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| ***Title:*** | Only the Beginning (Intro to the Book) |
| ***Text:*** | Acts 1:1 |
| ***Subject:*** | Why is Luke writing the account of Acts? |
| ***Compliment:*** | To reveal to Theophilus that Jesus work in the gospels was only the beginning. |
| ***CIT:*** | Luke writes to Theophilus once more for the purpose of revealing that Jesus work in the gospels was only the beginning. |
| ***Purpose:*** | To help the individuals of the local New Testament church realize and embrace Jesus purpose behind the existence of the institution of which they find themselves to be a part. |
| ***Homiletic Idea:*** | Jesus work in the gospels was only the beginning of all he intended to do and teach and the rest he intends to do through you as a member of the local New Testament church. |
| ***Intro:*** | There is more that Jesus intends to do and this is the record of the beginning of His continued work! |

***Introduction to the book of Acts:***

***The Writer: Luke the physician***

Luke was not an apostle. He was not an eye witness of the earthly ministry of Jesus. It is unclear when or how he came to know Jesus as savior. His nationality isn’t certain either.

So how did Luke write the gospel if he wasn’t there? Where did he get his information? How did he come to know all he did? Much of it he probably learned from the man that discipled him…the apostle Paul. This is perhaps one of the most interesting things about Luke in my opinion. It would seem as though Paul picked Luke up in Troas in Acts 16 as the language of the account at this point now begins to include the first person personal pronoun we. Now we do need to understand that Scripture was given by inspiration of the Holy Ghost, and that men were moved by the Spirit to write what God desired according to II Timothy 3:16 & II Peter 2:21. However, that does not mean that it is necessary for us to disregard the earthly sources by which the facts were revealed. Perhaps one of the reasons this relationship between Paul and Luke fascinates me so much is because it is further testimony to the power of discipling relationships. Investing in the life of another pays off often in ways we might never imagine. Paul, probably, did not know at the time that the man he just picked up and began to invest in was going to be used by God to further complete the revelation of Himself to mankind in His written Word.

The imagination ought to be employed in the reading the Word of God. I like to imagine the conversations between Luke and Paul on the ship as they were leaving Troas. I picture Paul recalling the day of Pentecost there in Jerusalem when Peter stood up and proclaimed with power and boldness that God had made that same Jesus both Lord and Christ. Paul was probably there. We know that Paul was a Hebrew of the Hebrews, and therefore would have probably been gathered with the other devout Jews on that day, and probably heard that message first hand. He might have said to Luke, “what a powerful message that day…Peter’s words haunted me. I was pricked in my heart (Acts 2:37). I resisted though and did not accept what I heard about Jesus at the time. What a preacher Peter is. Hopefully you will get to meet him at some point on our journeys. I’ll need to report to Jerusalem before too long…” He might have told him about Stephen. “Then there was Stephen. I never knew him personally, but what I saw in him the day I allowed the other Jews to stone him was incredible. How could one being wrongfully and brutally murdered pray that God would forgive the very ones casting the rocks? And then there was that time on the road to Damascus…”

We could go on and on, but the take away here is that Luke was a disciple of Paul the apostle. It sounds as though, in the first few verses of chapter one of the Gospel of Luke, that Luke would have had access to other records to draw from as well.

***The Recipient: Theophilus (the Unknown)***

Theophilus is kind of an enigma. Almost nothing at all is known about him other than his name which means “friend of God’. There is, however, much speculation.

One theory is that he is a new convert that Luke is writing to in an effort to disciple him. The Gospel of Luke mentions that Luke wants to help him “know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed.”

Another theory is that he was a Roman official, and that the accounts of the Gospel of Luke and of the book of Acts were efforts by Luke to defend Christianity and Paul who was on trial in the Roman courts having appealed to Caesar. In the Gospel of Luke, Luke refers to him as most excellent Theophilus. The phrase “most excellent” is often ascribed to those of official station.

One more theory and certainly the most romantic of the three is that Theophilus was Luke’s master. Often times the trade of physician would be practiced by a servant and his services would be employed in the house of the master. The thought is, again in reference to the way in which Luke addresses Theophilus in the Gospel of Luke, that Luke had been released by his master, a good man but lost, to follow Paul, and the Gospel of Luke and the book of Acts were Luke’s attempts to share the gospel with his master in hopes that he would be saved.

At the end of the day we only know that Luke wrote Acts and addressed it to Theophilus as the 2nd part of a two part series.

