

Series: Acts 10: One More From The Road

Message: Week 1- Where we've been, where we're going

Date: January 9, 2022

- ***Hello Everyone! Happy New Year, welcome, and thank you for joining with us.***
- ***I apologize for my voice- I feel fine, but on the very back end of a what amounted to a bad cold.***
- ***We are BACK IN ACTS! This is our 10th installment, and I've planned our journey out to its completion- we should finish Acts, leaving Paul under house arrest in Rome, sometime in early June.***
- ***We left off back in November at the end of Paul's second missionary journey, and, as you might expect, we now move into the THIRD great missionary journey- ONE MORE FROM THE ROAD. NOW, many believe Paul took a fourth missionary journey, but this is the last we have recorded in the book of Acts. Paul will take a fourth and final journey, but of a different nature, as we will see.***
- ***SO, TODAY, as it's been 8 weeks since we left Paul back in Antioch, I want to bring us back up to speed on WHERE we've been so far, WHERE we are going through the rest of Luke's history, and, very importantly, WHY WE ARE HERE- why we are taking this journey through Acts- in the first place.***
- ***That's where we are going today, but first, GET YOUR BIBLE, pull up the outline I have for you below, strap in, put your seats and trays in their full upright position, and we will jump back in! TODAY is SUNDAY, January 9th, 2022- PE, TO- thanks for...***

† Why we're here

- ***We began our journey through acts during the original COVID lockdown, on April 26th of 2020.***
- ***When we started, we asked the question- WHY are we taking this journey? WHY go to the time and effort to dig deep into this history of Christianity's first generation? With this in mind, let's go back to where we started, with the first 10 verses of Acts chapter 1***

Acts 1:1-10 *In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach ² until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen.*

³ *After his suffering, he presented himself to them and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God. ⁴ On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. ⁵ For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."*

⁶ *Then they gathered around him and asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?"*

⁷ *He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. ⁸ But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."*

- ***We are on this Journey through Acts because this mission given to the Apostles- to be witnesses of the GOOD NEWS of Jesus Christ- this is still our mission today. Acts has 28 chapters, and in a very real way, we live in Acts chapter 29th, as God continues this story***

through us. Part of appreciating on a deeper level the story we are in TODAY is understanding how OUR story began...

⁹ After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight.

¹⁰ They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. ¹¹ “Men of Galilee,” they said, “why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.”

- **This is such an incredible image... right at the beginning of the story, these Angels proclaim how it will end... CHRIST WILL RETURN. BUT until then... don't just stand around looking up. God is about to launch a project called the CHURCH, and He is sending the very presence of Christ through the HOLY SPIRIT, that will be with you always.**
- **FRIENDS, this same HOLY SPIRIT is with us today, and still speaks to us saying... DON'T JUST STAND AROUND LOOKING UP! God's work continues still, and He is doing this work through you and I- through all believers, through his church.**
- **And so, Acts is a great gift, telling us the story of how the Church began. THIS IS OUR ORIGIN STORY, and it is a journey worth taking.**
- **SO, THAT SAID, I'm going to walk us through WHERE WE'VE BEEN and WHERE WE ARE GOING, using the framework of a timeline- hopefully this will help us grasp the big picture of how our story has unfolded.**

† Where we've been and where we're going

- **If we think of Acts as a play, then the curtain comes up, SCENE ONE, with Jesus' ascension. AD 30.**

Scene 1: AD 30-34. The birth of the church (Ch 1-8)

- Jesus' resurrection and ascension
- Pentecost and the birth of 'The Way'
- Growth of the community of believers in Jerusalem
- Onset of persecution, Paul's persecution

Scene 2: AD 35-39. The Gospel opens to the Gentiles (Ch 9-10)

- Paul's conversion, Paul in Damascus, Arabia, Jerusalem
- Paul takes refuge in Cilicia and Syria
- Jerusalem church expands into Israel
- Peter's ministry and conversion of Cornelius

Scene 3: AD 40-45. Gospel expands beyond Israel (Ch 11-12)

- Peter defends Gospel going to the Gentiles
- Gospel spreads to North Africa and Syria
- Paul and Barnabas in Antioch
- Believers first called Christians in Antioch
- Peter's arrest/escape from prison in Jerusalem. Peter exits scene.

