

Introduction to the Book of Acts (Intro and Acts 1:1-8)

Expository Lessons from the Book of Acts

I. Introduction to Book of Acts

- a. Many of us come from churches where there was a great deal of focus on the **Book of Acts**.
 - i. The reasons we focused so much on this book included:
 - 1. **Acts 2:38** and the emphasis on the importance of baptism for the remission of sins in conversion and the new birth.
 - 2. The encouraging story of the initial spread of the gospel into new lands, for those interested in evangelizing the world today.
 - 3. From the churches we many of us came from, the two most popular verses of the Bible were **Matthew 28:18-20** (the Great Commission) and **Acts 2:38** (“repent and be baptized”).
 - ii. The book of **Acts** was taught so frequently to emphasize evangelism, that for years I had a strong aversion to teaching and studying it.
 - 1. Out of over-reaction, I tended to avoid it and, instead, to emphasize parts of the Bible we had largely neglected.
- b. My goal is to ‘reclaim’ this wonderful book for those of us who had an agenda-driven version presented to us repeatedly in the past, to discover new things we were never taught, and to introduce others to the treasures within it.

II. Things We Can Benefit From in Studying Acts

- a. Discover how Old Testament prophecies were used powerfully in the beginning to convince unbelievers to have faith in Jesus.
 - i. Benefit for us: to see how we can do the same thing today, to the same effect.
- b. See *the message that was preached* to those coming to faith and how they became Christians.

- i. Again, this is helpful for us to understand what the gospel message was in the beginning, so that we can preach the same message today.
 - ii. We can see what was preached to different types of people to reach them (Jews, Gentiles, rulers, philosophically-minded pagans, etc.).
- c. We can learn more about the Holy Spirit, who is mentioned prominently in this book.
 - i. Many of us came from churches where there was very little emphasis or teaching on who the Holy Spirit is and what the Spirit does.
- d. This book can provide us with a picture of what the church and the Christian life were like in the beginning.
 - i. That would include learning about early persecution, the lifestyle of the Christians, etc.
- e. This account can help us develop a framework for the geographic spread of the gospel, especially to the west (into Turkey and Europe).
 - i. Perhaps we can gain a vision for how the gospel can be spread to other nations and cultures today. We can see how the Lord can use even hardships and times of persecution to spread the Christians (and the gospel message) to new lands.
 - ii. In seeing the conversion and missionary journeys of Paul, we can have a better appreciation for Paul's letters, fitting them into their proper context (where these cities are located, when Paul was there, what their problems were, etc.).

III. Some Myths to Dispel

- a. **Myth No. 1:** Christianity is a 'Western religion.'
 - i. Actually, this is not true! The message began in Western Asia, and spread from there in all directions, in the beginning.
 - ii. While **Acts** starts in Jerusalem and ends in Rome, that was just one part of the overarching story of the spread of the gospel. Other apostles took the message to places like Egypt, Ethiopia, Africa, India and Persia (Parthian empire).
 - iii. Although Christianity today is associated with Western countries (U.S., Europe, etc.), that is largely a result of historical developments after the year 800 AD. Prior to that time, Christians had spread the gospel throughout the known world, and it was unclear whether the predominant land where the Christian faith would flourish would be Europe, Asia or Africa.

1. (More information on this point can be found in the following book: Jenkins, John P., *The Lost History of Christianity*.)
- b. **Myth No. 2:** Paul was the most important apostle, much *more important* than the Twelve Apostles.
 - i. While God used Paul in a tremendous way, including to help spread the gospel and to write many of the books in the New Testament, let us consider what the Scriptures say about the Twelve Apostles.
 - ii. In the book of **Revelation**, the great city descending from heaven is built on *twelve foundations*, on which are the names of *the twelve apostles* (not Paul).
 1. “And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God. Her light was like a most precious stone, like a jasper stone, clear as crystal. Also she had a great and high wall with twelve gates, and twelve angels at the gates, and names written on them, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel: three gates on the east, three gates on the north, three gates on the south, and three gates on the west. Now *the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.*” (**Revelation 21:10–14**, NKJV)
 - iii. The twelve faithful apostles (including Matthias, Judas’ replacement) were not failures! They were fully trained by the Lord himself, and took the gospel to the ends of the earth just as Jesus had commanded them. They made extraordinary sacrifices, and many died martyr’s deaths as they remained faithful to the end.
 - iv. The book of **Acts** was written by Luke, who was a traveling companion of Paul. That is why there is so much about Paul in this book. However, let us not denigrate the Twelve (whom Jesus hand-picked and trained), especially in light of the fact that the Scriptures hold them up in such high regard!