***The Purpose of the Book:***

The book of Acts is the record of that which Jesus began coming to fruition. So (CIT Stated) Luke writes to Theophilus once more for the purpose of revealing that Jesus work in the gospels was only the beginning.

1. ***It was only the beginning. Acts 1:1-2***

Here in Acts 1:1-2a Luke sums up the “former treatise” or the Gospel of Luke. In Acts 1:2b-3 he sums up the Book of Acts.

* 1. The former treatise pertained to the earthly ministry of Jesus, Theophilus, but that was just the beginning. Acts 1:1-2a
  2. After Jesus ascended he continued the work which he began through his apostles by the Holy Ghost! Acts 1:2b-3

Transition: I can almost hear Theophilus as he reads these beginning lines say to himself, “What do you mean began? Jesus in the last account not only died but he ascended. He isn’t here anymore. How could he do anymore?” To which Luke would reply, guessing Theophilus’ thoughts, “Here is what happened” From verse 4 through verse 11 Luke recalls some of the major events between Jesus resurrection until his ascension.

Note: Notice the use of the word “shall” indicating more to come.

1. ***The work which Jesus began would be propagated by Jesus through the people He empowered as members of the institution he established. Acts 1:4-8***
   1. V4-5 Jesus commands the apostles to tarry or wait in Jerusalem, the location of the first local New Testament church established by Jesus himself, until they received the Holy Ghost.
      1. John 14, 15, and 16 have much to say about the purpose of the Holy Ghost.
      2. Luke 24:49 also makes reference to this and is quoted in part in Acts 1:4.
      3. John 16:7 Jesus explains that the very reason his ascension was so important was that the Comforter, the Holy Ghost, would be sent.
   2. V6-8 Jesus reveals the purpose of the Comforter and the reason His, the Holy Ghost, involvement in the work was so vital.
      1. The disciples, sensing that Jesus is about to leave, bring up the one thing that consumed their minds often, being Jews, which is the restoration of the kingdom.
         1. It’s like they are saying, “aren’t you going to do this before you go?”
         2. Their minds were not yet on track with Christ’s purpose for them further revealing their need for the Holy Ghost in the work to come.
      2. Jesus gets them on track with His will revealing the purpose of sending the Comforter.
         1. The Holy Ghost will empower and enable them to do the work Jesus began in the gospels.
         2. This work involves taking the gospel, being witnesses unto Jesus, to the entire world!
            1. Jerusalem a city within Judea.
            2. Judea is the Province housing Jerusalem.
            3. Samaria represents a sub-culture to the Jews.
            4. Uttermost part of the earth is pretty self-explanatory.
2. ***Having received from Jesus instruction of what’s to come and what to do; now it was time to hurry up and wait. Acts 1:9-11***
   1. Having received instruction from Jesus.
   2. The angels ask “why stand ye gazing”
   3. It’s time to go and wait…

What an exciting thought. The end of the gospel accounts did not include the end of the work that Christ was doing. Rather they contained only the beginning. Jesus had more to do.

***Application:***

An even more exciting thought is that Jesus ***has*** more to do. (Homiletic Idea Stated) Jesus work in the gospels was only the beginning of all he intended to do and teach and the rest he intends to do ***through*** you as a member of the local New Testament church.

* Jesus began a work in the gospels.
  + He gave the gospel
  + He established the church, his vehicle for spreading the gospel
  + He commissioned the church to do that very work
* Whose responsibility is it to make sure that a local New Testament church continues to be used by Jesus to do the work He began?
  + The individual members of that local New Testament body
  + That means you and me
* How would they do that?
  + By making sure they are continuing to be used by Jesus within that body to do the work!
* Jesus began a work in the gospels that he would like to continue through you by your involvement and contribution in your local New Testament church! Will you let him?

Conclusion:

The earthly ministry of Jesus in the former treatise was just the beginning of what Jesus had to do and teach.

What more would he desire to do?

In the gospels he gave the gospel. Now he intends to spread the gospel.

But Jesus ascended. How can he do more if he's not here?

In the gospels he gave the church. Now he is going to empower it and use it.

Jesus plan from the beginning was to be that sacrificial lamb and use the local church as the institution solely responsible for the propagation of the provision made by Him.

The beginning efforts in fulfilling this plan are recorded in the gospels containing the account of Jesus earthly ministry. He provided both the gospel and the local church.

In Acts he empowers the church to do what it was created and commissioned to do. So that from that point through even today the churches purpose is clearly defined. We are to be the vehicle through which Jesus completes the work he began in the gospels!

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| ***Dates and Locations Delivered*** | |  |
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