

## The Most Urgent Question of Our Day

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Turning the World Upside Down / Jesus; Holy Spirit; Apostle / Acts 1:1-5  
Acts 1:1-5 teaches us that Jesus is the only hope for our world today.

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## Introduction

What is the most urgent question of our day?

I decided to ask my artificial intelligence (AI) application that question.

Here is the answer I received: “Determining the most urgent question is subjective, but topics like climate change, healthcare, and social justice often top the list for global concern.”

Some people argue vigorously that the most urgent question of our day has to do with climate change. You hear about it repeatedly in the news. Even King Charles mentioned climate change in his Christmas message.

Others suggest that the most urgent question of our day has to do with healthcare. We have just come through a worldwide pandemic with COVID-19 and there is still no consensus about its origin. We are told that unless we get vaccinated and then boosted we are going to cause massive health issues for others.

Then some believe that social justice in its many variations is the most urgent question of our day. Issues such as critical race theory or border control are just two issues that have significant social justice implications. Some believe that this is the most urgent question of our day.

A growing number of people believe that gender identity is the most urgent question of our day. In less than a decade, we have seen an astonishing transformation in our culture as individuals believe that they can determine their own gender identity.

A handful of people will undoubtedly suggest that who will win the upcoming US Presidential election is the most urgent question of our day.

So, what is the most urgent question of our day?

I want to put before you that the most urgent question of our day is this: “Who is Jesus?”

I say this because Jesus is the only hope for our world today.

I would go further and say that the most urgent question since the birth of Jesus is, “Who is Jesus?”

For the past two thousand years there has never been a more urgent question than “Who is Jesus?”

Every person in every generation must answer that question. The issues that faced every culture for centuries pale in comparison to the issue about the identity of Jesus.

Fortunately, we are not left without an answer to the question, “Who is Jesus?”

Today, I am starting a new series of sermons in the book of Acts.

The author of the Book of Acts is Luke. He actually wrote two books. One is titled, *The Gospel According to Luke* and the second is usually titled, *The Acts of the Apostles*.

Today, I want to introduce us to the Book of Acts.

## Scripture

Let's read [Acts 1:1-5](#):

**<sup>1</sup> In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach, <sup>2</sup> until the day when he was taken up, after he had given commands through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. <sup>3</sup> He presented himself alive to them after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God.**

**<sup>4</sup> And while staying with them he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, “you heard from me; <sup>5</sup> for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.”**

# Lesson

[Acts 1:1-5](#) teaches us that Jesus is the only hope for our world today.

Let's use the following outline:

1. Jesus Is the Only Hope for Our World Today Because His Message Continues (1:1)
2. Jesus Is the Only Hope for Our World Today Because His Ministry Continues (1:2-5)

## I. Jesus Is the Only Hope for Our World Today Because His Message Continues (1:1)

First, Jesus is the only hope for our world today because his message continues.

You may be familiar with the opening words of Luke's Gospel. He wrote in [Luke 1:1-4](#):

<sup>1</sup> Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us, <sup>2</sup> just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have delivered them to us, <sup>3</sup> 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, <sup>4</sup> that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught.

Who was Theophilus?

There has been a lot of discussion about whether Theophilus was a real person. Since Theophilus can be translated as "lover of God" or "loved of God," some have suggested that Theophilus refers to anyone who is loved of God (Walter A. Elwell and Barry J. Beitzel, *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988], 2052).

However, it is more likely that Theophilus was a real person because Luke referred to him as "most excellent Theophilus" (Luke 1:3). That was a common way to address a real person in Luke's day.

Apparently, Theophilus knew Luke. Moreover, Theophilus knew that Luke knew about Jesus. Luke was not an apostle. But Luke had traveled with the apostle Paul and knew a lot about Jesus.

So, Theophilus asked, “Luke, who is Jesus? I have heard about Jesus and I don’t know what to believe about him. Can you tell me who Jesus is?”

In response to this question, Luke decided to write two books about Jesus. Luke began his second volume with these words, **“In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach”** (1:1).

**The first book** refers to the book we call *The Gospel According to Luke*. It is a book about the person and work of Jesus.

Luke’s Gospel **“dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach.”** Luke wanted to write “an orderly account” of the life of Jesus for Theophilus.

So Luke began with the prediction to Mary by the angel Gabriel. He told Theophilus that Mary was told that she was going to have a baby. No man would be involved in the conception of this child. Indeed, Mary would conceive by the power of the Holy Spirit. And the child that would be born to Mary would be called Jesus.

*And Theophilus*, Luke wrote, “He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end” ([Luke 1:32-33](#)).

Luke told Theophilus about the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem. He told Theophilus about Jesus’ time in the temple when he was only twelve years old.

