

Point #3

Acts is the story of the coming of the Spirit to fulfill the great commission.

Do you agree or disagree?

- The great commission is about world evangelism.
- The primary purpose of the church is world evangelism.
- The gospel message is basically about personal salvation from hell.
- People cannot “get saved” without praying to receive to Christ.
- Water baptism is a “work” that is not necessary for our being accepted as Christians.
- The most important thing is to get people saved from hell. Spiritual growth to maturity is desired but not the main issue.
- The sign of a church’s success is measured by the number of people it sees come to faith in Christ and the % of its budget spent on world missions.
- The worship service should be focused on bringing the unsaved to faith.
- If you’re not an evangelist, you need one.

1. Luke’s Gospel ends with a commission.

Lk.24:46-49 “⁴⁶ - - - Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and rise again from the dead the third day; ⁴⁷ and that repentance for forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. ⁴⁸ you are witnesses of these things. ⁴⁹ And behold, I am sending forth the promise of My Father upon you; but you are to stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.”

NOTE: This text makes the following critical points:

- a. The Scriptures (OT) predicted the death and resurrection of Jesus the Christ.
- b. Repentance for forgiveness of sins based upon the death and resurrection of Christ is at the heart of the gospel message that is to be proclaimed. The message is not primarily one of ethics, or social political reform.
- c. This message is to go beyond Israel to include the Gentile nations.
- d. The eyewitnesses (apostles) are the objects of the great commission. It can be assumed that those who would receive the Spirit after them would also proclaim this message.
- e. The “promise of My Father” which includes an anointing of power will be sent upon Christ’s followers. They were to wait for this in Jerusalem.
- f. The parallel texts shed light on Lk.24.

Matt.28:19-20 “¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

NOTE: This text makes the following critical points:

- a. The principle imperative is “make disciples” which involves converting people to the faith and bringing them to maturity in the faith.
- b. The radically new aspect to this command is its focus on the Gentile (nations) as objects of disciple making.
- c. The Great Commission consisted of at least three elements.

1. Making disciples (students) of Jesus. This is a dynamic and on going process based on a teachable posture toward Jesus.
2. Baptizing in the name of Father, Son, and Spirit. This suggests a firm grounding in repentance from dead works and faith in Christ.
3. Teaching them to observe all that Jesus had commanded. We assume that the Epistles are an expression of this.

Jn.20:21-23 “²¹ - - - Peace be with you; as the Father has sent Me, I also send you.”
²² And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit.’ ²³ ‘If you forgive the sins of any, their sins have been forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they have been retained.’”

NOTE: This text makes the following critical points:

- a. The apostles were sent just as Jesus was sent. He was the model. Apostles (missionaries) in the church should adopt the calling of Jesus as a model.
- b. The apostolic power to bind and loose from sins condemnation was given to the apostles who would become the foundation of the church and would by their teaching declare the nature and limits of forgiveness and freedom in Christ. Eph.2:20 “built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets,”

Mk.16:15-18 “¹⁵ - - - Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. ¹⁶ He who has believed and has been baptized will be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned. ¹⁷ And these signs will accompany those who have believed: in My name they will cast out demons, they will speak with new tongues; ¹⁸ they will pick up serpents, and if they drink any deadly poison, it shall not hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.”

NOTE: This text makes the following critical points:

- a. Believing the message is critical to participating in its promises.
- b. Water baptism is to mark new converts, as is the presence of power signs. These signs were present among the apostles but not among all the converts.
- c. Verses 9-20 do not appear in two of the most trustworthy manuscripts of the N.T. and may not have been a part of the original text.

What the Gospel is not

1. It is not the **Bible**. The Bible contains the gospel but there is a great deal of material in the Bible that is not the gospel.
2. It is not the **Commandments**. It is not just a message from God telling people how to live.
3. It is not **Repentance**. It is not a call to change your ways and clean up your life. It does call for a change in life direction but such a change is not the heart of the good news.
4. It is not **giving up** the world. It is not a call to be separate from all worldliness.
5. It is not human **religion**. A person can be very religious and not embrace the gospel. The gospel is not a call to religion.
6. It is not salvation (primarily) from temporal **psychological** meaninglessness or **political** injustice. These are the two options for most theologically liberal views.

7. It is not faith in the **preaching** of a message about events (death and resurrection) that never were a part of history. This is a popular liberal view.

The message preached by the early church.

1. The promises by God made in the Old Testament have now been fulfilled with the coming of Jesus the Messiah.
2. God anointed Jesus as Messiah at His baptism.
3. Jesus began His ministry in Galilee after His baptism.
4. He conducted a gracious ministry, doing good and performing mighty works by the power of God.
5. The Messiah was crucified according to the purpose of God.
6. He was raised from the dead and appeared to His disciples.
7. Jesus was exalted by God and given the name "Lord."
8. He gave the Holy Spirit to form the new community of God.
9. He will come again for judgment and the restoration of all things.
10. All who hear the message should repent and be baptized.

