

ACTS 1: Introductory Talk, The Book of Acts

Subject: Acts is part of the unified story which is God's message to all believers.

Main Idea: God has intended from the beginning to reach each of us with His message

Principles:

- *God's motivation to reach you is love.*
- *God works through individuals to convey His message to mankind.*
- *The Spirit of Jesus (the Holy Spirit) is actively continuing all that "Jesus began to do and to teach until he was taken up to heaven." (Acts 1:1-2a)*

Introduction

In the west, many countries have regular elections of officials. During the period of time leading up to elections, the candidates for office do everything they can to reach as many people as possible with their ideas, with their "message." As communication has improved through technology, there are all types of strategies the candidates use to reach those they hope will vote for them. They have campaigns with campaign managers and sometimes dozens of people on their campaign staff, all participating in a well thought out strategy by which they will reach people.

God has intended, since before the beginning of time, to reach each of you. He has a strategy, part of which we read about in the Bible, for doing this. It has always been His plan to reach YOU!

Read Acts 1:1-2a tells us that Jesus "began to do and to teach" while on earth. The implication is that He is still at work. He continued working after His ascension into Heaven. In the book of Acts, we learn that it is through His Spirit, the Holy Spirit, that Jesus has continued His work on earth. And that work is reaching you, and others, with His message.

Therefore, it is not an accident that you are listening to these words today. The Spirit of Jesus, that is the Holy Spirit, has acted to ensure you and I have been on a collision course because He has intended since before you were born to reach you *today!* *He* has things to *teach you and me* and things He intends *to do* in and through you as a result of our participation in this study! I hope you are as amazed by that as I am!

First, I will share with you some basic information about the Bible in a very general way, and then I am going to go into a bit more detail about the author of Acts of the Apostles and the book itself.

I. The Story of the Bible:

A. A Unified Story

1. The more we study the Bible, the more we see that all the details really work together to accomplish one main aim, to tell one great story.
 - a. When our children were younger and we took them camping, we sometimes played a game around the campfire at night in which one person introduces a beginning to a made-up story, then each other person, in turn, invents a portion they add to the story.
 - b. Even though each story teller uses his own words and personality to express his part, the point of the game is that altogether ONE UNIFIED story is told!
2. Because the Bible is a collection of 66 different writings by more than 40 human authors written over hundreds of years, it would be impossible for it to be unified, except that ultimately *God Himself* is the author of the Bible (and the author of human history).
 - a. It is God's special and unique message to each of us.
 - b. He has personally superintended the writing of the Bible so that it is unified, consistent and complete in revealing the story He wants conveyed to all people.
 - c. My illustration is very inadequate since in our game we each invented our own part of the story. But in the Bible, it is impossible that the human authors could have each invented their part of the story. Just one reason this is impossible is that so many of them predicted events that were actually fulfilled in history hundreds of years after they wrote!
 - d. God divinely inspired each writer concerning what to write. He allowed their own style and personality to be evident as they wrote, without allowing His very own message to be compromised in even the slightest detail. This is what we call the inerrancy and divine inspiration of Scripture.
 - e. So, the Bible is a unified story of man's fall out of favor with God and God's plan to restore His relationship with us, to use Biblical language – to redeem us.

B. The Old Testament

1. Genesis 1-2: We read that God created the world and all that exists, including people.
2. Genesis 3: Sin entered the world when Adam and Eve made a decision of their will to disobey God.
 - a. All life has God as its source, but sin separated man from God. Therefore, death entered the world as a result of sin, physical death and spiritual death.

