**The Book of Acts Sermon I**

Theme of Acts:

There is not so much a single theme, as there are multiple themes or lines to the story, as this is an historical document.

The themes are mostly established in the first chapter.

I. The work of the Holy Spirit in establishing the Church. Acts 1:2, 1:4-5, 1:7, 1:16

II. The Kingdom of God revealed. Acts 1:3, 1:6

III. The growth and development of the Church. 1:8

Timeline

AD 30 Pentecost Acts 2

32 Church Scattered after Stephen martyred. Acts 8:1-3

33 or 34 Conversion of Saul/Paul Acts 9:1-22

about 37 First Gentiles baptized. Acts 10-11:18

42 or 43 Barnabas joins Paul in Antioch. Acts 11:22-24

45-47 Paul’s first missionary journey Acts 13-14

48 Council in Jerusalem. Acts 15 (14 years after Paul’s conversion)

48-52 Paul’s second missionary Journey (end fixed by Gallio’s

 proconsulship) Acts 16-18:22

52-57 Paul’s third missionary journey Acts 18:23-Acts 21:16

57 Paul arrested in Jerusalem

57-59 Paul a prisoner in Caesarea

60-62 Paul a prisoner in Rome Book of Acts ends.

62 Probably freed. Went to Spain?

65 (?) Martyrdom in Rome

Luke/Acts is one long book, broken up into two parts, perhaps in part because it did not fit on a single scroll.

Luke: Jesus goes to Jerusalem.

Acts: Jesus goes out from Jerusalem (through his apostles)

**I. Acts and Jesus**

Acts 1:1 All Jesus began to do and to teach. Here we see that Jesus is still a major character in Acts. Jesus continues to work in Acts.

Examples:

He works miracles: Acts 3:6,10,30, Acts 9:34, Acts 13:11, Acts 14:3.

He is seen at God’s right hand Acts 7:55-56.

He appears to Saul Acts 9:4-5.

He speaks to Ananias Acts 9:10-16.

He tells Peter to go to Cornelius’ house Acts 10:13-15.

He comforts Paul and Silas in prison Acts 18:9-10.

He sends Paul to preach to the Gentiles Acts 22:17-21.

He tells Paul he must go to Rome in chains Acts 23:11

This is Jesus’ church. Matthew 28:20 I will be with you always.

As we go through Acts, be mindful of Jesus in the background

**II. Even more so, we see the Holy Spirit acting and controlling events in Acts.**  This is the Holy Spirit whom Jesus sent.

Acts of the Apostles could very well be called Acts of the Holy Spirit.

Acts 1:2 Instructions through the Holy Spirit.

1:4-5 Wait for the Holy Spirit.

1:7 Power from the Holy Spirit.

1:16 The Holy Spirit spoke the prophecies

2:1-4 The Holy Spirit falls on the apostles.

2:17-18 Pouring of the Holy Spirit prophesied in Joel.

4:8 Peter spoke, as he was filled by the Holy Spirit.

4:25 He spoke through David.

4:31 They were filled with the Holy Spirit and the house was shaken.

5:32 The Holy Spirit witnesses to the resurrection.

6:3-6 Those known to be full of the Holy Spirit chosen to lead.

7:55 Stephen was full of the Holy Spirit.

8:29 The Holy Spirit tells Philip to share with the Ethiopian Eunuch.

9:31 The Church strengthened and encouraged by the Holy Spirit.

10:19 The Holy Spirit tells Peter to go with the three Gentile visitors.

10:44-47 The Holy Spirit fell on Cornelius and his house (confirming that salvation was for the Gentiles too).

11:28 The Holy Spirit tells Agabus about a famine in the Roman world.

13:2-4 The Holy Spirit set apart Barnabas and Saul for missionary work, and sends them off.

13:52 The disciples filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.

15:28 The Holy Spirit influenced the decision of the Jerusalem Council.

16:7 The Spirit of Jesus prevents them from going to Bithyia.

20:22 Paul compelled by the Holy Spirit to go to Jerusalem.

20:23 The Holy Spirit warns Paul of danger.

20:28 The Holy Spirit makes and chooses elders.

21:11 The Holy Spirit tells Agabus how Paul will die.

Q: What does all this tell you?

**III. Acts and the Kingdom of God.**

Acts 1:3 What was Jesus talking about? The Kingdom of God.

Acts 2:17-21 The Kingdom comes, as prophesied again and again in the OT.

Acts 10 The Kingdom comes to the Gentiles.

Acts 8:12 Philip proclaims the Kingdom

Acts 14:22 We are on our way into the kingdom of God

Acts 19:8 He persuaded them about the kingdom of God.

Acts 20:25 Paul preached everywhere about the Kingdom of God.

**IV. Acts as a story of the growth and development of the Church and the spread of the gospel.**

Acts 1:8 A scary vision. Yet, that is what they did.