Scene 4: AD 46-49. The next major steps (Ch 13-15)

- First missionary journey
- Jerusalem Council
- Paul returns to Antioch, writes book of Galatians

Scene 5: AD 49-52. *The Gospel reaches Greece (Ch 16-18)*

- Second missionary journey
- Paul writes 1st and 2nd Thessalonians from Corinth

– ***From Corinth Paul traveled back to Antioch in Syria, completing the second missionary journey. This is where we are now, the year is right around AD 53.***

————— ∞ AD 53 - We Are Here ∞ —————

Scene 6: AD 53-57. *The Gospel spreads as resistance intensifies (Ch 19-20)*

- Third missionary journey
- Paul writes 1st Corinthians from Ephesus
- Paul writes 2nd Corinthians from Macedonia
- Paul writes Romans from Corinth

Scene 7: AD 57-59. *Back to Israel (Ch 21-26)*

- Paul arrives in Jerusalem.
- Paul arrested at the temple, Romans protect him from threats
- Paul imprisoned two years in Caesarea
- Paul on trial in Caesarea

Scene 8: AD 59-60. *The last journey (Ch 27-28)*

- Paul travels to Rome, shipwrecked on Malta
- Paul arrives in Rome, begins period of house arrest

– ***And here we will leave Paul, proclaiming the Gospel and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ, with all boldness and without hindrance. ENDS WITH EXCLAMATION POINT. GOD IS AT WORK- as He still is today.***

– ***OKAY- that's the framework of the story... now, want to remind us of a few key concepts as we ENGAGE- consider and really wrestle with- this scripture. These principles are going to be very important as we continue...***

✠ Engaging Acts: reminding ourselves of a few key concepts

- Acts is a time of TRANSITION

- ***From the Gospel being for the Jews, moving to the Gentiles. Primary theme***
- ***Geographic- From Jerusalem to Mediterranean world- 1st century roman Empire***
- ***From Gospel being primary focused on forgiveness, to the full message of God's Grace***
- ***CRUCIALLY, the transition from the OLD COVENANT to the NEW COVENANT. We've seen Luke describe how this new movement was ROOTED in the prophets and work of God in ISRAEL, and yet was fulfilled, and given new birth to all the world, IN CHRIST.***
- ***ACTS 15 is a turning point in the history of the church- one of the most important and least taught chapters in the NT.***
- ***Here, when confronted with whether or not all believers should live under the requirements of the Mosaic Law, Peter proclaimed...***

why do you try to test God by putting on the necks of Gentiles a yoke that neither we nor our ancestors have been able to bear? ¹¹ No! We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we (Jewish believers) are saved, just as the gentiles are.”

- **Then, in Acts 15:19, James lays down a principle that must still guide us today, when he said... WE SHOULD NOT MAKE IT DIFFICULT FOR THE GENTILES- the outsiders- WHO ARE TURNING TO GOD.**
- **TIME of TRANSITION. This will be important in our scripture next week.**
 - The key question of DESCRIPTIVE vs NORMATIVE
- **As we’ve moved through our story, we’ve examined the difference between what is a HISTORICAL DESCRIPTION of what has happened, and BEYOND THIS, what are events or principles that are NORMATIVE for all believers, church, all time**
 - **Miracles- God working in specific ways, for specific purposes- God CAN work this way now, but scripture doesn’t teach us God necessarily WILL work through physical supernatural acts. This is not NORMATIVE for the church.**
 - **On the other hand, throughout Acts we see the consistent theme of believers experiencing their faith in COMMUNITY. As a BODY of faith. While this can be expressed in many different ways, this call to be a COMMUNITY of faith, to share our lives together, is absolutely normative for the church- in fact, it is one of the most consistent teachings of the New Testament.**
- Big themes of Acts:
 - GOD is growing His church
- **Seems obvious, but crucial and can be easy to forget. The personalities of our story have been important. We think of Peter, James, Barnabas, Philip, Silas, PAUL... each had different resources and skills they brought to the table.**
- **BUT THE expansion of the Gospel across the Mediterranean world was NOT dependent on any of these people. It was dependent upon God.**
- **TODAY we live in a time when Christian culture is borderline obsessed with celebrity pastors/teachers, our incredible resources, conferences, strategists, you name it. From a human standpoint, the church has more resources today than any time in its history. BUT NONE OF THIS IS WHAT WILL GROW GOD’S KINGDOM. It is GOD, working through believers just like you and me, as we are His disciples.**
- **Next big theme... will become center stage in as we near the end of the story...**
 - The centrality of Christ and His RESURRECTION
- **In the final three years of his ministry- prior to arriving in Rome- Paul will defend his faith multiple times. EACH TIME he does, the central issue will be the Resurrection. More than once, Paul will proclaim that THE reason he is on trial is the HOPE of the RESURRECTION.**
- **Last one, and we just talked about this...**
 - The importance of the COMMUNITY of believers
- **We have seen this throughout Acts, and will again in several emotionally powerful scenes.**

– ***Want to WRAP UP today with this... we are beginning our last push through Acts, and we'll begin with a goodbye...***

‡ Beginning with a goodbye

– ***In the late AD 50's, Paul wrote the Book of Romans from the city of Corinth. We will cover this time period in the coming months.***

– ***As we know, Romans is arguable Paul's 'magnum opus', his great articulation of the Faith... and he ends Romans by saying this. It's an appropriate thought for us as we enter into the unknown of this New Year.***

Romans 16:25-27

Now to him who is able to establish you in accordance with my gospel, the message I proclaim about Jesus Christ, in keeping with the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past,²⁶ but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God, so that all the Gentiles might come to the obedience that comes from faith—²⁷ to the only wise God be glory forever through Jesus Christ! Amen.