- b. The great chasm sin created between God and man cannot be bridged by us.
 - c. Via foreshadowing in a veiled reference, God promised that eventually He would send someone to crush (destroy) sin's hold on us (Ge 3:15).
- 3. Genesis 4-5: Not every descendant of Adam and Eve choose to walk with God. As world population increased, this became all the more evident.
- 4. Genesis 6-10: Mankind became so wicked that God wiped out the world population in a flood, save one family: Noah's.
- 5. Genesis 11: As Noah's family repopulated the earth, we read that sin was still corrupting men's hearts.
- 6. Genesis 11: Again, God chose one man, Abram. God promised Abram that through his many descendants He would bless the rest of the world.
- 7. Genesis 12-50: The remainder of Genesis tells of the first descendants of Abraham and their struggles to learn to trust God. Near the end of Genesis, we read that Abraham's descendants migrated from Palestine to Egypt where they multiply into a nation called the Hebrews (or Israelites).
- 8. Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy tell the part of the story in which God brought the Israelites out of Egypt under Moses' leadership and gave them His written law.
- 9. Joshua: The Israelites were given the land of Palestine by God as an inheritance. (It was first promised by God to their father Abraham over 400 years earlier.) Through military campaigns they overthrew the local (and very wicked) Canaanite people groups, and then resettled in the land.
- 10. Judges, Ruth, 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, and 1 and 2 Chronicles give accounts of the Israelites residing in the land God gave them and tell of their struggle with faithfulness to God. While a few, like Samuel, King David, Kings Hezekiah and Josiah, served the Lord faithfully, most of the people and their kings were so unfaithful that God eventually gave them over to their enemies who carried them out of Canaan and into captivity. It was during their captivity that the few remaining Israelites became known as Jews.
- 11. Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Songs are books of poetry written by Jews.
- 12. The Writing Prophets: Finally, the last books of the Old Testament, Isaiah through Malachi, are books of prophecy (also written by Jews). The prophets lived during the years just preceding Israel's captivity. Through the prophets, God warned the Jews (and other people of the earth) of the consequences of their sin. But the prophetic books also

contain God's promises concerning a future deliverance from sin through a "Messiah," or Deliverer. We later discover this is the individual who would fulfill God's promise to destroy the power and penalty of our sins first mentioned in Genesis.

C. The New Testament

1. Gospels: The New Testament begins with four different accounts of the life and ministry of this promised Messiah, Jesus Christ, called "Gospels."
 - a. Jesus claimed to be unique, the *only way* men can reach God.
 - b. Furthermore, He claimed that in coming to earth to deliver us from enslavement to sin, He provided us with a revelation of God Himself, because He claimed to BE God.
 - c. In John 3:16, we read that love is what motivated God to send His Son Jesus to earth to die on our behalf. It says, "For God SO LOVED the world, He gave His Only Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life." He did it because He chose to rescue us! He did it because He loves us!
 - d. The Gospels tell us that after Jesus died on the cross, He was resurrected and then returned to Heaven.
 - e. Eternal life and a reconciled relationship with God is what Jesus offers anyone who chooses to receive Him as their Deliverer from sin and its consequences.
2. Acts: The book of Acts is a transitional book, which gives the history of the early church after Jesus' ascension and also provides the context for all the letters written by Jesus' apostles in the remainder of the New Testament.
3. Romans – Revelation: These books are called "epistles" because they are written as letters to churches or individuals. These letters contain powerful teaching and explanation of the fuller meaning of Christ's person, life, and work, how Believers are to apply these truths to the way they live, and what Believers can expect in the future.
 - a. Revelation: The New Testament ends with Revelation, a special apocalyptic book, which contains a vision the apostle John saw of future events. So, the New Testament concludes the story of the Bible with words about the eternal home of those who have been delivered from sin by Jesus in Heaven. It is the perfect ending to the perfect story.

SUMMARY: Acts is part of the Bible's story of how God has acted to restore His relationship with those who receive Him. This is a message God planned from the beginning would reach YOU!

PRINCIPLE: God's motivation to reach you is love.

ILLUSTRATION: For many years, I knew God loved me. I had received Jesus as my Savior when I was young. I understood that God love me, but I didn't grasp the implications of His love for me. Over time, I came to realize that, even though I had received Jesus as my Savior, I still held a subconscious belief that God was "out to get me." Once I had this insight, I began be aware of all it meant that I was restored to fellowship with God and that He really loved me. About age 30, this began to change my life. Jesus' love not only made Him willing to die for us so that we could call God our Father, but having a Heavenly Father who loves us means He always wants what is best for us! And because He is all-powerful, He is able to work to ensure that every single difficulty we face in life can be used for our good.

