

Catch the Wave *Acts 1:1-3, Luke 16:19-31*

Good morning, Happy New Years

If I encouraged you to **catch the wave** for New Year's, you would probably think I was referring to some new campaign the church is trying to start.

The dictionary defines the phrase, **catch the wave**, *as seizing an opportunity presented to you, especially to do something new.*

When it comes to **surfing**, *bodhisurf.com* says...

“Catching waves is one of the most important skills in surfing and should not be overlooked.

If you really want to improve your surfing, then you need to know how to catch waves — as many as possible.”

Please open your Bibles to **two places**, first to **Luke 16** and then to **Acts 1** as we embark on a new series in the **Book of Acts**.

The **Book of Acts** is the history and the beginning of the early church, as it recorded what happened after Christ's Resurrection.

The **Book of Acts** was written about a wild time in history.

The beginning of **Acts** tells how the risen Christ spent 40 days with His disciples teaching them about “**the Kingdom of God**” while promising them the coming of the Holy Spirit.

The world was taken by storm, by a new belief system that was first referred to as **the Way** and was later known as Christianity.

Many Bibles name this book, “*The Acts of the Apostles*”, because it foretells the events of the original Apostles with the infant stage of the Early Church.

So, the *Book of Acts* is the history of the early church and its followers. Some of these Christ-followers may have told others to **catch the wave** of following Christ, to be saved from their sin.

I. Introduction to the *Acts of the Apostles*.

Read *Acts 1:1*

As we study the *Book of Acts*, we will soon discover that the book is divided into two distinct sections:

Acts 1-12 detail Peter’s ministry in Jerusalem and Samaria.

Acts 13-28 detail Paul’s missionary journeys throughout the Roman Empire.

Swindoll said, “*Acts is the only biblical book that chronicles the history of the church immediately after Jesus’s ascension.*

“*As such, it (Acts) provides us with a valuable account of how the church was able to grow and spread out from Jerusalem into the rest of the Roman Empire.*” (Chuck Swindoll)

“*In only three decades, a small group of frightened believers in Jerusalem transformed into an empire-wide movement of people who had committed their lives to Jesus Christ.*

In *Acts 1:1*, we are told a lot of information, so let's break it down one statement at a time.

The writer begins the book with the statement, “*The former account I made*”.

The first question to answer is: *who is the author?*

A man named Luke wrote the *Gospel of Luke* and then he wrote the *Book of Acts* sometime around 62-64 A.D.

The *Gospel of Luke* and the *Book of Acts* are presented as a single book in the *Original New Testament* (ISBN 978-0062507761) because they have the same author.

We do not know a lot about Luke, but we know Luke is mentioned by the Apostle Paul in three of his epistles; *Colossians, Philemon, and 2 Timothy*.

Luke was Gentile (*Col. 4:11*) the only Gentile author in the NT.

Luke was a doctor as well as a friend of Paul (*Colossians 4:14*).

Because Luke was a physician, it is believed that he was a Roman slave at one time.

Luke was a fellow **laborer** of the Gospel who was with Paul on his second and third missionary journeys. (*Philemon 1:24, Acts 17:1, Acts 20:5*)

Luke was with Paul while in prison in Rome. (*2 Timothy 4:11*)

So, Luke began the *Book of Acts* and addressed it to a person named *Theophilus*.

Who was Theophilus?

There are many different ideas of who *Theophilus* was, but we cannot be dogmatic because, at the end of the day, no one really knows who he was.

Allow me to give you some of the potential candidates of who this man could have been.

The name *Theophilus* means loved by God or friend of God.

Some believe *Theophilus* could have been the High Priest.

Theophilus could be a generic name for all Christians, but in *the Gospel of Luke*, Luke addressed this person as “*most excellent Theophilus*”, which seems to address a specific person.

Paul addressed officials this way later in the *Book of Acts*, like in *Acts 23:26* Paul wrote, *To the most excellent governor Felix*.

Some commentators believe *Theophilus* was a Roman official to whom Luke presented the history of Jesus because Luke addressed him as “*most excellent Theophilus*, in the Gospel”.

Several commentators believe Luke addressed *Theophilus* to prove Christianity was not a threat to the Roman Empire.

Some believe *Acts* was written as a part of Paul's defense before Caesar, which seems to fit the abrupt ending of *Acts*, where Paul spoke to the governing officials at that time.

While Paul was sailing to Rome, they encountered a tempest...

Paul said in *Acts 27:23*, “*For there stood by me this night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve,*

Acts 27:24 “*Saying, 'Do not be afraid, Paul; you must be brought before Caesar; and indeed God has granted you all those who sail with you.'*”

Acts 27:25 *Therefore take heart, men, for I believe God that it will be just as it was told me. NKJV*

Theophilus could have also been a rich influential person who was bank-rolling the ministry for Paul and Luke. But again, we cannot be dogmatic about who *Theophilus* was.

Luke and *Acts* may have been written to edify the church, showing the history of both Jesus and His Apostles.

Luke ends *Acts 1:1* by saying the reason he wrote the book was to tell “*of all that Jesus began both to do and teach*”.

Luke's Gospel records the humble beginnings and further work of Christ, while He was physically here on Earth.

The *Book of Acts* records the continuation of the work of Christ after His resurrection and even tells of how His work continues into modern times.

