Thy Kingdom Come, Thy Will Be Done: The Unstoppable March of the Gospel

Jonathon Petrie

The Acts of the Apostles / Acts

Introduction

It is my pleasure today to usher you into our next book, The Acts of the Apostles. We have before us a great journey, much like Samuel and David's journey. For over a year we have been pointed forward to Christ, in 1st and 2nd Samuel. Within these volumes, we have heard phrases like "the better David," "a Man after God's own heart," "The perfect Shepherd," "The ultimate King." Now we zoom forward in time thousands of years and we nearly breach past this "better David." We land on the end of Christ's physical time with his people.

As much of Acts points backwards to the Gospels, I believe that it is necessary to bring us back today, just for a single day to look at what the the Apostles and disciples will preach, exhort, pray, and even die for. Today we will land at the end of the Gospel of Luke. Today we are standing on the bridge between the two. Much of the end of Luke and the beginning of Acts overlaps as Luke masterfully bridges these pieces. There is no gap between the two.

When we spend a lot of time in books like 1st and 2 Samuel or any historical narrative, it is easy to get distracted by the protagonists that are written in the text. We follow the drama of their internal and external development and their success and failures. However, like our Elders have been faithful to do so, we must realize that while they play significant parts in the unfolding of events, Christ is always the main character of our text. The Bible always points in different manners to Christ. We must avoid this same trap in the book of Acts. We cannot see Peter, Stephen, Paul, even Luke as the main characters and focus during the next 58ish weeks of this book. Christ is always the main character. He is always acting. He is ruling, governing, protecting, guiding, establishing his Kingdom through use of these faithful men.

Sermon Breakdown

1. The authority and authorship of the Book of Acts
2. The life of Christ
3. The promise of the Spirit

Scripture

Luke 24:36–53 ESV

36 As they were talking about these things, Jesus himself stood among them, and
said to them, “Peace to you!” 37 But they were startled and frightened and
thought they saw a spirit. 38 And he said to them, “Why are you troubled, and
why do doubts arise in your hearts? 39 See my hands and my feet, that it is I
myself. Touch me, and see. For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see
that I have.” 40 And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his
feet. 41 And while they still disbelieved for joy and were marveling, he said to
them, “Have you anything here to eat?” 42 They gave him a piece of broiled fish, 43
and he took it and ate before them. 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 for the 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.” 50 And he led them out as far as
Bethany, and lifting up his hands he blessed them. 51 While he blessed them, he
parted from them and was carried up into heaven. 52 And they worshiped him
and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, 53 and were continually in the temple
blessing God.

Call: “The grass withers and the flowers fades,”

Response: “But the word of the Lord endures forever.”

~~~ [Pray]~~~

Authority and Authorship

Let us start with the why. Why preach the book of Acts? This book is the highway in which the Epistles are connected to. It is the background setting for them. This book is a historical narrative that contains within it, the necessary record of events to help us understand the flow of the New Testament, from the Gospels to Revelation.

This book was written somewhere between 62-64 AD. Some suggest 80-85 AD, however I believe that there is a good argument for the book being written before 70 AD. The book ends with Paul being contained under house arrest while he awaits a trial before Caesar.

There is no mention of the great fire of Rome, of which, Christians were blamed for, which took placed in 64 A.D. This book does not mention Pauls' death. This of course would have been included if it had been written after the fact. Christians were tolerated as a sect of Judaism by Rome, that was until Nero scapegoated them with the great fire of Rome of which followed great persecution.

So who wrote the book? I would say that most of us believe that it was Luke. The same person who wrote the Gospel of Luke addresses the same benefactor Theophilus in their introduction. Having a benefactor was a common practice especially to who is investigating. Benefactors were those that financially supported others in order to perform works or in this case gather evidence. The historian Josephus had the Emperors Vespasian and Titus to support him.

Why would Luke be argued over authorship if it seems so obvious. This is because Luke was a non-Jew, he was a Gentile. In fact he would be the only non-jew to write a book in the bible. Are there any biblical proofs?

Colossians 4:10–11 "10 Aristarchus (Air-i-st-arkus) my fellow prisoner greets you, and Mark the cousin of Barnabas (concerning whom you have received instructions—if he comes to you, welcome him), 11 and Jesus who is called Justus. These are the only men of the circumcision among my fellow workers for the kingdom of God, and they have been a comfort to me."
~~~

Just before Luke is mentioned in this letter, Paul describes those that were with him that were the "only men of the circumcision," meaning Jews. That means Luke was excluded from this list.