IV. This is the Second Book Written by Luke

- a. Read **Acts 1:1-8**.
 - i. This book is addressed to “Theophilus”. The Greek name means “lover of God”.
 1. This could have been a literary device to address this gospel to all “lovers of God” (including us!), or it may have been written for one prominent person by that name.

- ii. This is Luke's second book; the "former account" refers to the gospel of **Luke**.
- iii. This is essentially 'volume 2' of Luke's account.
 - 1. I believe there is more text from Luke in the New Testament (from **Luke & Acts**) than from any other writer.
 - a. Through these two books, Luke has contributed over $\frac{1}{4}$ of the entire New Testament.
 - b. From the apostle Paul, we have the second greatest amount of New Testament text.
 - 2. Luke's first account, the gospel of **Luke**, covers about 30 years (from the conception and birth of John the Baptist and Jesus, through the resurrection and ascension of Jesus).
 - 3. Luke's second account, the **Book of Acts**, covers approximately the next 30 (from the resurrection and ascension of Jesus through Paul's arrival in Rome).
 - a. This corresponds to approximately the first 30 years of the Christian church.
 - 4. From the opening lines of the gospel according to **Luke**:
 - a. "Inasmuch as many have taken in hand to set in order a narrative of those things which have been fulfilled among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word delivered them to us, it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write to you an orderly account, most excellent Theophilus, that you may know the certainty of those things in which you were instructed." (**Luke 1:1-4**, NKJV)
 - b. One line from that passage, from the ESV translation: "...it seemed good to me also, *having followed all things closely for some time past*, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus...." (**Luke 1:3**, ESV)
 - i. Note that this book also was addressed to 'Theophilus'.

- ii. Luke indicates that several others (at the time he was writing that gospel) had “taken their hand” to write an account of the things done by Jesus.
 - iii. He investigated things carefully to provide an accurate account of what actually happened.
- b. **Question:** Who was Luke? What do we know about him?
 - i. He was a Christian who accompanied the apostle Paul in his work to spread the gospel. (**Philemon v. 24, 2 Timothy 4:11**)
 - ii. Paul described him as “Luke, the *beloved physician*”. (**Colossians 4:14**)
 - iii. From church historian Eusebius, writing c. 320 AD:
 - 1. “But Luke, who was born at Antioch, and by profession a physician, being for the most part connected with Paul, and familiarly acquainted with the rest of the apostles, has left us two inspired books, the institutes of that spiritual healing art which he obtained from them. One of these is his gospel, in which he testifies that he has recorded ‘as those who were from the beginning eyewitnesses, and ministers of the word’, delivered to him (**Luke 1:2**). The other is his Acts of the Apostles, which he composed, not from what he heard from others, but from what he had seen himself.
 - 2. “It is also said, that Paul usually referred to his [Luke’s] gospel, whenever in his epistles he spoke of some particular gospel as his own, saying ‘according to my gospel’.”
 - a. (Source: Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, book 3, chapter 4)
- c. **Question:** How many authentic gospels were written?
 - i. On the one hand, Luke alludes to the fact that, at or prior to the time of his writing down his gospel, *several others* had made attempts to write down accounts from the life of Christ.
 - 1. “Inasmuch as *many have taken in hand to set in order a narrative* of those things which have been fulfilled among us...” (**Luke 1:1**, NKJV)
 - ii. Modern critics of the Christian faith often insist that there were *several gospels* (in addition to the four in our Bibles) that were in circulation in the early church. They often further claim that the

Catholic Church sometime later (such as in the 300s) weeded out the ones that did not fit with their agenda and theology.

