

The Book of Acts as Historic-theological Apologetics

I. Acts 1:1-11 – Foundations:

The Jews and the Romans have wrongly thought that by crucifying Jesus they succeeded to put off the “wild fire” of the teaching of the “new order” – the kingdom of God – that was spreading throughout the nation, all over Judea and Galilee.

The high priests believed that they managed to “manipulate the media” (Matt 28:11-15 “Now while they were going, behold, some of the guard came into the city and reported to the chief priests all the things that had happened. When they had assembled with the elders and consulted together, they gave a large sum of money to the soldiers, saying, “Tell them, ‘His disciples came at night and stole Him away while we slept.’ And if this comes to the governor’s ears, we will appease him and make you secure.” So they took the money and did as they were instructed; and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day.”).

In spite of this, the faith in Christ’s resurrection became the invincible, irresistible moving force in the lives of the disciples. However, in a movement such as this (Christianity) it is of prime importance to separate fact from fiction and build upon the strong foundation of facts. This is what Luke is doing and this is what all the Biblical writers have been doing over the 1400 years or so. The Bible is a book of “revelation and witness” (John 15:26 - “But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me.” (John 15:27) - “And you also will bear witness, because you have been with Me from the beginning.” (Acts 1:8) – “But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

The Biblical accounts of historical events are not accounts of isolated events occurred in secret places. That would reduce them to the level of rumours at best. They are accounts of public events which changed the world and the way the world thinks. Such events have been testified to by countless eye witnesses. They were undeniable: Acts 26:26 – 32 “Now as he thus made his defence, Festus said with a loud voice, “Paul, you are beside yourself! Much learning is driving you mad!” But he said, “I am not mad, most noble Festus, but speak the words of truth and reason. For the king, before whom I also speak freely, knows these things; for I am convinced that none of these things escapes his attention, since this thing was not done in a corner. King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know that you do believe. Then Agrippa said to Paul, “You almost persuade me to become a Christian.” And Paul said, “I would to God that not only you, but also all who hear me today, might become both almost and altogether such as I am, except for these chains.” When he had said these things, the king stood up, as well as the governor and Bernice and those who sat with them; and when they had gone aside, they talked among themselves, saying, “This man is doing nothing deserving of death or chains.” Then Agrippa said to Festus, “This man might have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar.”

Luke starts his account in Acts 1:1-3 by stating the veracity of the greatest event in history – the resurrection of Christ. He refers to it in words like these: (Acts 1:1) - “The former account I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach,

(Acts 1:2) - until the day in which He was taken up, after He through the Holy Spirit had given commandments to the apostles whom He had chosen,

(Acts 1:3) - 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.”

Luke teaches us a very important thing: the faith in Christ's resurrection is based on unmitakeable facts. It is the **event** of resurrection that constitutes the foundation ground for the faith in it. See what Paul says in 1Cor 15:17 - “And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins!”

This kind of approach to the truth has kept the church safe from error throughout the ages. It is also important for us today to be on guard and always discern between fact and fiction.

Another foundation truth standing out in this paragraph is that **the church is God's institution, functioning on God's power and authority: vv. 4-6.**

The next precept is that **the church should not aspire to political power and influence: vv. 6-8.**

The last thought for this session is in verses 9-11 – **Jesus has ascended to heaven and will in like manner return for his people.**

II. Acts 2:1-15:35 – The Church Established: Local, National and Worldwide

The main historical events:

- The **Inauguration** of the Apostolic/Church era: Acts 2:1-47;

The main characteristics:

1. *initiated and empowered by the Holy Spirit* (vv. 1-4);
2. *universal in scop* (vv. 5-13);
3. *kerygmatic¹ in method* vv.14-36);
4. *Christ-centred in witness* (vv. 22-39);
5. *Metanoic² in goal* (v.37-39), as opposed to “proselytizing”;
6. *Holistic worship orientated* = gospel + fellowship + communion + prayer (vv. 42-43);
7. *Communal in practice* (vv. 44-47; 3:32-37);
8. *God-effected church growth* (v. 47; 4:4; 9:31; 13:48).

¹ *Kerygma = preaching*

² *Metanoia = renewing of mind= repentance*