How do we know Luke is the author? Outside of mentioning his benefactor, Luke was an eyewitness. He was with Paul throughout his journey to the very end. Colossians 4:14 "14 Luke the beloved physician greets you, as does Demas." We know the writer was with Paul because throughout the book we are given the First Person Plural pronoun "we." If this evidence was not enough, we have early church Theologians Irenaeus and Clement of Alexandria, and Eusebius that all claim Luke as the author of Acts. We also know that Luke was a well educated man. In fact he was a gentile physician. Grammarians note that the author has well "polished Greek" all throughout his writing.

What are we going to see in this book:

Holy Spirit and Pentecost. We will see the promise of Christ come to fruition. We will witness baptisms. We will see the Spirit transform timid disciples into bold preachers that turn the world upside down.

Birth and life of the Early Church. We will get a snapshot of what life was like in the early days. They had everything in common and their fellowship with one another. We will see their devotion to teaching and cooperate prayer and the spread of the Gospel from it. The Church will break ethnic boundaries with the inclusion of the Gentiles.

Opposition and Persecution. Apostles will be repeatedly arrested by the Sanhedrin in order to silence them. We will witness the first martyr with the stoning of Stephen. We will see Gentile rage as the Gospel spread to Ephesus and disrupts Idol making. However this tribulation against the church only accelerates the spread of Christ's Gospel.

Forwarding of the Kingdom of God and early Apologetics. We will see Christ preached as Lord, as the Ultimate King contrary to the worship of Caesar. We will see Jesus preached as the Resurrected King. We will witness Paul's defense against the roman government, Luke's demonstration that Christianity is not an anti-social anti-law movement.

We are going to witness the expansion of the Word of God as it moves through his Apostles, prophets and disciples as they develop the foundation of Christ's Church. We will witness this expansion break out in growing circles.

1. Jerusalem Chapters 1-7.
2. Judea/Samaria Chapters 8-12.
3. The rest of the world Chapters 13-28.

What about the culture of the day? The Apostles and the early church had to engage with two very potent foes.

The Jews which held a long established religion that diverted itself in its traditions that ultimately rejected their own Messiah and crucified him. The Jews in Judea and Samaria would hold significant power by having the favor of the people. Though Pharisees and Sadducees were not in governing positions, they could incite the population to move in their favor. This is exactly how they manipulated the Romans in Judea to crucify Christ.

The second foe would be the gentiles, specifically the Greeks and the Romans. Despite what many might think. The Greeks and Romans were very religious people, though polytheistic. They would in fact call Christians atheists for not believing in their Gods. Any and all disasters, famines, wars, market disasters were often blamed on Christians because they did not believe in their Gods and therefore angered them.

What about the Authority of the text? This text is θεοπνευστος, God-inspired, God breathed. Although written by the man Luke, it is the inspiration of God that orchestrated and put the words and desires in Luke's mind to pen it the way that God had ordained it to be written.

Central to this Book is the Preached Word of God. In fact one third of the book are speeches where God's Word and His Gospel is proclaimed. There are degrees of styles from speaker to speaker and different degrees of the use of the Old Testament. What unites them is that each given speech consistently uplifts God's glory as creator of which humanity is guilty before Him. They consistently lay

before their audience the redemptive mission that Christ accomplished, his death and resurrection, and a warning of his coming judgement.

Now that we have established the author and authority of this book. I feel that it is only proper to remind ourselves of the gravity of this book by reminding ourselves of what led us up to this point. We spent, I believe, over a year following Samuel and David as they establish God's Kingdom for His future heir, Jesus Christ. We followed the life of Saul and the fall of his house, we followed the gravity of sin and its effects in the life of David.

However, what we did not witness is God giving up on his covenant people. Despite humanity's best efforts in drawing themselves away from God, He still held them fast. Reminding and redeeming His people by the coming of the anointed one, the one who can save them from their sin, Jesus Christ, the only begotten, the Son of God.