- iii. However, early Christian writer Irenaeus (bishop of the church in Lyons, in modern-day France), writing c. 180 AD, addressed this question directly in book 3 of *'Against Heresies'*.
 - 1. In his youth, Irenaeus was taught by Polycarp, who personally knew some of the apostles and others who had known Jesus personally. Therefore, the human link separating Irenaeus from the apostles themselves was no more than one person! Irenaeus explained:
 - a. "But Polycarp also was not only instructed by apostles, and conversed with many who had seen Christ, but was also, by apostles in Asia, appointed bishop of the Church in Smyrna, whom I also saw in my early youth, for he tarried [on earth] a very long time, and, when a very old man, gloriously and most nobly suffering martyrdom, departed this life, having always taught the things which he had learned from the apostles, and which the Church has handed down, and which alone are true."
 - b. (Source: Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, book 3, chapter 3; found in ANF vol. 1, p. 416)
 - 2. From the same work, Irenaeus stated the following regarding the four gospel accounts:
 - a. "We have learned from none others the plan of our salvation, than from those through whom the Gospel has come down to us, which they did at one time proclaim in public, and, at a later period, by the will of God, handed down to us in the Scriptures, to be the ground and pillar of our faith."
 - b. "For it is unlawful to assert that they preached before they possessed 'perfect knowledge,' [Note: 'perfect' = complete - CP] as some do even venture to say, boasting themselves as improvers of the apostles. For, after our Lord rose from the dead, [the apostles] were invested with power from on high when the Holy Spirit came down [upon them], were filled from all [His gifts], and had perfect knowledge: they departed to the ends of the earth, preaching the glad tidings of the good things [sent] from God to us, and proclaiming

the peace of heaven to men, who indeed do all equally and individually possess the Gospel of God.

- c. "Matthew also issued a written Gospel among the Hebrews in their own dialect, while Peter and Paul were preaching at Rome and laying the foundations of the Church.
- d. "After their departure, Mark, the disciple and interpreter of Peter, did also hand down to us in writing what had been preached by Peter.
- e. "Luke also, the companion of Paul, recorded in a book the Gospel preached by him. Afterwards, John, the disciple of the Lord, who also had leaned upon His breast, did himself publish a Gospel during his residence at Ephesus in Asia."
 - i. (Source: Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, book 3, chapter 1; found in Ante-Nicene Fathers vol. 1, p. 414)
 - ii. Points made by Irenaeus include:
 - 1. There were four gospels.
 - a. **Matthew** was written first (not Mark).
 - b. **John** was written last.
 - 2. The apostles had 'perfect knowledge' (the complete package of the faith), given to them through the Holy Spirit before they preached the gospel to the world.
 - 3. Anyone who claims they can '*improve on*' the faith that the apostles handed down should be considered a heretic, since that is not possible!
 - iii. Later in book 3 of *Against Heresies*, Irenaeus goes on to explain that the heresies he saw in his day generally fell into one of two categories:
 - 1. Those who wanted to *add to* what the apostles handed down initially (via other

writings or supposed further revelation from their false 'prophets'); OR

2. Those who wanted to *delete from* the Scriptures handed down to the church (like Marcion and his followers).
- iv. In my opinion, the heresies of today tend to fall into the same two categories. Instead of contending for the faith that was "once for all entrusted to the saints" (**Jude v.3**):
 1. Some want to *add to* what the apostles handed down originally (claiming to have further revelation or more wisdom than the apostles possessed); AND
 2. Others want to *remove* some of the New Testament teachings (for example, by claiming that they no longer apply).
3. Later in the same work, Irenaeus emphatically reinforces that there would be *exactly four* authentic, inspired gospel accounts. No more, and no fewer!
 - a. "It is not possible that the Gospels can be either more or fewer in number than they are. For, since there are four zones of the world in which we live, and four principal winds, while the Church is scattered throughout all the world, and the "pillar and ground" (**1 Timothy 3:15**) of the Church is the gospel and the Spirit of life; it is fitting that she should have four pillars, breathing out immortality on every side, and giving life to men afresh. From which fact, it is evident that the Word, the Craftsman of all, He Who is enthroned upon the cherubim, and contains all things, He who was manifested to men, has given us the gospel under four aspects, but bound together by one Spirit."
 - b. [*Irenaeus then goes on to tie the four gospels to the four faces of the cherubim or 'living creatures' in **Ezekiel 1:10** and **Revelation 4:6-7**.*]
 - i. (Source: Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, book 3, chapter 11; found in Ante-Nicene Fathers vol. 1, p. 428)

- iv. There is *even earlier evidence* that the Christian church recognized only four gospels as authentic. We can see this in a work by early Christian writer Tatian, the *Diatessaron* (c. 160 AD), which is a harmony of the four gospels.
 - 1. The title '*Diatessaron*' comes from two Greek words, meaning "through the four".
 - 2. This ancient work quotes extensively from all four gospels and arranges their passages in chronological order (according to Tatian, anyway).
 - 3. This work was used extensively in the Syriac-speaking part of the church in the East, to spread the gospel.

