

God in Search of Man

Unfinished

Introduction:

1. If the book of Acts were taken out of our New Testament, we would never understand the rest of it.
2. When you close the record of the gospels, you see nothing but a handful of Jews in the city of Jerusalem, the center of Jewish life, talking together about a kingdom for Israel.
3. When you open the book of Romans, on the other side of Acts, you discover that a man whose name is never mentioned in the gospels is writing to a group of Christians in Rome -- of all places, the center of Gentile culture -- and he is talking about pushing out to the very ends of the earth.
4. The question to ask is this - What happened to make the gospel burst out of its confines
5. The Book of Acts should be titled the ***"Continuing Acts of the Lord Jesus Christ"***
6. Acts is a continued story of what Jesus began both to do and to teach.
7. Luke goes on to say, ***"...until the day when he was taken up, after he had given commandment through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. To them He presented himself alive after His passion by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days, and speaking of the kingdom of God. And while staying with them he charged them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, "you heard from me, for John baptized with water, but before many days you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit." {Acts 1:2-5 RSV}***
8. It is the account of the way the Holy Spirit, coming into the church, continued what Jesus began to do, that is, carried on the work He initiated
9. We are living now in the age of the Spirit but we have only listened to one part of the Great Commission -- go but what about ***"I am with you always, to the close of the age?"***

Testimony:

1. The book of Acts is the testimony to His ability and adequacy through the ministry of the Holy Spirit to carry out what His plan was
2. In the Book of Acts You will discover the multi-faceted ministry of the Holy Spirit.
3. For instance, Philip when the Spirit of God said to him, ***"Rise and go" {Acts 8:26}.***
4. ***Acts 9*** -- the account of Ananias and Paul
5. ***Acts 13:2b "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul"***
6. ***John 8:30 says "As He spoke thus, many believed in him"***
7. In the story of Ananias and Sapphira their hypocrisy was revealed by the Holy Spirit
8. Today if someone begins to use his religious standing, his Christian opportunities in order to advance his own sanctity in the eyes of people -- to pretend to a holiness he does not possess -- what happens? The Holy Spirit cuts him off
9. The major emphasis in this book is about the empowering to do the work of Christ -- for instance the disciples hiding behind locked doors until the Holy Spirit comes

Partners:

1. The extent of God's plan is revealed to us both geographically and chronologically
2. In ***Acts 1:8*** you have the geographic dimension: ***"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit is come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth."***

The Great Happening:

1. Everything flows from the outpouring of the Holy Spirit
2. The interesting thing is to see how Christians, reading about this amazing occurrence, have focused their attention on the incidentals and neglected the essentials
3. The incidentals are the rushing wind – the languages they spoke
4. The essential was the forming of a new people – the church – the body of Christ
5. They became a living unit – a living organism – empowered by God Himself
6. The rest of this book details the Apostle Paul's life as an apostle to the gentiles
7. ***"I don't want you to reach Israel. I'm calling you to be the apostle to the Gentiles, to bear my name before kings and to preach unto the Gentiles" {Acts 9:15}***
8. The book ends with Paul in Rome, preaching in his own hired house, chained day and night to a Roman guard, unable to get out, unable to pursue the evangelizing of the ends of the earth as his heart longed to do -- limited, fettered, bound
9. One of the most amazing words in all of Scripture is given there, as he writes to his friends in Philippi and says, ***"All these things which have happened to me, have happened to advance the gospel," {Phil 1:12b}***
10. The greatest accomplishment of Paul was the letters which he never would have written if he had not been in prison.
11. The book of Acts is an unfinished book - it just stops.

The Unfolding Story:

1. There is a transformative power of an encounter so meaningful and so profound that it propels change in how we understand ourselves and our place in this world
2. Christianity provides a real community of people – a community of coordinates
3. Coordinates are necessary to locate and anchor oneself in the world
4. Today in the midst of the craziness that exists in the world today more than ever people cannot hope to live logical lives without reference to the life and love of God that resides within them
5. Example of battleships - We need coordinates to locate ourselves
6. There is a cry in the heart of man to belong
7. How does anyone make sense out of that when there is an innate sense of wanting to belong – to believe in something of significance and bigger than us
8. Christianity provides that alternative: a grand story to follow and to which to belong.
9. Christianity provides that alternative: a grand story to follow and to which to belong.
10. If we understand thriving in this light, then we understand the invitation is not simply to accept what God has done through the cross, but also to accept and embrace our part in God's ongoing and unfolding story
11. We understand that when Jesus says follow me He is not referring to Facebook or Instagram – He is referring to a way of life and participation in His ongoing ministry
12. We need to remember that when He left this earth as a physical man, He gave us His Spirit to empower us and to continue His work on this planet until He comes again