

BGM BIBLE COLLEGE

AN EXEGETICAL AND THEOLOGICAL STUDY OF THE BOOK OF ACTS

LECTURE NO 02

The Central Themes of the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles

1. The Universal Scope of Salvation

In both of his writings, the holy Luke declared that though salvation is of the Jews, yet its bounds are not limited unto them alone; for the Lord Jesus Christ hath included the Gentiles also therein. From Acts chapter 2 unto chapter 11, through the ministries of the holy Peter and the holy Paul, the message of salvation is carried unto the Gentiles.

2. The Jewish Response

In the Gospel it is made very manifest that the Jews rejected the message of salvation; likewise in the book of Acts this truth is set forth, that though a few among the Jews received the word of salvation, yet the greater part rejected it.

3. The Lord Jesus Christ the Central Figure

In the Gospel is recorded the earthly ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ; but in the book of Acts it is shown that after His resurrection He yet remained active. He is seated at the right hand of God ([Acts 2:33](#)), and hath been appointed Judge of the living and the dead ([Acts 10:42](#)). It is He who sendeth forth the Holy Ghost, who empowered the believers ([Acts 1:8](#)).

4. The Role of the Witnesses

In Acts are found the accounts of many faithful witnesses—Peter, James, John, Stephen, Barnabas, and the holy Apostle Paul. For the Greek word used for *witness* is *martyria*, from which cometh the English word *martyr*, translated in Urdu as *shaheed*. A witness, therefore, is one who is ready even unto death. All the witnesses in the book of Acts teach us how to remain steadfast and faithful unto God in every circumstance.

The True Centre of the Book: God

Though the Acts contained many characters and many places, yet the true central figure is God Himself. The holy Apostle Paul is a powerful example thereof; for by the direct intervention of the Lord Jesus Christ he came unto faith. And God brought him safely unto Rome, even though the tempest and the breaking of the ship.

The Key Verse of Acts and Its Fulfilment

The key verse is [Acts 1:8](#), for therein is revealed the ordered pattern of the disciples' witness throughout the whole book. Chapters 2–8 record the preaching in Jerusalem where only Jews

were present. Thereafter, in Judea and Samaria, in chapters 8–12, the message reached Jews, Samaritans, and Gentiles. From thence unto the ends of the earth, in chapters 13–28, it is proclaimed unto Jews, Samaritans, and pagans.

The Purposes of the Book of Acts

Many opinions are held concerning the purposes for which the holy Luke wrote this book. It is possible he wrote it for one or for several of the following reasons:

1. To Preserve the History of the Early Church

For Luke was an educated man, and it is likely he desired to preserve the beginnings of the early Church for the generations to come.

2. To Reveal the Continuing Work of Christ through the Ministry of the Holy Ghost

This is a chief purpose of the book, under which the whole narrative is set forth ([Acts 1:1](#)).

3. To Provide a Defence of the Church before the Roman Government

In those days the Romans had decreed that no movement should arise in their realm which might endanger the empire. The Jews had accused the Christians before the Romans, saying that the believers were a rebellious sect harmful unto the state. Thus one purpose of Acts was to prove that Christians were no rebellious faction, neither was the Roman Empire in any danger from them.

4. To Demonstrate How Christ Establishes His Church

The book of Acts clearly sheweth that the founder of the Church is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, who, despite all hardships, established and upheld His Church.

5. to Show That Christianity Is the Fulfilment of the Old Testament

The Jews had given the impression that Christianity was a new religion, stirring up rebellion among the people. But the holy Luke hath plainly shewn in Acts that Christianity is not a new faith, but the very fulfilment of the Old Testament.

6. The Outline of the Life of the Holy Apostle Paul

The latter portion of the book of Acts is cantered upon the ministry, the journeys, and the trials of the holy Apostle Paul. His labours, his travels by land and sea, and his appearances before rulers and governors form the closing narrative of the book.

The Fundamental Elements of the Kerygma in the Acts of the Apostles

Kerygma is a Greek word signifying a *proclamation*; and in the Christian sense it denoted the proclamation of the glad tidings. It pointed unto the central message of the Lord Jesus Christ—His life, His death, and His resurrection. It expressed the essential content of the Gospel as set forth in the Holy Scriptures. The manner in which this proclamation appeared in the book of Acts is here declared by several principal points:

i. The Lord Jesus Christ the Fulfilment of Old Testament Prophecy

The message of Acts testified that all the ancient prophecies concerning the Messiah find their fulfilment in the Lord Jesus Christ.

ii. The Ministry, Miracles, Crucifixion, and Resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ

The apostles continually declared the works, the wonders, the crucifixion, and the rising again of the Lord, bearing witness that He lived forevermore.

iii. The Exaltation of the Lord Jesus Christ at the Right Hand of God the Father

It is proclaimed that Christ hath been exalted and is seated at the right hand of God, having received glory and dominion.

iv. The Doctrine of Repentance and Baptism

The apostolic preaching in Acts called all men unto repentance and commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

v. The Promise and the Outpouring of the Holy Ghost

A central theme of the proclamation is the promise of the Holy Ghost, and the record of His descent upon the believers, enduing them with power from on high.

The Geography of Luke

In both the Gospel written by the holy Luke and the Acts of the Apostles, a deliberate movement or journey is evident. In the Gospel the narrative moved steadily toward Jerusalem (Luke 9:51), and this forward movement continued unto the end of the Gospel. In contrast, in the Acts of the Apostles the journey proceeded outward *from* Jerusalem unto the uttermost part of the earth, according to the order given in [Acts 1:8](#).

The geography of Luke is quiet in expression, yet full of purpose and wisdom. Rome esteemed itself the centre of the world in those days; and in the book of Acts the arrival of the holy Paul in Rome is portrayed as a fitting consummation. Luke presented Jerusalem as the sacred centre from which the word of the Gospel goeth forth; and Rome, being the centre of the world, becomes the destined place to which the Gospel must needs be carried.