V. The Best Introduction of the Book of Acts: The End of Luke's Gospel

- a. Luke points back to his earlier work and overlaps with it at the beginning of **Acts 1**.
 - i. From **Acts 1:1-8**:
 - 1. Recounts how Jesus, after his resurrection, appeared to the apostles and showed convincing proofs of his physical resurrection from the dead.
 - 2. Recounts how Jesus taught the apostles more things about the kingdom of God during that time.
 - 3. Recounts the instructions Jesus gave to wait in Jerusalem for the promise that would come soon.
 - 4. Recounts how he had told them that the message would go out to "all the earth", starting from Jerusalem.
 - ii. These things all point back to the events of **Luke 24**.
- b. The death, burial and resurrection of Jesus, from **Luke 23-24**:
 - i. The crucifixion and death of Jesus.
 - 1. Read **Luke 23:26, 23:32-38, 23:44-48**.
 - ii. The burial of Jesus.
 - 1. Read **Luke 23:50-56**.
 - iii. The resurrection of Jesus.
 - 1. Read **Luke 24:1-12**.

- a. Note that the “two men” in the story were *angels*, as Jesus explained to the two men on the road to Emmaus, in **Luke 24:23**.
- c. This is the foundation of the gospel (the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus), according to Paul.
 - i. Read **1 Corinthians 15:1-8**.
 - ii. This is the gospel Paul preached.
 - 1. Jesus died for our sins, *in fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies*.
 - 2. He was buried.
 - 3. He rose on the third day, *in fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies*.
 - iii. The two kinds of evidence for the Christian faith Paul points to are:
 - 1. Fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies
 - 2. The accounts of eyewitnesses
 - a. Many of the eyewitnesses suffered persecution, torture and even death, taking their message to the ends of the world with nothing to gain.
 - iv. **Question:** How can we *know* these things (the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus) really happened, since it was over 2,000 years ago?
 - 1. Something we all have to wrestle with, at one time or another.
 - a. Especially teenagers hearing this, who need to come to their own convictions regarding this remarkable claim!
 - 2. Example of my own conversion.
 - a. For a time I abandoned the faith of my parents after wondering, “How do I *know* that these things are true?” As a result, I ended up becoming an agnostic for a few years, in my twenties.
 - b. I realized the Christian faith all hung on the resurrection of Jesus: either it happened, or it did not.

- i. If Jesus was resurrected from the dead in fulfillment of the prophecies, *that changes everything*.
 - ii. If I were to become convinced that Jesus actually *was* the Son of God, then I must follow Him!
 - c. Coming to that conclusion would be like 'checkmate' in chess. To use another metaphor, I saw this as being 'for all the marbles'.
 - d. "And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins!" (**1 Corinthians 15:17**, NKJV)
- 3. Personal example of a friend who was sharing modern '*conspiracy theories*' with me and my wife recently.
 - a. Questions I ask myself regarding such claims:
 - i. What is the *track record of the sources* of these extraordinary claims?
 - ii. Are the sources *reliable*?
 - iii. Did they make other claims in the past that seemed unlikely at the time, but which turned out to be true?
 - b. Likewise, we can ask *similar questions* regarding the extraordinary claims we find in the gospels.
- d. Clarifying exactly what I mean when I say Jesus was '*resurrected from the dead*'.
 - i. When an unbeliever is in the process of studying the gospels and coming to faith, at some point, I ask the question: "Do you believe that Jesus died on the cross, and then on the third day *rose from the dead*?"
 - ii. If they respond "Yes", I follow up with the following:
 - iii. "Let me clarify what I mean when I say that He 'rose from the dead'. I mean:
 - 1. His *physical body* rose from the dead. This was not just a 'spiritual resurrection'.
 - 2. The tomb was emptied. His body no longer remained in there.
 - 3. His physical body was transformed and raised back to life.

