

# The Christian Arsenal

[www.christianarsenal.com](http://www.christianarsenal.com)

## ACTS 1:1-26

Today we begin a new study – a six month study in the **Book of Acts**. As we always do when we begin a new study, let's take just a couple of minutes to set a little background and introduction to this New Testament book. Let's see **who wrote it** and **to whom it was written** and **for what purpose it was written**.

Even though the author doesn't identify or introduce himself, this book is overwhelmingly believed to have been written by a man named Luke. Luke was a Greek physician who also wrote the Gospel that bears his name.

Luke was a companion of the Apostle Paul. On over in the **Book of Acts**, Luke writes in the first person... "**we did this**", and "**we saw this**" and "**we said this...**" making it very clear that he was with Paul in such places as Troas, Philippi and Miletus and Syria and many other places as well.

So, Dr. Luke wrote the **Book of Acts** and he wrote it as **verse 1** tells us to a man named Theophilus.

Now, let me just quickly tell you that there are two theories about Theophilus.

Theophilus means "lover of God." Christians were being persecuted in the First Century and some theologians believe this to be a "code name" that would mean any person who loves God.

Most theologians I read, however, believe Theophilus to be a specific man, a man perhaps in authority. Luke refers to him in his gospel as "most excellent Theophilus". Apparently, Luke had written his gospel to this same man. **Luke 1:3** and **Acts 1:1** alludes to that first writing.

But, as I was thinking about all this this week, it occurred to me that Luke more than likely wrote this book to a real man named Theophilus, but he also wrote this book to **all lovers of God**. You and I love God and are the beneficiaries and recipients of Luke's account, aren't we?

The Book of Acts is a bridge between the Gospels and the Epistles. Without the Book of Acts the New Testament would have a great void.

The last recorded fact about Jesus in the **Gospel of Matthew** is the Resurrection, and this is recorded in **Acts 1**.

The last recorded fact in the **Gospel of Mark** is the Ascension, and this is also recorded in **Acts 1**.

The last recorded fact in the **Gospel of Luke** is the promise of the Holy Spirit and that is also in **Acts 1**.

The last recorded fact in the **Gospel of John** is the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus and guess what? That is recorded in **Acts 1**.

Let's think a moment about the **purpose** of the **Book of Acts**.

Luke's purpose has several focuses. We need to remember that the disciples were Jewish. So, one of Luke's purposes include making it abundantly clear to the Jewish people that the Gospel was not their exclusive possession. The Gospel is for all people. Luke also makes it clear that Gentiles would not first have to become Jews before becoming Christians.

# The Christian Arsenal

[www.christianarsenal.com](http://www.christianarsenal.com)

Luke also wrote in part to commend Christianity to the Roman world...the Gentile world.

Lastly, I believe Luke wrote a completely accurate historical account of the first several decades of the church. This is not an exhaustive history, but it is an accurate one. Luke shows in this book how the spread of Christianity was empowered and energized by the Holy Spirit.

See, Christianity is historical. Christianity isn't based on an idea or on a philosophy or on a theory.

Most of the "religions" of the world can exist apart from their founder.

For example you don't have to have a historical Buddha to have Buddhism. All you have to have is Buddhist teachings.

You don't have to have a historical Shinto to have Shintoism. All you have to have is a reverence for their "gods of nature."

You don't have to have a historical Hindu to have Hinduism. All you believe is a one's good deeds in one life will determine the next life one leads.

But, this is simply not the case with Christianity. If you take away the history...if you reduce it, as some have tried to do, to a "religion" of mere ethics, or ideas, then Christianity becomes like all other religions of this world.

This is because Christianity is permanently linked to the life and accomplishments of the Lord Jesus Christ!

Jesus taught us about God, but He didn't merely teach about God, He showed us what God is. He said, "I and the Father are one." He said, "If you've seen Me, you've seen the Father."

In short, Jesus **was** God and **is** God and He showed that to be a historical fact by dying for our sins and rising from the dead. And, Beloved, the bottom line is **without that historical basis, Christianity is no better than any other of the world's "religions."**

Remember what we've said is the difference in the world's religions and Christianity. **Religion is man's effort to reach to God. Christianity is God's reaching down to man through the blood of His Son.**

Christianity is based on a proven fact. There's much skepticism about this in our day. Maybe there always has been...but we surely are exposed to it more now, aren't we? All we need do is turn on our TV to one of the "roundtable discussions" of the "intellectual liberal theologians" and we hear doubt after doubt cast upon the historical essentials of our faith, don't we?