APPLICATION:

- Have you, by a conscious decision and choice, received God's offer of salvation for yourself? Don't be deceived into false thinking that because God created all life He is "Father" to everyone! That relationship was broken once sin entered the world. He has made the way, through Jesus, to restore the relationship, but you must decisively choose it as your source of life!
- If you have received Christ's offer of salvation and entered a restored relationship with God, for what difficulty which you now face will you trust in His love for you? God's promise of deliverance from trouble is fulfilled in His gift of Heaven. But presently, we live in a fallen world which is full of trouble. We must learn to trust that God, who authored such a love story, has continued through His Son Jesus all He began to do and to teach while on earth. He is still speaking through His Word to teach me and you and acting on our behalf, out of love for us. It has always been His plan to reach us!

TRANSITION: One of the specific things the Spirit of Jesus has done to reach you with His message, just as He indeed from the beginning, was to prompt an individual named Luke to pen the book of Acts.

After Jesus ascended to Heaven, He worked through Luke to reach YOU!

II. The Author of Acts

A. Luke's background

1. It is generally believed that Luke was a Gentile.ⁱ If so, He is the only gentile Biblical writer.
2. Paul also referred to him as a physician, in Colossians 4:14.
 - a. Some Greek scholars point out that Paul sometimes uses medical terms. For example, in his gospel, when speaking of a man the devil had “thrown,” he uses the correct medical word for convulsions.
3. His education would explain while the style of his Greek writing is considered excellent by scholars
4. According to tradition Luke was from Antioch. If that's the case, that he may've been one of Paul's converts.
5. Apparently, Luke was modest, for he never mentions himself by name in either of his books.
6. He was Paul's traveling companion, which is confirmed by his writing in places throughout Acts, such as Acts 16, where he indicates that “we” traveled... (where he formerly had spoken of Paul's travels using the 3rd person, “he” traveled).
 - a. The indication in Acts is that Luke accompanied Paul on both his second and third missionary journeys.
 - b. And also to Rome, for in 2 Timothy 4:11 Paul writes in his very last letter that “only Luke is with me.”
7. He wrote 2 books, Luke and Acts, which together make up nearly a third of the Greek New Testament.
 - a. Both are addressed to an unknown man, Theophilus.
 - b. Originally Luke-Acts were two parts of one book, with Luke as the author of both.
 - c. The opening words of Acts are, “In my former book...,” a reference to the gospel of Luke.

B. Luke's writing style

1. Luke was a scholar. Of course, this is not surprising given the fact that he was educated as a physician. One of the ways his interest in scholarship is demonstrated in his writing style is the interest he had he recording accurate historic detailsⁱⁱ:
 - a. Within Acts we find a history of the early church, so that the reader would have no doubt about the basis of their faith being well-grounded historically.
 - b. He included a number of lengthy speeches.
 - i. Altogether Luke recorded 6 speeches of Peter.
 - ii. He records Stephen's lengthy speech prior to his stoning in chapter 7,

- iii. James speech at the Jerusalem council in chapter 15,
 - iv. and between chapters 13 and 28, nine speeches of Paul.
- c. Luke's interest in historical accuracy is shown by the careful record of Paul's three missionary journeys.
- d. Finally, within Acts, Luke recorded much detail about Paul's life and trials:
 - i. Three accounts of Paul's conversion are recorded.
 - ii. Much detail is given about his trials in chapters 21-28.
- 2. Second, Luke was also a spiritual man with spiritual interests. We see this particularly in the personal commentaries on the history of the early church which he included – "progress reports," of a sort.
 - a. I personally counted no less than 20 times that Luke interrupts the narrative to comment on the fellowship of the believers, the attitude of their hearts, and other commentaries all revolving around the growth and condition of the young church.
 - b. There are 6 or 7 main "progress reports" of the church given.
- 3. Third, Luke is quick to note the emotional and psychological impact of the Gospel on individuals. Perhaps his experience as a physician made him more aware of this. I counted no less than 61 times that Luke uses terms like these:
 - a. 2:7 "utterly amazed"
 - b. 2:12 "amazed & perplexed" ("amazed" used repeatedly)
 - c. 2:37 "cut to the heart"
 - d. 3:10 "filled with wonder & amazement"
 - e. 4:2 "greatly disturbed"
 - f. 4:13 "astonished" (used repeatedly)
 - g. 4:5, 11 "great fear"
 - h. Others: "puzzled", "furious", "rejoicing", "stirred up", "mourned deeply", "great joy", "afraid" "filled with jealousy", "filled with joy", "alarmed", "great eagerness", "seized with fear."