4. After His resurrection, He had flesh and bones. He ate food. Thomas could put his finger into the holes into His hands and feet, and his hand into the side of Jesus where the soldier had pierced His body on the cross.”
- iv. When challenged in this manner, sometimes the person will respond, “Whoa! That wasn’t what I was thinking. I assumed that this was more of a *spiritual* type of resurrection.”
 1. If that is the response, I will proceed to share with them passages from the New Testament that clearly demonstrate this fact.
 2. “Now as they said these things, Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them, and said to them, ‘Peace to you.’ But they were terrified and frightened, and supposed they had seen a spirit. And He said to them, ‘Why are you troubled? And why do doubts arise in your hearts? *Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. Handle Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have.*’ When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His feet. But while they still did not believe for joy, and marveled, He said to them, ‘Have you any food here?’ So they gave Him a piece of a broiled fish and some honeycomb. *And He took it and ate in their presence.*” (**Luke 24:36–43**, NKJV)
 3. I also look at the passage where Jesus demonstrates to the ‘doubting Thomas’ that he was physically raised from the dead. (**John 20:24-29**), as well as what Paul teaches regarding the physical resurrection from the dead in **1 Corinthians 15**.
- v. It is critical to understand that Jesus was bodily resurrected from the grave on the third day. Many elements of the Christian faith are anchored in this foundational teaching.
- e. The physical resurrection of the body is foundational Christian teaching.
 - i. Many Christians today (incorrectly) believe that at death, *our bodies are consigned to the grave forever*, while *our spirits go immediately to personal, individual judgment*: then directly either to heaven or hell, for eternity.
 1. I believed something like that for many years, perhaps influenced by well-meaning messages I heard at many Christian funerals. At such funerals, the preacher typically would assure those left behind that the *soul* of the person recently departed was now *happily in heaven*.

- ii. In reading some of the early Christian writers many years ago, it struck me that they did not believe that our souls go straight to heaven after we die. Instead, they believed that our souls went to Hades, a resting place for the souls of the dead awaiting final judgment on the Last Day. At Jesus' return, the dead will be raised (their spirits reunited with their resurrected and transformed bodies), then all people of all time (including those who are then alive and those who have already died) will be judged at one time. When I considered what the early Christians believed and then went back to look at the Scriptures, I was surprised and encouraged to find that this is, in fact, what the Scriptures teach. For example:
 - 1. "Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which *all who are in the graves* will hear His voice and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation." (**John 5:28–29**, NKJV)
 - a. At the end, the graves will be emptied at the resurrection of all the dead, according to Jesus.
 - 2. "If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, *than for your whole body to be cast into hell.*" (**Matthew 5:29**, NKJV)
 - a. This indicates that at the Final Judgment, the wicked will be cast into the fire of gehenna *with their bodies* (not just as disembodied spirits).
 - 3. The resurrection of the dead is one of the six elementary teachings of the Christian faith, according to **Hebrews 6:1-2**.
 - 4. An entire chapter of the New Testament is devoted to explaining and defending this teaching (**1 Corinthians 15**).
 - 5. When a Christian recites the Apostles Creed (likely originally a baptismal creed, reaffirming that one grasps the foundational principles of the Christian faith), at the conclusion they affirm:
 - a. "...I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the Holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and life everlasting. Amen."

6. Also, recall that Jesus is described as “the firstborn from among the dead” (**Colossians 1:18, Revelation 1:5**).
 - a. He is our leader and the trailblazer who shows us the way.
 - b. If we follow Him, we will become like Him, including in experiencing the resurrection of our physical bodies.
- iii. Somehow I missed this foundational teaching and had the idea that our spirits would go to heaven right away, instead of their being a resurrection of the dead on the day of final judgment. Reading early Christians caused me to go back to the Bible and see clearly what I had missed.
 1. This teaching (resurrection of the body) will come up more than once in **Acts**.
 2. For more on this, see the audio message, *What the Early Christians Believed about Life After Death*, by David Bercot (available through Scroll Publishing or online via the Scroll Publishing YouTube channel).
- f. Prophecies explained by Jesus to two men on the road to Emmaus and then to the apostles.
 - i. The fulfilled prophecies were explained by Jesus to the two men on the road to Emmaus
 1. Read **Luke 24:13-35**.
 2. The two disciples were discouraged and perplexed about the rumors of women who claimed that the tomb was found empty.
 3. Jesus interrupts them and explains how the Christ had to suffer and then rise from the dead, going through Moses and the Prophets.
 - a. “Then He said to them, ‘O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?’ And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.” (**Luke 24:25-27, NKJV**)

