

Study Notes

Acts 1:1-3

- **Structural Parallelism**

Luke wrote Acts as the second of two volumes. His intention was to more fully inform Theophilus about the Gospel and Jesus' ongoing activities after his death and resurrection.

There is a definite "structural parallelism" between Luke's gospel and the Book of Acts. For example: 1. Both books would have taken about the same space on a papyrus roll. 2. Both books cover about 33 years of history.

The Outline of Both Books: In Luke's gospel, chapters 1-2 are a preparation for chapters 3-4. What follows is a narrative of Jesus' ministry – right to the conclusion of Luke's Gospel.

Acts employs a similar outline. Acts 2:1-41 is a preparation for the commencement of the Church. Luke proceeds to write a narrative of the Church's growth and expansion, culminating with Paul's last days.

- **The Prologue Continuity:**

Luke 1: "Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, 2 just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. 3 Therefore, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, it seemed good also to me to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, 4 so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught."

Acts 1: "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 showed himself to these men 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.

Luke's prologue to Acts lets us know that his second volume is an account of what Jesus continued to do and teach – although the circumstances had changed. Instead of being physically present, His work would continue as the Holy Spirit empowered his followers.

Luke is saying Jesus is still at work, he just working through his followers as the Holy Spirit enables them to continue what he began.

- Jesus' promise: "I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever—the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you." – John 14:16-17

The realization: In Acts 2, Luke says Jesus gave his final instructions to the apostles "through the Holy Spirit". The Holy Spirit is going to be the source of the spread of the Gospel through Jesus' followers.

- **A Point Of Continuity:**

Luke defines these early messengers in this way: "The apostles he had chosen". He uses the classic designation of Jesus' original Twelve Jesus chose at the earliest period of his earthly ministry.

As they sat under Jesus' teaching, they were his disciples. After his death and resurrection, when he sent them out to preach the Gospel, they were his apostles – his "sent ones".

How were they to be sent out? Luke says they got their instructions through the Holy Spirit. This is an extension of a narrative found in all

the gospels: The empowerment of the Holy Spirit and the proclamation of the Good News.

Later, in Acts 10, as Peter shares the gospel with Cornelius he will say,

“...God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and ... he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him.” – Acts 10:38

As a human, Jesus experienced the “anointing” – physical empowerment of the Holy Spirit to accomplish his ministry of presenting the Gospel to the world. The apostles will have a similar experience to accomplish their ministry.

In John 20:22, this is symbolized by Jesus breathing on them: “And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit.”

In Acts, it becomes plain that it was by the Spirit's power that the apostles' accomplished their mission. The centrality of the Spirit in Acts is so obvious that some scholars have suggested that Luke's second volume could be accurately named, “The Acts of the Holy Spirit”.

- **Jesus' Post-Resurrection Appearances:**

Acts 1:3: “After his suffering, he showed himself to these men 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.”

Jesus' post-resurrection appearance was far more than Resurrection or Easter Sunday. This is important because it is a standard part of what has come to be known as the “Kerygma” – the apostolic outline of the primary truths of the Gospel. Included are:

- Christ's Virgin Birth
- Christ's Sinless Life
- Christ's Atoning Sacrifices

- Christ's Resurrection
- Christ's Ascension
- Christ's Return

Theophilus had undoubtedly learned all these parts of the kerygma. In the prologue to his Gospel, Luke noted, "It seemed good also to me to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught." – Luke 1:3

Theophilus was a believer. Luke wants him to be sure of what he has been taught – especially about Jesus' resurrection and post-passion appearances. Luke's outline in verse 3:

- ***"After His Suffering, He Showed Himself To These Men."***

"After his suffering": After he was beaten; after his beard was pulled out; after a crown of thorns was crushed on his brow; after he was whipped; after his wrists and feet were nailed to the Cross; after his side was pierced by a spear; after he hung on the Cross for six hours ... He showed himself to these men.

Luke is verifying that Christ's appearances were after his suffering. No one who truly believes the Gospel can deny the resurrection. To be a Christian is to believe the resurrection.

- ***"He Gave Many Convincing Proofs He Was Alive."***

Luke's gospel primarily describes Jesus' post-resurrection appearances in Jerusalem and its regional borders, but he makes it clear Jesus gave "many convincing proofs he was alive".

What proofs might Luke have been thinking of?

- In John chapter 20, Jesus had Thomas touch the wounds on his wrists and side.

- In John 21, He met Peter and six other disciples on the beach. He made and ate a breakfast of fish and bread with them.

- **“He Appeared To Them Over A Period Of 40 Days.”**

During the 40 days between Jesus’ resurrection and ascension at Bethany, Jesus appeared at various times to his apostles and other followers. He left no doubt in their minds that he was really alive.

Paul gives one of the oldest lists of these appearances in I Corinthians 5:5-7. He writes: “... He appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all he appeared to me also...” I Corinthians 5:5-8

This list is not exhaustive. There were many other appearances that Paul did not record. Beyond this, John The Revelator gives us chapter after chapter of Jesus’ post-resurrection appearances in his apocalyptic book, Revelation.

The last part of the kerygma outline is:

- **“He Spoke About The Kingdom Of God.”**

What, specifically, did Jesus teach after his resurrection? The second-century Gnostics claimed Jesus taught information that was not included in the New Testament. They claimed to be the exclusive guardians of these truths.

While Luke doesn’t detail Jesus’ teaching, he tells us Jesus continued a primary theme: The Kingdom of God.

That’s what we will see next time.