Luke told Theophilus about the ministry of Jesus that spanned almost three years. It is as if Luke said, “Theophilus, you need to know that Jesus demonstrated power over sin, disease, demons, nature, and even death.” And so Luke wrote about Jesus’ miracles. He also wrote about Jesus’ teaching.

Luke also wanted Theophilus to know why Jesus came to earth. *Theophilus*, Luke wrote, *Jesus told us his mission when he said*, “For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost” ([Luke 19:10](#)).

Luke told Theophilus all about the life and ministry of Jesus in his first book, which we call *The Gospel According to Luke*. Luke also told Theophilus about Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection. Luke's Gospel ended with Jesus appearing to his disciples ([Luke 24:36-49](#)) and his ascension into heaven ([Luke 24:50-53](#)).

Luke's second book, as I mentioned earlier, is usually called *The Acts of the Apostles*.

However, I would like to suggest that it is improperly titled. Since Luke said that the first book **“dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach,”** the clear implication is that the second book is going to deal with all that Jesus continued to do and teach.

In other words, Luke's second book is not primarily about the apostles and the acts of the apostles. Luke's second book is really about Jesus. It is about what Jesus *continued* to do and teach.

Yes, Luke's second book tells us about the apostles. And yes, Luke's second book also tells us about the ministry of the Holy Spirit, as we learn in verse 2. The best title for Luke's second book is suggested by John Stott:

The most accurate (though cumbersome) title, then, which does justice to Luke's own statement in verses 1 and 2, would be something like *The Continuing Words and Deeds of Jesus by his Spirit through his Apostles* (John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Acts: The Spirit, the Church & the World*, The Bible Speaks Today [Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994], 34).

I had thought of titling this series of sermons, “The Continuing Words and Deeds of Jesus.” But, as Stott says, it is “cumbersome.”

The point is that the Book of Acts is the continuation of Jesus' message.

## II. Jesus Is the Only Hope for Our World Today Because His Ministry Continues (1:2-5)

And second, Jesus is the only hope for our world today because his ministry continues.

Luke wanted Theophilus to know that Jesus' ministry was continuing.

Luke outlined four stages in which Jesus' ministry continues.

#### A. Jesus Chose the Apostles (1:2)

First, Jesus chose the apostles.

Luke ended his first book with Jesus appearing to his disciples ([Luke 24:36-49](#)) and his ascension into heaven ([Luke 24:50-53](#)). And he began his second book with Jesus appearing to his disciples and his ascension into heaven.

Luke said in [Acts 1:2](#) **“...until the day when he was taken up, after he had given commands through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen.”**

Now, Luke wanted to tell Theophilus that Jesus chose the apostles. The Greek word for **“chosen”** (*eklegomai*) is the same word that Luke used in his Gospel when he first told Theophilus that Jesus had chosen his apostles. He wrote to Theophilus, “And when day came, he called his disciples and *chose* from them twelve, whom he named apostles:” ([Luke 6:13](#)).

Luke was going to use the same Greek word later in Acts to tell Theophilus about the replacement for Judas Iscariot. After Jesus' ascension, the disciples met together and prayed for the Lord's guidance about a replacement for Judas. They prayed, “You, Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which one of these two you have *chosen*” ([Acts 1:24](#)).

The same Greek word was used in connection with Paul when Jesus chose him to be his messenger. Luke wrote in [Acts 9:15](#) that the Lord said to Ananias, “Go, for he is a *chosen* instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel.”

Luke wanted Theophilus to understand that Jesus chose the apostles. Jesus chose the Twelve. He chose Matthias to replace Judas. And Jesus also chose Paul to be an apostle.

None of these men were self-appointed. They were not appointed by a Session or a Presbytery.

The apostles were directly and personally chosen by Jesus himself.

## B. Jesus Showed Himself to the Apostles (1:3)

Second, Jesus showed himself to the apostles.

In his Gospel, Luke told Theophilus about Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection.

Now Luke told Theophilus in [Acts 1:3](#), **“He [that is, Jesus] presented himself alive to them after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God.”**

Jesus showed himself to the apostles after his resurrection. He did that over **“forty days.”**

One of the requirements to be an apostle was that he had to have been with Jesus during his ministry and also be an eyewitness of his resurrection. When the Eleven Apostles returned to Jerusalem after Jesus' resurrection, they talked about replacing Judas as the twelfth apostle. Two men were proposed, and Peter said in [Acts 1:21-22](#), “So one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us—one of these men must become with us a witness to his resurrection.”

Jesus wanted his apostles to be first-hand witnesses of his resurrection. He wanted his apostles to have seen and touched and heard him in his glorified flesh after his resurrection.