SUMMARY: Luke is one of the 40 different human authors God has used to convey His Word to us. Though God's written revelation is complete, He still works through people today to bring His message, the "good news" of the Bible to others.

PRINCIPLE: God works through individuals to convey His message to mankind.

- Think about Luke, the person: an individual, a human “guy,” with normal struggles, joys and disappointments.
- Then think about how many people have been impacted because of the faithfulness of this one man!
- No doubt, Luke had no idea that people for more than two millennia would read His accounts.
- Luke was faithful to convey God’s message to others.

ILLUSTRATION: The impact of one faithful individual on another is illustrated by this story:

- Sunday School teacher Edward Kimball helped lead the famous evangelist Dwight L Moody to Christ.
- A man named J. Wilbur Chapman was helped in his walk with Christ and affirmed in his salvation by the teaching and by meeting personally with Dwight L. Moody. Later, he became Moody’s co-worker.
- The famous preacher Billy Sunday became the assistant of Wilbur Chapman.
- Billy Sunday held an evangelistic campaign in Charlotte, North Carolina which resulted in the founding of a Christian businessman’s club. That club invited Mordecai Ham to come as a speaker.
- Billy Graham was saved in 1934 at a series of revival meetings conducted by Mordecai Ham in Charlotte.ⁱⁱⁱ
- One man conveyed the message to the next, and in this case, the impact on the world for the cause of Christ was tremendous.
- God works through individuals to convey His message to mankind.

APPLICATION: God intended from the beginning to reach you.

- Who has God used to bring YOU His message?
- And who do you know *to whom you can BE* the *messenger* of His good news?
 - Is there someone you need to invite to this Bible study?
 - God used and worked through Luke, and He wants to work through and use you to convey His message to others.
 - How will you show faithfulness in conveying God’s message to others?
 - We have no idea how your faithfulness in doing so may impact others!

TRANSITION: Let’s consider some very general information about the book of Acts itself and our study, *Acts 1*.

III. The Book of Acts

A. The Title of the book has appeared in different forms.

1. It must be remembered that originally it was the second volume of a single book, which now we have separately as Luke and Acts. The book may have not had any title when Luke wrote it.
2. The title of Acts, alone, has appeared since the second century in ancient Greek manuscripts as “Acts,” “Acts of the Apostles,” and “Acts of the Holy Apostles.”^{iv}
3. However, it has been noted that the book of Acts could rightly have been entitled, “The Acts of the Holy Spirit,” since it is through the Holy Spirit that the young church was empowered to accomplish their “acts.”

B. Sources

1. Luke was an eye-witness of the life of Paul, with whom he traveled. As a travel companion, physician, and close personal friend of Paul, Luke was in a unique position to know a lot of detail about Paul’s ministry. Surely, Paul was, at times, a source for Luke.
2. But some of the events recorded in Acts, Luke had witnessed himself.
3. In addition to Luke’s own testimony and the testimony of Paul, Luke encountered many great men of the early church as he traveled with Paul. These, too, would have served as sources of information.

