

**Acts #1**  
**Introduction to the Book of Acts**  
Acts 1:1-7

**Tonight, as we begin our study of the book of Acts, we will look briefly at the introduction.** The book of Acts was written by Luke between 63-65 AD. Although this fifth book in the New Testament is often called “The Acts of the Apostles” only four apostles are mentioned in it. **It is a record of the first thirty-three years of Jesus’ ministry after He was raised from the dead.** Matthew, Mark, Luke and John is the record of the first thirty-three years of Jesus’ ministry while He was in the earth, then the book of Acts the record of the first thirty-three years of Jesus’ ministry at the right hand of the Father as the Resurrected Lord of the church.

Therefore, a careful study of the book of Acts should allow the present-day church to establish our priorities along the same lines that were established in the early church.

**About a century ago British scholar William Ramsey focused on the book of Acts to try to show that it was filled with geographical and archaeological errors.** After all, many scholars of his day, equipped with the tools of textual criticism and archaeology, had exposed many errors in other classic writings. This eminent humanity professor diligently prepared himself by studying archaeology and geography before departing for the Middle East and Asia Minor in his quest to prove Luke’s history of the early Church was mostly myth.

**His quest did not turn out as he expected.** After a quarter century of research in what is today Israel and Turkey, where he carefully retraced the steps of the apostles as described in the book of Acts, this famous unbeliever shook the intellectual world when he announced he had converted to Christianity. He confessed his radical change of mind and heart was largely due to the accuracy he found in Luke’s narrative of Acts.

After years of examining the historical and geographical details mentioned in the book, Ramsey concluded; “Luke is a historian of the first rank; not merely are his statements of fact trustworthy, he is possessed of the true historic sense... In short this author should be placed along with the very greatest of historians” (The Bearing of Recent Discovery on the Trustworthiness of the New Testament, 1953, p. 80).

**One of the things that stand out in the book of Acts is that no man or woman is eulogized.** That is, nobody is made a super hero for the cause of Christ. It is true that the Apostle Paul is one of the major characters; the Apostle Peter is a major character; Barnabas and Silas are major characters, but it does not

just eulogize them it tells their mistakes, their faults, and it tells how the Holy Spirit used them anyway in spite of all their problems and short-comings. And it shows us the sweet mercy of God in His desire to bless the Body of Christ and to take care of it, even in all of our faults and failures!

**Why did God take such care to expose the early leadership in the church with all of their faults?** Simply to let the world know that the Kingdom of God was not establish nor built on the power, nor the ability of men, but by the power of God! In fact Acts 14:15 tells us that on one occasion after Paul had commanded a man to be healed, had to remind the people, “We also are men of like passions with you.” You see, God understands that we are pronged to worship men more than we worship God, so he wanted to make sure that there was no mistaking the early church leadership as some kind of super heroes.

**Now you have to remember that during the time of the book of Acts, during the time that this was being carried out on the earth, nobody in the book of Acts could turn to First and Second Corinthians and read about speaking in tongues, the gifts of the Spirit, because the New Testament had not been written.** In fact, the book of Acts was almost over with before Thessalonica had even heard about Jesus.

**Therefore, the only written Scripture they had was the Old Testament, because these people were living out the New Testament, which would be written down considerably later on in the history of the Church.** You and I have a copy of everything they had, we have a copy of more than they had, and we have a copy of what they did, what they said, and how they responded during the times of blessing as well as during the times of persecution.

You see, the only revelation they had was the words of Jesus just before He ascended, as seen in Mark 15-18, “And He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.” **Jesus had given those who believed in Him a weapon more powerful than anything that could possibly come against them.** He gave them the authority of His name! There the believers in the Early Church were taught this important truth of doing everything in the Name of Jesus.

**There is more power in the Name of Jesus than most of us ever realize.** A few years ago, there was a popular advertising campaign on television for a stock brokerage company. In a room full of people, whenever someone

mentioned the name of this brokerage company, everyone in the room suddenly stopped talking to listen. They all wanted to stop and hear this company's advice on the stock market.

**Child of God, when you speak the Name of Jesus everything stops!** Well, listen to what we have been told in Philippians 2:9-10, "Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth." Verse 10 reads like this in the Greek, At the name of Jesus every knee will bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth." **When you speak the Name of Jesus, everything in Heaven and on earth stands still.** Every problem, sickness, demon, and whatever else is coming against you stops at the mention of His Name.

**The Name of Jesus is known on the golden streets of Heaven.** When that Name ascends on High, every heavenly being stops. And John 15:16 Jesus tells us that speaking the Name of Jesus in faith causes the Heavenly Father Himself to give attention, "...whatsoever you shall ask the Father in my name, He shall give you."

