

Visual overview of Acts, and Acts 1:1-5

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Opening remarks

Last week we looked at the prologue of the two volume Luke-Acts in Luke 1:1-4, the background of Acts, and answered a series of questions: Who wrote it, why was it written, when was it written, what genre is it, and what are some of the theological themes.

This week we're going to do two things: watch two videos from *The Bible Project* that provide a really good overview of Acts, and then we're going to unpack Luke's introduction in the first five verses of Acts.

By the way, a couple comments on the business meeting last Sunday evening:

1. Verse-by-verse, or pericope-by-pericope (thought-units)?
2. ...

A visual overview of Acts - *The Bible Project* videos (2 parts)

1. These two videos from *The Bible Project* provide a good visual overview of the book of Acts. Each video is just over eight minutes long.
 - a. <https://thebibleproject.com/videos/acts-1-12/>
 - b. <https://thebibleproject.com/videos/acts-13-28/>

Luke's introduction to Acts - Acts 1:1-5

1. Acts 1:1-5 [SLIDE]
2. The connection with the Gospel of Luke
 - a. "In the first book..."
 - i. Which book is he referring to?
 1. The Gospel According to Luke
 - b. "...O Theophilus"
 - i. Who is this person?
 1. Luke's patron - the person who funded this project
 - c. How does he summarize his gospel?

- i. “...all that Jesus began to do and teach, until the day when he was taken up, after he had given commands through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen.” (1:1-2)
 - 1. What does this imply?
 - a. Jesus is not finished doing or teaching
 - b. His ascension was not the end of his ministry, though it was the end of his ministry on earth. Now he will be doing and teaching from heaven **by** his Holy Spirit **through** his apostles. This is significant, and Jesus told his apostles this would happen generally in **John** chapters **14-16**, and very specifically in **John 16:7**. [SLIDE]
 - i. Surely they did not want him to leave them, but he assured them that it was to their advantage that he leave **so that** he would send his Holy Spirit, and in doing that he could do so much more through the Spirit and through them.
 - ii. “His” Holy Spirit, or simply “the” Holy Spirit?
 - 1. See **Acts 16:6-7** [SLIDE]
 - 2. **1 Peter 1:11**
 - c. So Acts is not merely the “Acts of the Apostles,” nor is it merely “The Acts of the Holy Spirit.” We discussed possible titles last week, and here’s another one, courtesy of John Stott:
 - i. “The Continuing Words and Deeds of Jesus by his Spirit through his Apostles.”
 - ii. What’s the connection with us, today?
 - 1. Jesus continued his work by his Spirit through the apostles in laying the foundation of the church, as the apostles spread the gospel and taught the churches, which Luke will be documenting in the book of Acts.
 - 2. After the time of the apostles (the post-apostolic age, or now), he continues to build his church by his Spirit through the spread of the gospel and the teaching of the apostles that we have in the New Testament.

3. The apostles as the foundation of the church

- a. First, what’s an apostle?
 - i. A messenger, agent, or delegate sent by someone
 - ii. The apostles could speak for Jesus, and they had a special place of authority in the church. Even more, they did this by the Holy Spirit who was working uniquely through them.

- b. The apostles were unique in the history of the church, and Luke tells us several things about them that set them apart.
 - i. Jesus chose them (1:2)
 - 1. **Luke 6:12-13 [SLIDE]**
 - 2. He will choose Judas Iscariot's replacement in **Acts 1:12-26**
 - 3. He will choose Saul (Paul) in **Acts 9**
 - 4. None of the apostles chose Jesus; Jesus did the choosing
 - ii. Jesus showed himself to them (1:3) [SLIDE]
 - 1. When?
 - a. After his suffering (referring to his death and resurrection).
 - 2. How?
 - a. "...alive..." (1:3)
 - b. He was not just a spirit appearing to them, but he was fully alive, with a resurrected body they could see, hear, and touch
 - 3. By what means?
 - a. By many proofs...
 - i. **Matthew 28,**
 - ii. **Mark 16**
 - iii. **Luke 24**
 - iv. **John 20-21**
 - v. **1 Corinthians 15:3-8 [SLIDE]**
 - 4. For how long?
 - a. "...during forty days" (1:3) [SLIDE]
 - 5. What did he say to them?
 - a. "...speaking about the kingdom of God." (1:3)
 - b. We'll say more about the kingdom next week when we look at the next passage.
 - iii. Jesus commanded them (1:2, 4)
 - 1. What were these commands?
 - a. See the gospel accounts (listed above) for many examples.
 - b. He also told them to remain in Jerusalem and wait for the Holy Spirit (1:4) [SLIDE]
 - iv. Jesus promised the Holy Spirit to them (1:4-5)
 - 1. "...which, he said, 'you heard from me...'" (1:4)
 - a. What's he referring to here? Probably **John 14-16** where he spoke extensively about the Holy Spirit.
 - 2. Where is the Holy Spirit coming from?
 - a. Ultimately from the Father, to Jesus, and then from Jesus to the apostles and the world
 - i. See **Acts 2:32-33** where Peter explains this [SLIDE]

- ii. **Joel 2:28ff** [SLIDE]
 - iii. **Ezekiel 36:27** [SLIDE]
- b. Jonathan Edwards on the Trinity is worth pondering:
 - i. “The Father is the deity subsisting in the prime, unoriginated and most absolute manner, or the deity in its direct existence. The Son is the deity [eternally] generated by God’s understanding, or having an idea of Himself and subsisting in that idea. The Holy Ghost is the deity subsisting in act, or the divine essence flowing out and breathed forth in God’s infinite love to and delight in Himself. And . . . the whole Divine essence does truly and distinctly subsist both in the Divine idea and Divine love, and that each of them are properly distinct persons.” Jonathan Edwards, “Essay on the Trinity” as quoted by John Piper in “A God-Entranced Vision of All Things” [SLIDE]
- 3. What’s the significance of John’s baptism? Why mention that here?
 - a. In **Luke 3:15-16** John the Baptist also promised that the Holy Spirit would be coming, and that the Christ, Jesus, would baptize his people with the Holy Spirit. [SLIDE]
 - b. It’s also significant that the Holy Spirit isn’t merely coming, but the apostles (and eventually all Christians) will be baptized (immersed) in or with the Holy Spirit.
- 4. “...not many days from now.” (1:5) [SLIDE]
 - a. How long is this? About ten days, on the day of Pentecost.
- c. So the apostles are uniquely qualified and appointed by Jesus to continue to act on his behalf, and Luke intends to tell us about the acts of the apostles throughout the rest of the book.

Resources

1. *The Message of Acts*, John Stott
2. *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, Ben Witherington III
3. <https://thebibleproject.com/explore/>