C. Recipient of Luke’s accounts – “Theophilus”

1. Theophilus means “lover of God.” Therefore, some have suggested Luke wasn’t using the real name of the person he wrote for because of the danger of persecution to the recipient.
2. A second possibility is that Theophilus was a high government official. In Luke, Paul calls him “excellent Theophilus.”
 - a. Suggestions have been made that Paul wrote this official to convince him not to persecute Christians.
 - b. Possible (as FF Bruce argues) that Luke wrote to persuade a government official not to persecute Christians.
 - c. Another interesting suggestion is that Luke may have written Luke-Acts for Theophilus as a legal defense for Paul at his trial.
3. Some have pointed out that since Luke 1:4 says he wrote to Theophilus “so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught,” Theophilus was a believer whom Luke wrote to strengthen in his faith.
4. Finally, “Theophilus may have been Luke’s patron who financed the writing of Luke and Acts.”^v

D. Content – Acts contains information about

1. ...the beginning of the first church with Peter as its leader. It started as a Jewish Christian church, since Jesus and His followers were Jewish.
2. ...the spreading out of the church as a result of persecution following Stephen's stoning.
3. ...the reception of the gospel by the Gentiles with Paul as their leader, including Paul's three missionary journeys:
 - a. the first to Asia,
 - b. the second, which began in Asia, then extended to Europe (Macedonia & Greece, specifically), with extended time spent in Corinth,
 - c. and the third journey during which Paul returned to strengthen the churches he started in Asia and Greece – this time spending an extended period of time in Ephesus.
4. ...Paul's imprisonment and trials which led him to Rome (covered in the *Acts 2* study).

E. Outline: Acts can be outlined in a variety of ways, in addition using the four historical events noted above:

1. Using key persons: Peter and Paul. Peter is highlighted as the key leader of the Jewish community in the first part of Acts and Paul is highlighted as the key apostle to the Gentiles in the last part of the book.
2. By the geographical expansion of the Gospel which follows the pattern of Acts 1:8 (Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the uttermost parts of the world). Luke's record shows how the Great Commission was fulfilled as the Gospel was spread.
3. According to the seven major "progress reports" for the church which Luke gives.
 - a. The outline that follows reflects the content of the book as I have already described it:
 - i. Chapters 1-6: showing the Young church in Jerusalem joyfully experiencing power, fellowship, opposition, and growth.
 - ii. Chapters 6-8: persecution leads to expansion
 - iii. Chapters 9-21: Paul's conversion and Peter's vision result in the young church expanding to include Gentiles.
 - iv. Chapters 21- 28: Paul's imprisonment and trials.

F. Acts' Unique Position in the New Testament

1. Acts is the only book that serves to continue the history given us by the Gospels.
2. It bridges the four gospels with the remainder of the New Testament.

- a. Early on, the four gospels were gathered to form one collection and circulated under the title, “The Gospel.” The New Testament epistles formed a collection circulated under the title, “The Apostle.” The 2nd half of Luke’s work was used as a bridge between the collection called, “The Gospel” and the collection called “The Apostle.”
- b. The epistles are illuminated by Acts, since it gives a narrative backdrop to Paul’s relationship with those to whom he wrote.

G. What is Covered in *Acts 1*

1. This course covers the book Acts through Paul’s three missionary journeys ending Acts 21, together with Paul’s Journey Epistles – 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Corinthians, and Romans, as they fit into the narrative given in Acts.
2. It also covers the letters of James and Galatians, which seem to fit into the chronology of the first half of Acts.
3. Paul’s arrest and trials in Acts 21-28, and the remaining epistles of the New Testament are covered in *Acts 2*, the final *GOD of the WORD* Bible study.

H. Date

1. Luke must have been written before the Fall of Jerusalem in AD 70, before Paul’s death (which is traditionally dated between 66 and 68 AD), and before Nero’s persecution of Christians began after the great fire of Rome in AD 64, or Luke certainly would have mentioned these important events in his record.
2. A generally accepted date of the writing is 60-62 AD^{vi}, either in Rome just before Paul’s release, or possibly written partially in Caesarea during the 2 years Paul was imprisoned there, and then completed in Rome.