The essentials of our faith include and in fact the very definition of the gospel is that Christ died for our sins, that He was buried and that He was raised from the dead!

And when Luke, as we'll see in a moment, writes of Jesus' resurrection, he bases it on actual eyewitness accounts.

Christ's resurrection was not a "good idea" dreamed up by my man. Christ's resurrection was not a scheme or a hoax or a ploy!! Christ's resurrection is a historical fact!

# The Christian Arsenal

[www.christianarsenal.com](http://www.christianarsenal.com)

One other thing before we get into our text...

The Book of Acts serves as a transition. During His earthly ministry, the work of preaching and teaching was done primarily by our Lord Himself. But the time came when He passed that responsibility on to the apostles.

From a purely human standpoint the apostles weren't ready for such a task. But they would soon be empowered for the ministry of evangelism and edification and we'll see that in greater detail next week.

So, with all that in mind, let's look at our text...

## **Acts 1:1-3...**

Luke is the only one who tells us that Jesus walked this earth for 40 days after His resurrection. Paul tells us He appeared to more than 500 brethren at one time.

Why did Jesus do this? Why didn't Jesus just go on to Heaven when He was raised from the dead?

Well, I believe He did it for the same reasons we just mentioned...

- to establish His resurrection as a historical fact.
- to strengthen His apostles for the task at hand.

Listen, these men knew Jesus had been crucified. There was no doubt among any of them that Jesus had died on Calvary. In fact, they were so convinced of His death, that they soon began to scatter and go home,

Because well, it was nice to have known Him but He was dead now, and to give their lives to the mere memory of a dead Christ would be foolishness! He simply had not done all they had expected Him to do.

**But, then Jesus rose and began appearing to them. And you know what? His appearances were sufficient to draw them together again. These wouldn't come together for a "philosophy" or an "idea" or a "theory" or a "myth"...They came together because the Christ they had known and loved was alive!! He had conquered death, hell and the grave!!**

## **Verses 4 and 5...**

Here we see Jesus promising them that they would be baptized by the Holy Spirit and down in **verse 8**, He tells them their power will come from the Holy Spirit.

Now, think about this...

Don't you know after Jesus had appeared to them for 40 days, these men were fired up? Don't you know when they saw the resurrected Christ they thought they could go anywhere and do anything for the cause of Christ?

But Jesus told them to wait...Why?

Because Jesus knew they couldn't operate on **emotion**.

Jesus knew they couldn't operate on **excitement**.

Jesus knew their **enthusiasm** wouldn't last.

It was noble and it was sincere, but it had no staying power and it had no saving power. It was of the flesh. In addition to **emotion** and **excitement** and **enthusiasm**, these men would need **enlightenment** and **energizing** and **encouragement**.

- 1) These were unlearned, ignorant men, and these unlearned, ignorant men would preach before thousands. They would preach before governors and kings. They and the folks they would lead to Jesus Christ would write the New Testament...so they would need **enlightenment!**

# The Christian Arsenal

[www.christianarsenal.com](http://www.christianarsenal.com)

- 2) These men couldn't convert or convict anybody...so they would need **energizing** from the Holy Spirit!
- 3) These men were full of enthusiasm now but what about were alone, when they were in prison, when they were scourged and threatened with death for the sake of the Gospel? They would need the Holy Spirit to **encourage** them, wouldn't they?

By the way, aren't you glad this same Holy Spirit lives in you and me? What would we do without Him? We can't get very far walking in the flesh, can we? But, we can do all God wants us to do if we're walking in the Spirit!

## Verses 6-8...

Can't you just hear this conversation?

"Lord, You know...we've been pretty patient. We've waited a long time. Three years is a long time, Lord. I mean, it really didn't take three years to teach us all we needed to know... but we went along with You, because after all You **are** the **Lord** and we're just Your disciples. We even had to go through that nasty business of Your crucifixion...

But now, Lord, don't You think we could get down to the **real business** at hand? I mean, now that You've been resurrected, what's to keep You from setting up Your kingdom? We're really ready for that kingdom to be established, Lord."

And what did Jesus say? "It's not for you to know when I'm Going to set up My kingdom. Your job is to be My Witnesses in this world. And that's exactly what you'll Be! You're going to receive power to do that when the Holy Spirit comes upon you!"

Now, we shouldn't be too hard on these guys. They had been taught since childhood to expect their Messiah to come and set up a literal kingdom. They knew Old Testament truth, but not New Testament truth.

And Jesus didn't really rebuke them.