4. Even before they realized it was Jesus speaking to them, their hearts were “burning within” them when they heard the prophecies recounted and explained.
 - a. “And they said to one another, ‘Did not *our heart burn within us* while He talked with us on the road, and while He opened the Scriptures to us?’” (**Luke 24:32**, NKJV)
 - b. Even today, this is the reaction of many when they hear the prophecies about Jesus and how they were fulfilled.
- ii. Jesus later explained these things to the apostles.
 1. Read **Luke 24:44-47**.
 5. Here Jesus finally explained what he had only alluded to before his death (for example, in **Luke 18:31-34**).
 6. Jesus explained that all the prophecies had to be fulfilled that were written in the **Law of Moses**, the **Prophets** and the **Psalms** (major portions of the Old Testament), regarding His passion, death and resurrection.
- ii. **Questions:**
 1. *Where in the Old Testament* does it say Christ will suffer?
 2. *Where in the Old Testament* does it say Christ will rise from the dead?
- iii. The Greatest Bible Lesson of All Time!
 1. Finally, after He is raised from the dead, Jesus explains to the two on the road to Emmaus and then to the apostles, how he fulfilled all the prophecies.
 2. I consider these two teaching sessions in **Luke 24** by Jesus, between them, to be the greatest Bible lesson of all time, given by the ultimate Teacher.
 3. **My Own Personal Frustration:** Luke did not provide the details of what Jesus actually said regarding how the prophecies were fulfilled by him! The greatest Bible lesson of all time would appear to be lost and unrecoverable.
 - a. This realization left me very frustrated. I wanted to know what Jesus taught regarding these things. I

prayed about it quite a bit, asking the Lord to fill me in on what Jesus taught, somehow (even while realizing this was a *highly unusual* request to put before God).

- b. I even wondered, “Was there anyone in the room who heard what Jesus taught, who might be able to help me discover what Jesus said?”
 - i. Then I realized that the apostle Peter had heard what Jesus revealed. He was in the room when Jesus opened the minds of the apostles regarding all the prophecies.
 - ii. So I thought perhaps I could recreate what Jesus taught then, or at least a portion of it, by very carefully considering what Peter subsequently preached in **Acts** and revealed through his letters (**1** and **2 Peter**).
 - c. Also, I considered that other early Christians might be able to shed light on the prophecies, based on insights passed down from the apostles.
4. After a few decades of exploring what Peter, other apostles and some early Christian writers taught regarding the prophecies, I have been able to get a much better understanding of the prophecies, in an attempt to ‘reverse-engineer’ what was originally handed down by Jesus. Out of that effort has come:
- a. The ‘*Prove It*’ apologetics series, now located on the Historic Faith website.
 - b. A teaching series, *Prophecies On the Resurrection of Jesus*, scheduled to be posted on the Historic Faith website in early 2022.
 - c. Plus – we will cover a lot of this in the current expository series we are just starting, going through **Acts**!

VI. The Message of the Kingdom

- a. **Question:** What was Jesus speaking to the apostles about during the forty days after His resurrection, before He ascended to heaven?
 - i. **Answer:** The kingdom of God!

- ii. "...to whom He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and *speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.*" (**Acts 1:3**, NKJV)
- b. 'The kingdom of God' also was the primary focus of Jesus' teaching throughout the gospels of **Matthew**, **Mark** and **Luke**.
 - i. The kingdom of God is a *real kingdom*. Like any true kingdom, it also has:
 - 1. A real *king* (Jesus)
 - 2. Real *subjects* (the Christians) and
 - 3. Real *laws* (the commands of Jesus and the apostles).
- c. Throughout the Old Testament, it was prophesied that God's kingdom would come.
- d. The message that Jesus said he wanted to have preached throughout the world was: *the gospel of the kingdom*.
 - i. "...And this *gospel of the kingdom* will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come." (**Matthew 24:14**, NKJV)
- e. The book of **Acts** starts and ends with the kingdom of God. This is the message we find Paul preached to the church in Ephesus in **Acts 20** and what he is preaching in Rome at the close of the book, at the end of **Acts 28**.
 - i. Paul recounted to the Ephesian elders: "And indeed, now I know that you all, *among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God*, will see my face no more." (**Acts 20:25**, NKJV)
 - ii. Paul in Rome, in the closing verses of the book: "Then Paul dwelt two whole years in his own rented house, and received all who came to him, *preaching the kingdom of God* and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no one forbidding him." (**Acts 28:30-31**, NKJV)