I. Purpose: Two possible purposes are given here.

1. To Record the Historical Expansion of Christianity:
 - a. Certainly one of Luke’s purposes in writing seems to be spelled out in Acts 1:8 – to show the expansion of Christianity. “*To explain with the Gospel of Luke the orderly and sovereignly directed progress of the kingdom message from Jews to Gentiles, and from Jerusalem to Rome,*”^{vii} certainly is at least Luke’s purpose, in part.
 - b. Barclay asserts, “*Luke’s great aim was to show the expansion of Christianity, to show how that religion which began in a little corner of Palestine had in a little more than 30 years reached Rome*” (William Barclay, *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. xvii).^{viii}
 - c. Amazingly, all this occurred in a period of only 30 years.

- d. In little more than ten years Paul established the Church in the four provinces of the Empire to which he made his missionary journeys!
 - i. Before 47 AD there were no churches there,
 - ii. And by AD 57 Paul spoke of his work there as complete enough that he could plan to go to the far west, to Rome, without worrying that the Churches he founded would fall apart in his absence.
- e. If Luke's main aim was to state the miraculous spread of the gospel as directed by God's sovereignty, this would explain why he simply stopped writing when the Gospel was established in Rome, the capital of the world.

2. To Give an Apologetic for Christianity

- a. Another possible purpose of Luke was to explain exactly what Christianity is. Is it a sect of Judaism? Why did so many Gentiles come into it? How can Jesus' teachings about a kingdom be other than political? What explains the opposition against it?
- b. Don Carson further suggests that it may have been a trial (Paul's?) which prompted Luke to write his accounts.^{ix}
- c. And F.F. Bruce suggests "that particular type of apologetic which is addressed to the secular authorities to establish the law-abiding character of Christianity... (Bruce, *Acts*, p. 24; cf. F.J. Foakes Jackson and Kirsopp Lake, eds., *The Beginnings of Christianity*, vol. 2, *Prolegomena II: Criticism*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1979, pp. 177-87). There is much in Acts to substantiate the idea that the book was written to defend Christianity before Roman rulers."^x

J. Themes: Perhaps many others exist, however I will note 4 below.

1. Witnesses (or, Sending)

- a. Jesus told His disciples in Acts 1:8 that they were to be His witnesses, and in obedience to His commission we see this fulfilled throughout Acts.
- b. I found 45 instances of this occurring, and in many of these, the word "witness" or "testify" actually occurs in the text.
- c. 12 times I found someone being "sent" out in order to testify to what they had witnessed.

2. Prayer - 30 times in Acts individuals or groups are said to pray.

3. God's Sovereignty

- a. Of course, this is a major Biblical theme throughout, but without question, it is emphasized in Acts.
- b. Speaking of Jesus' death by crucifixion in 2:23 Peter says, "*This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross.*"
- c. Again and again we will see that the numerical growth, the geographical expansion, the persecution, and the power that goes out from the young church were all under God's control and always accomplishing His purpose: that the Gospel message would reach you and me!

4. The Holy Spirit

- a. It was by the Holy Spirit that Jesus would continue His work on earth. The apostles received the Holy Spirit at Pentecost not too long after Jesus' ascension into heaven, according to the second chapter of Acts, and the book of Acts repeatedly makes clear that it is the Holy Spirit's power that enabled them to accomplish what they did.
- b. The Holy Spirit is behind all the events of the book of Acts.
 - i. He is mentioned by name no less than 28 times in Acts, an average of once per chapter.
 - ii. Indeed, He is not only behind the events given in the books of Acts, but He is behind the events of the life of *every believer today* – guiding, instructing, comforting, and empowering us!

PRINCIPLE: The Spirit of Jesus (the Holy Spirit) is actively continuing all that "Jesus began to do and to teach until he was taken up to heaven." (Acts 1:1-2a)

As we study the book of Acts and several epistles, we will learn much about the activity of the Holy Spirit.

ILLUSTRATION:

Some of you have heard of the work of the Spirit in various part of the world.

- In recent years, the Spirit of Jesus has been evidenced in places where Christians have had difficulty bringing His Word.
 - Stories have been verified by reliable sources that "a man in a white raiment" has personally appeared in a number of places to give the Gospel message, or point individuals to where they could hear this.
 - Those who oversee Christian work abroad keep hearing accounts of "the man in the white raiment" appearing.