In the May 30, 2002 issue of USA TODAY an article read, "Americans are increasingly pessimistic about the war against terrorism following weeks of revelations about missed clues and warnings of likely future attacks. Only 4 in 10 Americans believe the United States and its allies are winning the war against terrorism, according to a USA Today/CNN/Gallup poll. In January, when headlines focused on military successes on the battlefield in Afghanistan, two-thirds of those polled felt the nation was winning the war. The number has declined since. Now, 35% say neither side is winning the war, and 15% say the terrorists are winning."

**What has happened to cause so much pessimism in America?** The answer is simple: wave after wave of reports of new terrorist threats, perhaps biological terrorism, nuclear arms at the hands of terrorist, and terrorist attack alerts is wearing down on the nerves of the people.

**As I look around in the Body of Christ, I believe in the same way many Christians today too are sensing that they are not winning the battle against the enemy of our souls.** Just like the Al Qaeda terrorists, the devil's demons appear hard to root out, and when they do strike, many Christians fail in their efforts for victory. As a result, there is a sense of pessimism among many defeated Christians. Defeated perhaps by the cares of this world, defeated by pressures that seem out of control, defeated by a failed marriage, etc.

**What then is the problem?** I think the problem is that many Christians have never been taught that through the Name of Jesus we “are more than conquerors.”

**The Bible teaches us in Colossians 1:13 that when you were saved you were delivered from the power of darkness.** The word “power” is literally translated “authority.” As a child of God, you have been delivered from the power, or authority, of darkness and placed into God’s kingdom. Jesus said this in Matthew 28:18-19, “All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore...” **That power was given to you as a part of your inheritance in Christ Jesus.** As a child of God, you have entered into this position of authority because you are in Him.

**One of the most vital areas of the believer’s authority is his power to successfully stand against Satan in the Name of Jesus.** Ephesians 4:27 says, “Neither give place to the devil.” In Ephesians 6, the apostle Paul describes the armor that we as believers are to wear in combat against Satan. **He explains each piece of that armor.** It is the armor of God. But not once does he say that God will put the armor on you or that God will fight the devil for you. **“You” is the understood subject of these verses.** He says, “You be strong in the Lord. You put on the whole armor of God that you will be able to stand against the wiles of the devil; and having done all you stand.” God has given you the power and the authority to stand against Satan and his destructive works. He has provided the armor, but it is your responsibility as a believer to put on that armor and stand against the devil. James 4:7 says, You “resist the devil, and he will flee from you.” **The armor and the weapons are at your disposal.** God is there with you to back His Word; but all is worthless unless you take your position of authority and assume the responsibility to use what He has provided. As a child of God, you have the power and the authority to take the Word of God, the name of Jesus, and the power of the Holy Spirit and run Satan out of your affairs. Take your responsibility and speak in the Name of Jesus and stand your ground firmly.

**People talk about the Name of Jesus, and we need to.** We get excited about it. We say, “Amen” to it. **But do we really understand the power that is in the Name of Jesus?**

**Jesus has given us the legal right to use His Name.** Most of us are familiar with the term “power of attorney.” If someone gives you the power of attorney, he gives you the legal right to use his name for transactions and documents. Power of attorney actually means a legal right to use a name.

**That same concept applies to the Name of Jesus.** The right to use that Name had to be given legally or there would be no power in it. But we have the power of attorney to use the Name of Jesus. The Bible tells us so in John

14:13-14, “And whatever you shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you shall ask anything in my name, I will do it.”

Look once more at what Jesus said would happen when you use His Name over the power of the enemy, “And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out demons; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.”

**In these verses, Jesus tells us what results to expect when we use His Name.** And that Name had been made available for every believer to use.

The New International Version says, “these signs will accompany” To accompany means “to come along side of.” Child of God, when you use the Name of Jesus, He comes “along side of” you to give you the power to do what He has called you to do, as seen in Philippians 1:6, “Being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.”

**You might all kinds of demonic activity going on around you.** But when you exercise authority over that power in the Name of Jesus, demons have no choice but to flee.

**The early Church lived with the Name of Jesus on their lips.** Everywhere they went, they were conscious of Jesus. And it produced results, not only in their lives, but also in the lives of those who were outside the Church.

**Those outside the Church feared the Name of Jesus.** For instance, when Peter and John were taken into custody after the man was healed at the Gate called Beautiful, Acts 4:17-18 tells us that the priests and the religious people said, “But that it spread no further among the people, let us threaten them, that they speak henceforth to no man in this name. And they called them, and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus.”

The Apostle Paul instructed the Church at Colosse, “Whatever you do in word or deed, do it in the Name of Jesus.” Philippians 2:13 simply says, “For it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.” **Child of God, as you live your life, live it as unto the Lord.** Walk in victory, work in victory, serve in victory, and rest in victory, all because of the Name of Jesus!

If you are not saved, why not come tonight?