By the way, that is why Paul could be called an Apostle because he had seen the resurrected Jesus.

And that is also why there cannot be apostles today because no one has seen Jesus in the flesh since the first century.

## C. Jesus Commanded the Apostles (1:2)

Third, Jesus commanded the apostles.

Jesus spoke to his apostles about “the kingdom of God” (v. 3) and the Holy Spirit (vv. 4-5). We shall talk more about this in a future message.

However, Luke wanted Theophilus to know that during the forty days between Jesus' resurrection and ascension, Jesus **“had given commands through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen”** (v. 2).

What were the commands that Jesus gave his apostles?

Interestingly, the Western text of the Greek New Testament adds the words, “to preach the gospel.” So, Jesus’ command to his disciples was to preach the gospel.

At the end of his Gospel, Luke said that Jesus gave his disciples his commission, which was “that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem” ([Luke 24:47](#)).

Luke would soon restate Jesus’ commandment when he said to his apostles in [Acts 1:8b](#), “And you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

By the way, the Greek word for “apostle” (*apostolos*) refers to one who is sent. In the New Testament, it refers to one who is sent by Jesus and authorized by him to speak on his behalf.

Therefore, Luke wanted Theophilus to know that Jesus chose certain men to be sent by him with authority to speak on his behalf. They were to tell the good news about Jesus. They were to tell people that Jesus—and only Jesus—can reconcile sinners with a holy God.

Jesus’ apostles were commanded to tell people that repentance for the forgiveness of sins can be found only in Jesus.

#### D. Jesus Promised the Holy Spirit to the Apostles (1:4-5)

And fourth, Jesus promised the Holy Spirit to the apostles.

Luke wanted Theophilus to know that Jesus was not going to leave the apostles without help.

Immediately following Jesus’ death and burial, the apostles were terrified. They hid in Jerusalem, not knowing what might happen to them.

But then Jesus showed himself alive to them!

The apostles were transformed from fear to faith. They believed that Jesus was alive!

Jesus then spent forty days with them teaching them about the kingdom of God. That must have been the most incredible time of teaching for them.



Jesus wanted to assure his apostles that he was not going to leave them to fend for themselves. He promised the Holy Spirit to the apostles. He said in [Acts 1:4-5](#), **“And while staying with them he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, ‘you heard from me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.’ ”**

Likely, the apostles did not fully understand what the promise of the Holy Spirit would mean for them. Shortly, Jesus would assure them that they would receive power when the Holy Spirit came upon them ([Acts 1:8](#)).

The Holy Spirit would then enable them to be witnesses for Jesus.

## Conclusion

These then are the four stages by which Jesus’ ministry continued. Jesus chose the apostles. He showed himself to them alive after his death, burial, and resurrection. He commanded them to preach the good news of the gospel. And he told them to wait until the Holy Spirit came upon them.

It was about 30 years after Jesus’ death, burial, resurrection, and ascension that Theophilus asked Luke about Jesus.

Theophilus had noticed that Jesus was a national sensation during his lifetime. But, after Jesus was put to death, his name did not die out. More and more people were talking about Jesus. And Theophilus wanted to know about Jesus.

After Jesus’ death, there were only about 120 followers of Jesus.

Within thirty years of Jesus’ death, there were now thousands upon thousands of followers of Jesus.

Jesus’ message and ministry continued after his death.

When Paul and Silas were preaching the gospel in Thessalonica, their preaching set the city in an uproar.

Paul and Silas were staying in the house of a man named Jason. The Thessalonians attacked the house of Jason, seeking to bring Paul and Silas out to the crowd. [Acts 17:6](#) says, “And when they could not find them, they dragged

Jason and some of the brothers before the city authorities, shouting, 'These men who have turned the world upside down have come here also.' ”

In just thirty years, the message of Jesus “turned the world upside down.” That is why I am calling my sermon series in the Book of Acts, “Turning the World Upside Down.”

Today, almost 1 out of 3 people in the entire world professes to be a follower of Jesus.

I began this message by asking the question, “What is the most urgent question of our day?”

The answer is, “Who is Jesus?”

Jesus is the only hope for our world today.

Even if people could figure out climate change and healthcare and social justice and gender identity and pick a US President who was supported by 100% of the voters, the most urgent question would still be, “Who is Jesus?”

The reason is that while we may spend 70, 80, or even 100 years on this planet Earth, we will spend an eternity in either heaven or hell.

And where you spend eternity depends on your relationship with Jesus.

The entire Book of Acts shows us that the Jesus who turned the world upside down in Thessalonica is still doing so today.

Jesus is still very alive and very active today.

As we study Acts, we will learn how Jesus is the only hope for our world today. Amen.