

SCRIPTURE STUDIES

INTRODUCING LUKE'S SECOND VOLUME

THE ACTS

THE ACTIONS OF THE APOSTLES

THE ACTIVITIES OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

Whatever you choose to call the 5th New Testament book, it is not a dull book. It is, as the title suggests, an action-packed book!

Luke was called "*the beloved physician*" (Col.4:14) and was the apostle Paul's Primary-Care Physician who traveled with him. He was the only Gentile author of a New Testament book. He was Paul's constant companion and in 97 verses in Acts, beginning in chapter 16, he uses the first person "I," "we," and "us" indicating he was with Paul and was part of the story.

Originally Acts was the second volume of a two-volume history of the beginnings of Christianity, which circulated in the early churches. Around A.D.100 the two volumes were separated and the Gospel of Luke was joined with the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke to form the "Four Gospels." The second volume then became known as "The Book of Acts of The Apostles."

The two books are two parts of the same story. The first tells "*of all that Jesus began both to do and teach*" (Acts 1:1) until His ascension. The second, picks up the Jesus Story after His resurrection and continues it for about 30 more years, tracing the spread of the gospel from Jerusalem to Rome.

Warren W. Wiersbe comments, "Imagine how confused you would be if, in reading your New Testament, you turned the last page of the Gospel of John and discovered – Romans! "How did the church get too Rome?" you would ask yourself; and the answer is found in the Book of Acts." The Book of Acts is the history of the early church, a bridge connecting the Gospels with the Epistles. It fills in what happened on earth after Jesus went back to heaven.

Luke's first book ends with these words: "*And He led them out as far as Bethany, and He lifted up His hands and blessed them. Now it came to pass, while He blessed them, that He was parted from them and carried up into heaven. And they worshiped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple praising and blessing God. Amen.*" (Luke 24:50-53)

Luke's second book opens with these words: "*The former account I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, until the day in which He was taken up, after He through the Holy Spirit had given commandments to the apostles whom He had chosen, to whom He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.*" (Acts 1:1-3)

Luke wrote the book to complete the account that he had begun in the Gospel of Luke. Eugene Peterson, in his introduction to the Book of Acts writes, “Luke continues to tell the story with hardly a break, a pause perhaps to dip his pen in the inkwell, writing in the same style, using the same vocabulary.”

The book of Acts is the history of what the first Christians did after Jesus left them to go back to heaven. It will be a great help to us if we recognize at the outset that the book of Acts emphasizes the historical, not the hysterical! It is a book of history – His Story – continued.

The Book of Acts records the start of something big – the greatest movement on earth - the Church of Jesus Christ! It details a movement of Christian faith-pioneers, risk-takers facing new challenges in a hostile environment, empowered by the Holy Spirit, in order to advance the cause of Christ. We are the modern-day descendants of those believers. Do we have the faith, the courage, the daring that they had? If we are to be a force for God and not a farce, we will need to be as committed as they were.

Let us now begin our study in the history of the early church, not to just fill our heads with information but to allow the Holy Spirit to use the information to create within us inspiration to impact our world for Christ Jesus, as the early church impacted their world. Forward! March!

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