The Life of Christ

Luke 24:36–44 ESV
36 As they were talking about these things, Jesus himself stood among them, and
said to them, "Peace to you!" 37 But they were startled and frightened and
thought they saw a spirit. 38 And he said to them, "Why are you troubled, and
why do doubts arise in your hearts? 39 See my hands and my feet, that it is I
myself. Touch me, and see. For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see
that I have." 40 And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his
feet. 41 And while they still disbelieved for joy and were marveling, he said to
them, "Have you anything here to eat?" 42 They gave him a piece of broiled fish, 43
and he took it and ate before them. 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."

This section starts with the Resurrected Christ revealing himself to his disciples.

They just witnessed their Master being publicly humiliated and mocked. They witnessed him beaten, his skin flayed open, thorns driven into his head, deprived of rest and sustenance. Forced to carry his own instrument of death, his cross. He

had nails driven into his hands and feet. They witnessed him as he slowly suffocated and died with a crescendo of increasing pressure and pain. They witnessed God's wrath on sin, our Wrath. The spotless and unblemished lamb was crushed and died under the weight of the wages of our sin.

Christ did nothing to deserve this. He was faithful and humble to his very last breath, yet he accepted it all in Love for his people. He did nothing to stop it. Like a lamb led to the slaughter, he opened not his mouth. He knew that it was the only way to reconcile us to God. The only way we can be restored to God. He built the bridge with his own blood and flesh. That is the God that you and I sin against daily.

Christ would have his disciples witness his last breath and his last words "it is finished," τετελεσται, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do." Those would also witness him be wrapped in the ceremonial balms and clothes and he would be sealed in a borrowed tomb.

However, that is not the ending. Luke does not end his gospel with a dead king, but a risen King. Christ was raised with a real physical body.

It is no wonder that in verse 36 and 37, when Christ appears to his disciples after this they would be startled. However, Christ proves that they are not witnessing an apparition but the real physical body of the resurrected King. In verse 38 through 40, he compelled them to touch his hands and feet. See the wounds!

To add further as they marveled Christ asked for something to eat, in verse 41-43. A ghost or spirit would not eat physical food. Although not in actual need of anything, Christ would lay the foundation that he is real and alive physically as he had promised. In three days he would rebuild this temple. He is risen Church (Χριστοσ Ανεστη!), "he is risen indeed (Αληθως Ανεστη!)". He conquered sin, he conquered death so that we can too in Him!

Christ being the great Shepherd, after serving his people as the propitiation for

our sins, continues to serve his disciples by continuing to teach them about all that he had spoken about. In verse 44, Christ finally removes the veil that covered and obscured the Old Testament, because it was always pointing to Him! He would fulfil the levitical priest hood and sacrificial system. Christ is the ultimate Temple, Passover lamb, Prophet, Priest, and King. The entirety of the Old Testament moves to point to Christ.

The Promise of the Spirit

Luke 24:45–53 ESV
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 for the 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.” 50 And he led them out
as far as Bethany, and lifting up his hands he blessed them. 51 While he blessed
them, he parted from them and was carried up into heaven. 52 And they
worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, 53 and were continually
in the temple blessing God.

Before the promise of the Spirit, they are equipped for their mission by way of the Spirit. He opens their minds to true understanding of God’s Word. He gives them the mission statement for essentially the entirety of the Bible in verse 46 and 47. Luke 24:46–47 “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 for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.”

And in verse 48, the initial delivery of his miraculous truth would be on the shoulders of the Apostles. They are the eye witnesses of this divine truth. However, God would not require this of their strength alone. Verse 49 reminds them that Christ had promised them something every unique. He would promise to send his Spirit. It is the power and strength of the Spirit that the kingdom of God will move forward. This promise was not alone given in the New Testament

but very much so in the Old Testament. Let us consider these truths found in the text concerning God sending his Spirit.

Old Testament Promise of the Spirit

Joel 2:28–29 ESV
28 "And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh;
your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams,
and your young men shall see visions. 29 Even on the male and female servants in
those days I will pour out my Spirit.

Just as there was no distinction of the Promised Spirit from slaves and non-slaves. There is no distinction from Jew and Gentile. The Spirit it not limited to any ethnicity, nation or culture. The promised Spirit is given to who were chosen by God and united under one banner, The Church.