Acts is not just a series of nice, unconnected stories. It is a record of a movement which, in the end, completely, absolutely, totally, forever, changed the world. It is hard for us to imagine how much they changed the future course of human (and eternal) history.

Growth of the Church in Acts.

Acts 2:41 Three thousand added that day.

Acts 4:4 The number of disciples grew to five thousand.

Acts 5:14 More and more men and women believed in the Lord and were added to their number.

Acts 5:28 You have filled Jerusalem with your teaching. (Note, they have now completed the first stage of Acts 1:8)

Acts 6:7 The number of disciples increased rapidly and a large number of priests were obedient.

Acts 8:4 Those scattered preached the word wherever they went.

Acts 9:31 The Church grew in numbers throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria. (completing stage 2 and 3)

Acts 11:24 a great number of people were brought to the Lord.

Acts 16:5 the churches were strengthened in the faith and grew daily in numbers.

Acts 17:6 These men have caused trouble all over the world. (completing stage 4 of Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and to the ends of the earth)

Acts 1 Jesus’ Marching Orders: Jesus Pushes the Jewish Envelope

Acts 1:1-8 Jesus makes last preparations for his disciples to carry on the work. To be all in. How?

a. v. 3 Teaching about the kingdom. (v. 6 but they are really confused)

b. v. 4-5 Wait for the gift. Sending the Holy Spirit to help them.

c. v. 8 Giving them a vision/mission.

1:8 Luke’s Great Commission: A scary vision!!!!

The Roman Empire was an amalgam of an ancient polytheism, local gods, Greek philosophies (Pytharorean, Epicurean, Stoic, Neoplatonist), Gnosticism, Greek, Egyptian and Persian Mystery religions and Persian dualist religions.

Logically, it makes absolutely no sense that a Jewish movement, led mostly by poor, uneducated people, from a relatively insignificant province in the Roman empire, with a world view diametrically opposed to that of the Roman/Greek world, following a leader who was executed at a young age—one who never wrote anything and who never left a 100 mile radius of his place of birth, who did not even speak Greek could conquer the entire Greco/Roman world.

This is what we need today. The only hope for this world is for us to change the world all over again. We need a new revolution like that we find in Acts.

Truly, God did amazing things in their days, but he can do the same today. Do you want to be part of this?

To do this, they had to overcome great prejudice.

Acts Ch 3-7 They reach Jerusalem and Judea.

Then God asked the Jews to do something they were NOT inclined to do. To go to Samaria and the ends of the world required them to do things they were not at all comfortable doing. It broke every stereotype and preconceived notion about the specialness of the Jewish people they had.

Acts 8:4-5 Philip preaches in Samaria.

Now the unclean half-Jewish Samaritans hear the word of God.

Acts 8:26-29 Praise God the Holy Spirit intervened here, otherwise Philip would not have done this. Why?

The Ethiopian eunuch is probably a Jewish convert (not born Jewish). Worse than that, he was a eunuch.

Eunuch were “unclean.” Philip has to reach out to an unclean person.

An angel told him to do it!!! Will you go and bring the gospel to “unclean” people?

But that is not all!

Acts 10 Now Gentiles will come into the church. God had said dozens of times, through Abraham ALL NATIONS will be blessed. But the church does not want to do this.

Acts 10:9-16 Peter has three visions.

v. 13 GOD says “Get up, Peter. Kill and eat.

And Peter says to the God of the universe. “Surely not!!!”

Acts 10:19 The Holy Spirit tells Paul to go with Cornelius’ men.

Acts 10:44 While Peter was still speaking.

The Holy Spirit interrupted his sermon in the middle!!!

Finally Acts 10:47-48 OK. I guess we better baptize Gentiles.

Last episode.

Acts 28:1,4 The barbarians. These are not Jews. They are not half-Jewish Samaritans. They are not unclean Jewish converts. They are not civilized Greco-Roman converts. They are barbarians.

But what are these barbarians doing for a ship-load of dangerous criminals?

These barbarians showed unusual kindness. They built a fire, welcomed them, took them into their homes.

This is a sort of re-enactment of the Parable of the Good Samaritan.

What is the moral of the story? God is sending us out.

God is empowering us with the Holy Spirit.

But when he says go into all the world—to the ends of the earth—he is quite serious.

Who do you hesitate to share with?

Who is the “barbarian” in your life?

Let us take the good news to the very ends of the earth, including Bakersfield, Tehachapi, Taft, Delano, McFarland, Shafter and, yes, to Merced.

Acts 1:9-11. The ascension. An angel tells them: He will come back the way he went. So, get about his business.

Q: What do you think it will be like?

Acts 1:13-26 Judas’ betrayal was prophesied (Psalm 69:25, 109:8).

Matthias chosen. They cast lots. Q: Is this something we should do?