2. Luke's Gospel ends with a commission fulfilled in Acts.

Acts 1:4-8 "4 And gathering them together, He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised, "Which, {He said,} you heard of from Me; 5 for John baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now." 6 And so when they had come together, they were asking Him, saying, "Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?" 7 He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority; 8 but you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and **you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.**"

- a. It was not the restoration of the Kingdom but rather the spreading of the message of Christ (His cross and resurrection) to the world that would be the focus of the Gospel Age.
- b. Reforming the unjust structures of society is not the focus of Acts. The ultimate result of the fulfillment of the Great Commission however, will include impact on social structures.

3. Luke's Gospel ends with a commission fulfilled in Acts and explained by Paul.

Eph.4:10-16 "10 He who descended is Himself also He who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things. 11 And He gave some {as} apostles, and some {as} prophets, and some {as} evangelists, and some {as} pastors and teachers, 12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; 13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of

God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. 14 As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; 15 but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all {aspects} into Him, who is the head, {even} Christ, 16 from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by that which every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.”

NOTE: This text makes the following critical points:

- a. The ascended Christ sent His Spirit with power to gift His people for ministry.
- b. We will all have a part but not the same part to play.
- c. Building up the Body of Christ is the objective.
- d. The end game is “a mature community of love” that reflects Christ. This might be described as “getting it together” and moving in the “right direction.”
- e. When we look at the ministry of Peter and Paul in Acts we see that much concern was given to the welfare and growth of those who had come to faith in Christ.

A. Disciples of Christ will make more disciples.

Acts 1:8 *“but you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.”*

- a. “Witnesses” in Acts refers to “eye witnesses of the resurrected Christ” (1:22; 3:15; 4:33). In the strict sense of this word, only the apostles could do this. It was clear, however, that Christ continued to live through the work of His Spirit in the lives of those who believed. In a broader sense, every believer had something of Jesus’ ministry to which they could bear witness.
- b. From Jerusalem (where they were) working outward to the remotest parts of the world would be their pattern.
- c. This statement is not a command but a prophecy.
- d. The power of the indwelling Holy Spirit (especially His filling) would be pivotal.
- e. Disciples are converts with a teachable posture who are in the process of becoming mature elements in Christ’s design for His church.

B. Disciples of Christ will make more disciples as they proclaim the resurrected Christ.

Acts 2 *“This Jesus God raised up again”*

- a. The resurrection was the focal point of the message (as apposed to the changed lives of the believers).
- b. The call was to repent (change the mind) and be baptized (identifying with Jesus).

C. Disciples of Christ will make more disciples as they proclaim the resurrected Christ and reason with seekers.

Acts 3 *“going up to the temple”*

- a. Some of the apostles’ evangelism was “off the cuff” while they were going about their daily life.

- b. Much of their evangelism was through preaching & teaching after showing (signs & wonders) the power of God.
- c. The church today needs to show and tell.

Acts 17:17 “*reasoning in the synagogue*” and on the street.

- a. The sermons in Acts appeal to reason, empirical evidence & Scripture.
- b. There seemed to have been a great diversity in style and material depending upon the cultural context (17:16-31).
- c. The Apostles seldom appealed to their changed lives or circumstances for Israel as a validation of their message.
- d. Their preaching seemed to assume a rigorous intellectual engagement with the message.

D. Disciples of Christ will make more disciples as they proclaim the resurrected Christ, reason with seekers, and are scattered around the world.

Acts 8:1 “*a great persecution arose against the church in Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.*”

- a. Persecution was the instrument that scattered the church for world evangelism.
- b. Lay people were instrumental in the spread of the faith.

Two common mistakes

1. We can assume that conversion is “to the Kingdom” more than the King. This is the mistake of the more liberal church.

<i>to the King</i>	<i>to the Kingdom</i>
<i>Repentance from disbelief</i>	<i>Repentance from all sin</i>
<i>Forgiveness & Holy Spirit</i>	<i>Ethical reform & Social justice</i>
<i>Cross = atonement</i>	<i>Cross = example</i>
<i>Crucifixion</i>	<i>Incarnation</i>
<i>This leads to .</i>	<i>.... this.</i>

2. We can assume that Spiritual New Birth is “the end” not the beginning. This is the mistake of the more conservative church.

<i>to the New Birth</i>	<i>To Maturity</i>
<i>Justification</i>	<i>Sanctification</i>
<i>Jesus as Savior</i>	<i>Jesus as Lord</i>
<i>Baptism as initiation</i>	<i>Baptism as death to self</i>
<i>Preparation for heaven</i>	<i>Preparation for earth</i>
<i>This leads to .</i>	<i>.... this.</i>

Lesson #3

We are called to “make disciples” wherever we are in life.