

## Introducing the plan of God – Acts 1:1-8; Luke 1:1-4



One of the things about living on the Sunshine Coast is the thunderstorms. I used to love them as a boy. I remember counting the seconds between the lightning and the thunder. As kids there is always the debate about whether thunder was best or lightning as if you could have one without the other. The reality is you can't have one without the other.

This first chapter of Acts is the account of what happened between the lightning of Jesus coming to earth and the thunder of the coming of Jesus Spirit at Pentecost. The two cannot be separated.

Today we are launching into the book of Acts. It is a significant and so important book. It is significant firstly because of the major themes of the Bible in contains. Themes like:- a major step in the unfolding plan of God revelation; the coming of the promised Holy Spirit; the work of Jesus after his return to the Father; the beginning of the church – and it's practises; the preaching of the word of God as God main way of saving people.

It is also significant because it is so action packed. Jesus going into the sky. The Holy Spirit coming and making people speak in different languages. People being healed, murdered, arrested and jailed. Shipwrecks and riots.

TODAY we are introduced to the plan of God.

***The continuing work of Jesus through His Apostles by His Spirit.***

### 1. The continuing book of Luke

Our series in Acts must begin in Luke 1:1-4.

Read: Luke 1:1-4

In these verse Luke tells us his **purpose in writing**.

See Luke 1:3-4

- He is writing the things that have been fulfilled
- From v.4 Luke wanted people who read it to know the reliability of these things and so the certainty

How?

- His reliable sources are eyewitnesses and servants of the word
- He has carefully investigated
- He has written ordered account

Now to Acts 1:1

Notice he says in my 'former' book. He is referring to Luke. Also notice he is writing to the same person – Theophilus. Also he says I wrote about what Jesus 'Began' to do and teach.

***Luke is about what Jesus began to do and teach and Acts is about what Jesus continues to do and teach.***

We are to live in the 'skin' of Theophilus. We are all learners. There is nothing more important to learn and be convinced of than the life of Jesus. We are to read as if you are Theophilus and Luke is writing to you. Many of us know what Jesus has done but know little about what he CONTINUES to do in our lives in the world.

Now we come to the plan of God.

The plan of God: *The continuing work of Jesus through His Apostles by His Spirit.*

## 2. The continuing work of Jesus

Read: 1:1

This book would be best named the Acts of Jesus rather than the Acts of the Apostles or the Holy Spirit.

The 2 books aren't 2 different stories. One of the life of Jesus and then one of the life of the church. Luke writes in a way to show they are one story.

See Luke 24:46-49 and Acts 1:3-5, 8

The story or better than that the account of the work of Jesus. It is 2 stages of his ministry. One when he was on earth and one after he left and worked from heaven.

The ascension of Jesus was the final event of one stage of his work but the beginning of the next phase.

Acts is essentially about Jesus. So as we read Acts we must keep asking: what are learning about the risen Jesus?

## 3. through the Apostles

Read it: 1-3

There is a transition going on here. Jesus began His work on earth. Now he's leaving it to others. Jesus takes us into the stadium to reveal his plan for the continuation of his worldwide movement. What does he reveal? A bunch of blokes who didn't get him when they were with him and who denied knowing as soon as he left. These guys had nothing.

Notice 3 things about them:-

### Chosen

Jesus chose the apostles. Luke wants us to know that these men were not self-appointed leaders. They did not even volunteer for the job. Jesus sovereignly chose them, first to salvation, and then to apostleship (the word "apostle" means "sent one"). They were men under authority. They were not entrepreneurs, building their own empires. They did not make up or preach their own message. Rather, they were witnesses, relaying to others what they had seen and heard.

### Commissioned

Jesus gave the disciples "many convincing proofs." One proof was visual: He showed Himself alive. He appeared repeatedly to them. If it had only been one occasion, we could might conclude that it was a vision or mass hallucination. But there were multiple appearances, some to individuals, some to the whole group, and not on one day only, but over 40 days. They knew that He was not a phantom when they saw Him eat a piece of fish in front of them (Luke 24:42-43).

