Acts

Luke II: The Increase of the Word

Introduction & Recap

Personal Introduction & Recap of Luke 24

Personal Introduction

1Dear Theophilus,

In the last book, I wrote about everything Jesus did and taught 2until, when He gave His commandment through the Holy Spirit to His chosen Apostles, He ascended.

Recap of Luke 24

3To these Apostles, He had shown Himself alive after His crucifixion by many compelling proofs, for forty days being seen by them and telling them about the Kingdom of God.

4While eating with them, He told them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father promised, "about which you've heard Me speak -- 5for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit in a few days."

6So when they came together again, they asked Him: "Lord, is this the time you're going to restore the Kingdom to Israel?"

7But He replied, "It is not for you to know about times or seasons which the Father has reserved under His own control. 8But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be witnesses about Me in Jerusalem and in all Judaea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

9Having said these things, before their eyes He ascended and a cloud shielded Him from view. 10As they were straining to see Him in the sky as He went, they suddenly noticed two men standing beside them, dressed in white.

11"Men, Galileans," they said, "why have you been standing around, staring into the sky? This Jesus, who has ascended from you into the sky, will come back the same way you saw Him go."

12Then they returned to Jerusalem from Mount Olivet, which is a half-mile away. 13When they entered the city, they went to the upper room where they were staying. There were Peter, John, James, and Andrew; Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew; James the son of Alphaeus, Simon the Zealot, and Judas the son of James.

14All of them stayed constantly in united prayer, along with several women (including Mary, Jesus' mother) and Jesus' brothers.

"In the last book"
Luke begins by giving a recap of the end of his last book, first in a one-sentence summary, then in a detailed re-telling.

"when He gave His commandment ... He ascended"
The Great Commission and the Ascension act as a conclusion in the gospels, but here in Acts, they are the introduction and they set the stage for all that is about to happen.

"telling them about the Kingdom"
Jesus continues teaching about God's Kingdom, particularly the new era of the Kingdom, signified by the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

"restore the Kingdom to Israel?"
The Apostles are still hoping for Jesus to restore the independent Kingdom of Israel that had existed under David. Jesus doesn't say He won't do this, but He makes it clear that this isn't what's He's referring to. The timing of the restoration of Israel's Kingdom is secret, but what Jesus is talking about will happen "in a few days".

"But you will receive power"
Jesus resets the Apostles' expectations, replacing visions of David's Kingdom with a vision of Holy Spirit-empowered witnessing, starting in Jerusalem and reaching to the very ends of the earth.

"you will be witnesses about Me"
This is Jesus' commandment (foreshadowed in verse 1), which is both the centerpiece of the Ascension story and the 3-part outline of Acts.

"why have you been standing around?"
This is a gentle rebuke, implying that the Apostles need to go to Jerusalem and prepare for the task at hand.

"this Jesus... will come back"
The angels sense the need to encourage the Apostles, who have been straining to see Jesus, to believe His promise and set their hope on the day they will see Him and be with Him again.

"stayed constantly in united prayer"
The gravity of what is happening, combined with the Apostles realization of their own inadequacy and Jesus' command to wait motivates the Apostles to spend the time in constant, united prayer - in strong contrast to their attitude in the garden of Gethsemane.