Ezekiel 36:25–27 ESV
25 I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your
uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. 26 And I will give you a
new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of
stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. 27 And I will put my Spirit
within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.

The promise of the Spirit means that man will be changed after he receives this promise. He will be as Paul states a "new creation." The idea that we can remain the same after receiving the Spirit is a false teaching. The Spirit will "cause us to walk in His statues" and to "obey His rules." The Spirit will drive his people to expand the Gospel in every location and calling that God has providentially placed them.

Ezekiel 37:14 ESV
14 And I will put my Spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you in
your own land. Then you shall know that I am the Lord; I have spoken, and I will
do it, declares the Lord."

God keeps his promises and promises that we will know Him. Once we are indwelt by the Spirit we “can” know Him. And we are assured that we will be gifted true knowledge of God. We will know discernment and truth by the Spirit.

Zechariah 12:10 ESV
10 “And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, when they look on me, on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn.

The Spirit will convict our hearts and move us to truly love Christ, to truly yearn for the presence of God in our lives. We will know true satisfaction, true satiety. When the world is in continuous pursuit to quench their hunger and fill their thirst, will will eat true bread and drink living water.

New Testament Promise of the Spirit

John 14:16–17 ESV
16 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, 17 even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.

We can receive the Spirit because it is given to us by the Father. He was with the disciples and in a 2 Chapters we will see Him move in them.

John 14:26 ESV
26 But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.

Only the Spirit can search the immeasurable truths of God. It is the Spirit that bridges our finiteness to the infiniteness of God. It is by the Spirit that we pray in truth. It is by the Spirit that we understand these Words. It is by the Spirit that preachers can preach truth. It is by the Spirit that you can take hold to anything that is proclaimed from God’s Word.

John 16:13–15 ESV
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. 15 All that the Father has is mine; therefore I
said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.

This is the assurance and boldness that comes with the arrival of the Spirit. God always acts in trinity. The Spirit will not be acting on his own, but what comes from the Father and the Son he delivers to us. We are grafted into this "inness" The Father is in the Son and the Son in the Father and likewise the same with the Spirit. This will be how we can stand before God and be blameless, not by any measure of our own efforts but because the Spirit will take what is Christ and declare it to us and if all that the Father has is Christ's as well that also will be declared to us. That is good new indeed!

Luke 24:50–53 "50 And he led them out as far as Bethany, and lifting up his hands he blessed them. 51 While he blessed them, he parted from them and was carried up into heaven. 52 And they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, 53 and were continually in the temple blessing God."

Their response was praise and worship and obedience. We will follow their response throughout the remaining 28 chapters of the book of Acts.

The Call to Christ

How should we respond to this then?

To receive the Gospel truth and hold fast to it! To those who do not believe, perhaps maybe you are sitting in these pews or listening online, if you have never felt to the true weight of the cross, consider all of these things. If you feel like you are suffocating in darkness, filled with depression in this sinful world, hopeless, purposeless, empty. Take hold of the scarlet rope of Christ, for he has built a bridge for you with his own flesh and blood. You can be filled with light, joy, and true happiness. With Christ you can have purpose, you can be freed from your guilt and shame. You can stand before God and be blameless.

Believe and put your trust in the saving work of Christ of which we covered today, repent of your sins and follow the cross.

For those that are following the Cross, hold fast to the promises that are given to us. Firm yourself in them, remind yourselves of them daily (read them, pray them) before you take on the world and the flesh. We are not given them to be stagnant, we are called to subdue and have dominion with the banner of the Gospel of Christ, to make disciples of the nations. Hold firm the strength of God that is given to us by his Spirit.

In this book, will see how the these men will walked the land holding on to the same Gospel and strength that is given to you and me. As we learn from them and witness their testimonies, take them to heart and be imitators as they imitate Christ. Remember that this book is not ultimately about Paul, Peter, Stephen, Barnabas, or even Luke. It is about Jesus Christ, and his continued work through his apostles to establish his kingdom on earth and its reign through the Church. It is Christ through his Spirit that makes the acts of the Apostles effective. Through the Church we are his workmen and his instruments. Hold fast to his overarching theme as we travel through these pages.

Awakening Church, welcome to the Book of Acts.