostles they cannot be questioned. When you cannot question them, they tell you, you marry that fellow but I am already married, I may divorce and then marry again. They have that kind of authority and that is absolutely false teaching. There is only one head which is Jesus Christ and the apostles have written and their word stands. There are no more apostles. So apostles can be in the terms of Apostle Paul and the 12 which are the historical apostles. The word apostle is apostolus which is basically the one who is sent. There are the historical 12 who write scripture then they got everybody else who is also an apostle sent on a mission, all of us can be considered apostles when we are sent on a mission to go and plant a church somewhere else, but you are not apostle in the traditional sense. So we should never mistake that.