



The following is the summary of the Sunday sermon that is sent to the body at Steadfast in an email called "The Weekly"

Acts 1

The Church in Jerusalem, Part 1

In his book, *Tipping Point*, Malcom Gladwell argues that a "tipping point" is when an idea, trend, or social behavior crosses a threshold, tips and spreads like wildfire. It permanently alters everything. Jesus Christ started a revolution in an obscure part of the Roman Empire - Judea and Galilee. His revolution continues today, radically changing how we think, act and relate to one another. Because He rescues humanity from its bondage to sin, His revolution transforms people from the inside out. Indeed, in a recent book by British historian, Tom Holland, Jesus and His movement called Christianity, are characterized as "the most subversive revolution in human history, whose legacy is the ongoing disruption of settled patterns of life." With His emphasis on love and human equality, Jesus undermined tyranny, racism, men's abuse of women and selfish imperialism. He offered salvation to all humans and provided the foundation for a new kingdom, the kingdom of God - with values, virtues and standards that undermine the kingdom of darkness in this broken, fallen world. His call is a radical call to discipleship that transcends and overcomes ethnic-political loyalties. His followers have a loyalty to Him above all else. Hence the title of Holland's book, *Dominion: How the Christian Revolution Remade the World*.

The New Testament book of Acts records this tipping point in human history - the unstoppable revolution of Jesus. When Jesus ascended back to His Father, he had only about 120+ followers; today His followers number 2.38 billion. The revolution He launched transformed the world and Luke tells this remarkable story in his two-volume history: The Gospel of Luke tells the story of salvation through the public ministry of Jesus and then His death, burial and resurrection. Acts details how, after Jesus' ascension, the Gospel of salvation spread.

- Luke writes, "*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.*" [Acts 1:1-2, ESV]
- In Acts 1:8, Jesus lays out His strategic plan for the disciples: "*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.*" [ESV] The Spirit will be His presence - empowering, guiding and directing His disciples as they take the message across the globe.

As we study this book, two great movements are in view: A **geographical** movement as the Gospel moves from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth (1:8) and an **ethnic** movement as the Gospel moves from the Jews to the Gentiles. This Spirit-driven geographical growth provoked an existential crisis for the early church. Luke highlights that one of the greatest threats to the early church was ethnocentrism and cultural pride within the fellowship of believers. This needed to be forcefully challenged, for all ethnic, racial and people groups will be impacted by this revolution: The Gospel is for everyone everywhere.

A Few Introductory Matters:

1. A word about Luke: Luke was a physician by occupation (Colossians 4:4) and one of the Apostle Paul's missionary companions (Philemon 24; 2 Timothy 4:11). He was a Gentile. He was also a meticulous historian. In Luke 1:3-4, he details how he interviewed eyewitnesses and carefully investigated everything. He no doubt wrote his two-volume history for the burgeoning Christian communities facing the challenges of living in the Greco-Roman world, especially the opposition of both Jew and Gentiles. His inspired books provided encouragement, confidence and a firm foundation for their Christian faith.
2. Act is a transitional book between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant.
3. The themes of promise and fulfillment permeate Luke - Acts. Jesus is the Jewish Messiah and the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy: His birth, public ministry, rejection, death, resurrection, ascension, the pouring out of the Spirit all fulfill OT prophecies.
4. The agent of this unstoppable revolution of Jesus is the Holy Spirit. Confirming that He is the Messiah and Lord, Jesus sent the Spirit at Pentecost. The Spirit is also the sign of the New Covenant, applied equally to both Jew and Gentile. The Spirit fills and empowers believers and He guides and directs the progress of the Gospel (see Acts 8, 10, 11, 13, 16).
5. Miracles in the book of Acts are Messianic, validating and authenticating the message of Jesus and His Gospel. Used of Jesus' ministry, the phrase "signs and wonders" also characterized the ministry of the Apostles (e.g., Acts 2:43; 5:12). Indeed, Acts 14:3 states that Paul and Barnabas evidenced the Lord "granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands." [ESV]

THE PROLOGUE 1:1-26 - an outline

- The Promise of the Holy Spirit, 1:1-5
- The Ascension of Jesus, 1:6-11
- Matthias Replaced Judas, 1:12-26

The disciples were waiting for the promise Jesus made to them before He ascended—but they were not idle! They prayed and they were unified. Peter's leadership was critical here, for he needed to demonstrate that Judas's betrayal was a fulfillment of Scripture and he needed to be replaced. The circle of Twelve remained important because Jesus detailed a role for the Twelve in the coming kingdom, (Luke 22:30). Matthias filled that missing slot.

As you pray this week, please prayerfully review these questions:

- The book of Acts is a transitional book: The people of God transition from the Mosaic Covenant to the New Covenant. What does this mean when it comes to applying all of the miracles recorded in the book of Acts? Should we expect to see what was occurring in Acts occurring today in the church?
- Peter emerges as a key leader of the community of believers in Jerusalem. What does this say about God's transformation of Peter? Would you have expected that when you read the Gospel accounts of Peter? What does this say about God's transformation of you?
- How important is the ascension of Jesus? What resulted from His ascension? Should we celebrate and remember this event in the church today?
- One of the themes of Acts is the Apostles' prayer life. How important was prayer to them? To you?

Dr. Jim Eckman