- The people who see Him all describe Him identically. And none of them have had any opportunity by which they could possibly have known that others in different locations had seen and heard something identical.
- On one occasion, two Christian men made an attempt to smuggle Bibles into a Muslim country, where Bibles are outlawed.
 - They decided the safest way to do this was under the cover of darkness. So they left late at night to make a long drive into the country. If they were stopped, it would mean probable death for them.
 - Several hours later, in the middle of the night, the steering wheel of the car stopped working. The driver slowly maneuvered the car over to the side of the road. The men opened the hood of the car and looked under it, completely ignorant of what to look for.
 - As they were looking, two men suddenly came up to them from off the side of the road. “Oh no! This is it! We’re done!” they thought.
 - And then, the most feared words followed: “Give us the Bibles!”
 - The Christians said, “What Bibles?” But the other two persisted, “The ones in your car. We know you have them and we were sent to get them.”
 - The Christians came to their senses and realized the improbability of these men being on the side of the road right where they happened to stop. Finally, one asked, “How do you know we have Bibles?”
 - One of the local men replied, “I am an Imam in our village several miles from here.
 - A week ago, a man in a white raiment appeared to me while I was giving the call to prayer at one end of our village. He told me that the Bible would tell me the way to life and that I must get this book.
 - I began running to the other side of the village to tell my fellow imam who was giving the call to prayer on the other side of the village what had just happened. But half way there I found him running toward me.
 - He told me a man in a white raiment had just appeared to him, and we discovered he had told us both the same thing.
 - Furthermore, he told us to come to this road at this time tonight and that two men would meet us with the Bibles we need to share with our village. So now, please give us the Bibles.”
 - The Christian men, in shock, gave all the Bibles hidden in their car to the imams.
 - They got back in their car, started the ignition, and found the steering working perfectly. They turned the car around and safely drove back out of the country.

- Not all the work of the Spirit is quite so dramatic. But it is all equally impactful. Many of you can testify to the work of the Holy Spirit in reaching and transforming you.
- The Spirit of Jesus is actively continuing all that “Jesus began to do and to teach until he was taken up to heaven.” (Acts 1:1-2a)

CONCLUSION

- Throughout the ages, men and women have faced tremendous persecution, even martyrdom so the gospel could go out.
- Christianity had been predicted by godless men to become defunct.
- But that is impossible, because it is God’s sovereign purpose that all that Jesus began to do and to teach continue, and that Jesus would reach you!
- God has personally orchestrated it’s advancement by His Holy Spirit.
 - Beginning in the time of the book of Acts, the gospel spread to Europe.
 - Since that time it spread throughout Europe, was carried to the new world of America, and has gone out to all regions of the earth.
- God’s message has been faithfully, carefully, accurately recorded and passed down to us today, and it has now reached your ears!

APPLICATION:

- Are you prepared for the Spirit of Jesus to continue all Jesus began to do and to teach through this study?
- How will it affect your commitment to participation, knowing that God has acted to bring you here, at this time, on this day, to speak to you by His Holy Spirit?

Reaching YOU with His message has always been a part of His plan!

ⁱ Ibid.

ⁱⁱ Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-). *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Ac 1:1). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

ⁱⁱⁱ Wheaton College Billy Graham Center Archives: www2.wheaton.edu/bgc/archives/faq/13.htm

^{iv} Utley, R. J. D. (2003). *Vol. Volume 3B: Luke the Historian: The Book of Acts*. Study Guide Commentary Series (1). Marshall, Texas: Bible Lessons International.

^v Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-). *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Ac 1:1). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

^{vi} Ibid.

^{vii} Ibid.

^{viii} Ibid.

^{ix} Carson, D. A. (1994). *New Bible Commentary: 21st century edition* (4th ed.). Leicester, England; Downers Grove, Ill., USA: Inter-Varsity Press.

^x Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-). *Vol. 2: The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (350). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.