The bodily resurrection of Jesus is at the heart of the Christian faith. If He is not risen, our faith is in vain. Jesus' bodily resurrection proves His deity and it is our guarantee that God accepted Jesus' death as the satisfactory payment for our sins. Jesus had claimed before His death that He would be raised. He claimed to be one with the Father, so much so that He could say, "I and the Father are one" (John 10:30). He told His disciples, "He who has seen Me has seen the Father" (John 14:9). If Jesus were not God, then these claims were blasphemy. God would not have raised a blasphemer from the dead. But God raised Jesus, proving His deity.

### Instructed

The Apostles were taught by Jesus. They were taught what they needed to teach others. Christianity is a message. There are certain things you need to know. Those things are about Jesus.

In the year 2000 the Sydney Olympics torch relay went through the suburb I was living in. It was originally lit in Olympia Greece. When the flame finally reached Australia it stayed 10 days, carried by 11 000 torch bearers through over 1000 towns. The torch visited every State and territory. Apart from the runners it travelled by train, plane, canoe, ferry, horse and a few other means of transport.

There was so much excitement. People turned out in the 1000's to watch. Those who carried it were so excited to be a part of something so big.

Do you feel like that sometimes? Everyday seems the same. Full of the ordinary moments of life.

The Apostles are now caught up in the plan of God. Something bigger and more significant than anything they could ever dream of or achieve on their own.

#### 4. by the Spirit

##### Read: 1:8

The Holy Spirit is mentioned over 60 times. As you read Acts you see that the Holy Spirit plays an important role in every advance of the gospel. It is not through the skills or cleverness of men but it is by the power of Jesus by His Spirit.

Although we are not to be preoccupied with the Spirit but preoccupied with what He says about Jesus. This is the promise Jesus made through out Luke. He promised something new to happen with the Spirit. We'll see more about the Spirit next week.

The new thing is that He would no longer moving in and out John 14:17 says "But you know him, for he lives with you and will be IN you." Jesus would no longer be *with* them but *IN* them. The power they would receive would not be *something* but *SOMEONE: JESUS*.

He would give them power. The word for power is ***dunamis***. You can hear that it is where we get the word dynamite.

##### ***Power for what?***

Acts 1:8 says they will have power to be witnesses. We understand they need to power to do this. Just think about what happened last time Jesus left them on their own.

**We often speak about the legacy people leave when they die.** What we mean by that is that all they have left this earth they leave some lasting impact that will continue despite their death.

**My grandfather , who I call Pa, left a legacy behind when he died.** Part of that legacy is these eyes and this nose but there are some important things which showed he left his stamp on this world.

Wife, 4 children, 14 grandchildren and great grandchildren, Christian witness, Good deeds with Rotary. Hospital in the Solomon Islands.

For me he left His Bible. This was the greatest legacy he could leave. A witness to the Word of God. A life lived based on the Word of God and concerned for the Word of God to be known.

By sending His Spirit Jesus is leaving a legacy. In a much greater way than we can as people. His spirit comes that the Word of God might be known and lived by. He enables people to powerfully preach His Word. Jesus will continue His work by His Spirit. Now he has ascended he can send His Spirit.

**The book of Acts is a fantastic book because it shows us that when we are followers of Jesus we are caught up in something bigger than ourselves.** We are caught up in a worldwide movement which makes anything else insignificant. We are involved in the passing on of a message that is unstoppable because it is powered by the Spirit of Jesus.

The plan of God: *The continuing work of Jesus through His Apostles by His Spirit.*

#### **Discussion questions:**

1. What is the plan of God?
2. Who are the main players in the plan of God?
3. Is the plan of God finished? How should this affect our praying?
4. How is the plan of God to continue?
5. What reassurance does it give knowing Jesus gives His Spirit to His disciples?