**Bless their hearts...they had a lot to learn, didn't they? And you know what? They learned it!! They learned the heavenly kingdom was more important than an earthly kingdom. They learned Jesus had called them to the greatest task and they wasn't to set up a material kingdom, but to build a spiritual kingdom.**

## Verses 9-11...

We've just come through a three month study of the book of Revelation. The study of prophecy is fascinating, isn't it? The study of end time events stimulates our imagination and I truly believe we should know all we can about the last days, But I also believe our study of God's Word should be balanced.

If we dwell on prophecy more than evangelism, that's not good. If we tell people about Jesus and fail to tell them He's coming again, they'll miss a blessing.

# The Christian Arsenal

[www.christianarsenal.com](http://www.christianarsenal.com)

To put it simply...Jesus was born, He died for our sins, He was raised, He sits at the Father's right hand and one day He's coming again, and He's coming just the way He left! And we should be witnesses of all this to those around us.

## **Verses 12-14...**

We see the disciples doing what Jesus told them to do. They were praying and waiting for what the Father had promised.

Who all were waiting? The disciples were waiting. The women were waiting. Mary, the mother of Jesus, was waiting. The brothers of Jesus were waiting.

...and that's not all...the next verse tells us that there were about 120 persons in all in that Upper Room.

One hundred twenty folks were waiting there...just waiting. I don't believe this was at all easy for them, do you?

But I believe what they had seen and heard from Jesus had made a real impact on them. So, this was

### **1) a time for obedience**

These folks would have to wait ten days. The text doesn't tell us that. But, if we figure the 50 days from Passover to Pentecost and subtract the 40 days Jesus walked the earth...that leaves about ten days. Now, they didn't know it would take ten days.

Jesus had said, "Don't leave Jerusalem. Wait for the gift

God has promised and I have told you about."

And they waited...obediently...

Not only was this a time for obedience, it was also

### **2) a time for fellowship**

They didn't isolate themselves from each other, did they. They bonded together in sweet fellowship. Isn't there something special about just being among other believers? Isn't there something special about knowing you're all on the same team and there is a common goal you're all trying to reach?

Have you ever thought about who these folks were? Well, we don't know. Only the eleven disciples are named...but wouldn't you think maybe Nicodemus was there? And maybe Joseph of Arimathea? Maybe Mary and Martha and Lazarus...(Martha was probably in the kitchen). Wouldn't you think maybe the Samaritan woman might have been there? What about all those folks Jesus healed?

Whoever all these folks were...they had gathered because they wanted to be together!

Not only was this a time of obedience and a time of fellowship, it was also

### **3) a time of prayer**

**Verse 14...**Sometimes we talk about prayer in terms of the ACTS acrostic:

A – adoration

C – confession

T – thanksgiving

S – supplication

Without a doubt there was adoration expressed for their risen and ascended Lord. God had sent Jesus Christ to die for their sins and He had risen from the grave and they had seen Him rise up to heaven.

# The Christian Arsenal

[www.christianarsenal.com](http://www.christianarsenal.com)

Surely there was confession expressed in that gathering. They were getting ready to do the work Jesus had for them and they must have been conscious of their inadequacy and their sin.

Peter was there. Surely Peter was more aware than ever of the way he had denied Jesus. The others may not have denied Jesus, but they had deserted Him and they had scattered and hidden themselves away, hadn't they?

**Surely all who were there had something to confess!**

They must also have given thanks. Thanks to the Father for what He had done and thanks to Jesus for what He had accomplished and taught them. Thanks for forgiveness and restoration and a work to begin and thanks for each other.

Don't you know they made supplication, as well? They must have asked God to supply all they would need to be all He had called them to be! These folks knew they would face much opposition...and they needed to ask God for His mercy and His strength!

Well, not only was this a time for obedience, and a time for fellowship and a time for prayer, but it was also

#### **4) a time for study**

When Peter stood up to speak, what did he do? He quoted Scripture!

**Verses 15-20...**

Two things go hand in hand in the life of a Christian...and that is Bible Study and prayer. When we pray, we are talking to God and when we study God's Word, God is speaking to us.

There is something about studying God's Word that is life-changing. There is strength and comfort and instruction and teaching and so much more in God's precious Word.

And I believe these folks were comforted when Peter quoted the Old Testament to them regarding Judas, don't you?

These folks were waiting. And I want to ask you this morning...are you waiting for something? Does God have you in a "holding pattern?"

May I suggest to you that this wouldn't be a bad pattern for you to follow?

Allow this time of waiting to be a time of obedience,  
And a time of fellowship with other believers,  
And a time of prayer and a time of Bible study.  
I truly believe God will bless your time of waiting if you will do this.