

The ACTS of the Apostles ***Preparation for the Birth of the Church***

Luke 1:1-4; Acts 1:1-3

Luke authored both the book of Luke and the book of Acts. In our study for this week, compare Luke's introductions to both books. In *Luke 1:1-4*, he explains his purpose in taking up his pen. He is compiling a chronological and factual narrative of the life of Christ. Luke's gospel is the most chronological of the four gospels. Luke is a physician (*Col. 4:14*) but he is also a very careful and competent historian. Both Acts and Luke are written for a high ranking official named Theophilus (*theos* – God, *philos* – love; meaning “lover of God” or “friend of God”). As we begin this study of Acts, may this beautiful name – “*lover of God*” – describe the passion of your heart. What Luke writes in this book is fertile soil for all sincere “lovers of God.”

Luke 24:44-53

Where Luke the theological historian ends his first volume, that is, the book of Luke; he then begins his second volume: the book of Acts. Read again *Luke 24:46-52*. Carefully notice the many similarities between the way the book of Luke ends and the way the book of Acts begins (compare especially *Acts 1:4-12*). Identify as many similarities as you can. There are at least a dozen. Also consider the words of Jesus in *Luke 24:22*. These words of Jesus hold incredible significance. Jesus explains to His disciples – and to us, if we'll listen – that His coming(s) and His work were anticipated and foretold throughout the entire Old Testament. The Old Testament has a unified center; it is Jesus the Christ. In fact, Jesus Christ is the indisputable center of all Scripture. And it is no different when we come to the book of Acts. Do NOT miss the centrality of Jesus Christ in the book of Acts (note: *1:1-11; 9:4-16; 18:8-11; 23:10-11; 28:30-31*). What do these verses reveal to us about Jesus' superintendence of His church? (see also; Rev. 1-3). How should this truth encourage believers today?

Acts 1:1-11

Luke's writing of a second book, the book of Acts, has another layer of significance. In today's vernacular we would label Acts as a sequel to the book of Luke. According to *Acts 1:1*, Luke recorded in his first book the things that “Jesus **began** to do and teach” while He was on the earth (the word order is important, *do* and *teach*; doing must always precede teaching, what we say must flow from how we live). Now, however, Luke records Jesus' return to the Father (*vs. 9-11*). So how will the work Jesus *began*, **continue**? The book of Acts answers this vital question. What **Jesus began** to do and teach in the book of Luke, the **church** continues to do and teach in the book of Acts. In a world plagued by religious confusion, may we never lose sight of the church's importance to *continue* what Jesus began to *do* and *teach*. In both, Jesus Christ is to be our role-model.