Arthur Pierson said, “*The Acts of the Apostles should therefore be studied mainly for this double purpose:*

“To trace our Lord’s unseen but actual continuance of His divine teaching and working; and, to trace the active ministry of the Holy Spirit as the abiding presence in the church.”

II. Jesus appeared after the Resurrection.

Read *Acts 1:2-3*

Here, Luke goes on to tell *Theophilus* that he reported all that Jesus had done, *“Until the day in which He was taken up”*.

Jesus appeared several times to several different people during the forty days after His resurrection.

What was Jesus doing during all of these appearances after His resurrection?

Acts 1:2b He through the Holy Spirit had given commandments to the apostles whom He had chosen. NKJV

Arthur Pierson said, *“This is a pattern for the rest of the **Book of Acts**, which shows us what the Holy Spirit does operating through the church.*

“We cannot afford to attempt the work appointed us without the same anointing.” (Pierson)

Notice, that we are told Jesus gave those ***commandments through His Holy Spirit.***

The Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity, is the same One who now lives in, empowers, and inspires Christians.

The ministry of the Holy Spirit is to guide, empower, comfort, **convict**, teach, and intercede in the lives of believers and unbelievers, as well.

As Jesus was preparing to go to the Cross He told His Disciples:

John 16:7 Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you.

John 16:8 And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:

John 16:9 of sin, because they do not believe in Me;

John 16:10 of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more;

John 16:11 of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged. NKJV

Who were the people Jesus **appeared** to? Of course, we know Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene, Peter, and others on the morning of His resurrection.

Jesus appeared to two men on the road to Emmaus.

Jesus appeared to the Disciples in the upper room without Thomas and then again while Thomas was there.

Jesus appeared to some of the Disciples who had reverted to their old life and went fishing as told in *John 21*.

Jesus appeared to the Disciples before His ascension on the Mount of Olives. Jesus also appeared to over five **hundred** people during those forty days.

1 Corinthians 15:3 For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures,

1 Corinthians 15:4 and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures,

1 Corinthians 15:5 and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve.

1 Corinthians 15:6 After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep.

1 Corinthians 15:7 After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles.

1 Corinthians 15:8 Then last of all He was seen by me (Paul) also, as by one born out of due time. NKJV

Notice the three things that are mentioned that Jesus did.

Jesus gave commandments to the Apostles, He presented Himself alive after His suffering with many infallible proofs, and He also taught them, *things pertaining to the kingdom*.

We also know that during this time, Jesus gave the Disciples the Great Commission found in *Matthew 28*.

Matthew 28:18 Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.

Matthew 28:19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

Matthew 28:20 teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." NKJV

Next time we will hear how Jesus told the Disciples to wait in Jerusalem for the Holy Spirit which happened on Pentecost.

So, we have been discussing what Jesus did after His resurrection, but where did He rise from?

Ephesians 4:10 He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things. NKJV

I have covered the next topic several times over the years, but a few weeks ago, I was asked the same question by two separate people, on a Sunday morning.

Please turn to ***Luke 16***. The question I was asked was, "*Where did Jesus go after He died on the Cross?*"

III. Jesus' proclamation.

Read ***Luke 16:19-31***

The Old Testament saints, who had all the promises of God, when they died physically, could not enter into heaven. **Why?**

There had not been a perfect sacrifice offered yet and the OT sacrifices simply covered their sin but did not remove them.

Remember, heaven is a perfect place, and if God allowed any imperfection into heaven, it would stop being heaven.

So where did the saints before Jesus died on the Cross go, if they could not enter heaven?

Before the Cross, there were two compartments in Hades:

- a. **Abraham's Bosom** which is also known as Paradise.
(*Luke 16:22*)

Remember the thief on the Cross who was next to Jesus, repented, and asked Jesus to remember him in His kingdom...

Luke 23:43 And Jesus said to him, "Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise." NKJV

Throughout the Old Testament, there are teachings of a holding area for the faithful as well as for the unfaithful, after death.

Abraham's bosom is where the righteous from the time of Adam until the Cross went to wait for redemption from Messiah.

But there was a second compartment of Hades:

- b. The second compartment was the holding place for the **unrepentant**. (*Luke 16:23*)

- While in torment, the rich man is aware, he is not in soul sleep or unaware of his pain
- Once in Hades, there was no second chance, the decision for Salvation is made before we die. *Verse 26*
- There are no excuses that the rich man didn't know; Abraham tells him that he had the books of the bible, and he would not believe. *Verse 29*

God has placed a God consciousness within every single person alive...so at the time of death there is no excuse

- Even if someone were to come back from the dead, they still would not believe. *Verse 31*

Jesus, foretelling of His resurrection said, that even if someone were to come back from the dead, they would not believe.

In our world today, a question we often hear is why a God of Love has a place like hell.

Hell exists so the LORD can deal righteously with sin.

The LORD is a God of Love and He proved it by dying on the Cross to pay for your sin, but He is also a God of righteousness, and if He did not judge sin, He would not be righteous or just.

Some people will not come to Jesus for forgiveness even though the LORD has done everything possible to convince them to accept His forgiveness.

The LORD is a gentleman and will never force anyone to accept His free gift.

Jesus descending to Hades occurred between His death and resurrection. Jesus did not go to hell to suffer as some false teachers claim.

John 19:30 So when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, "It is finished!" And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit. NKJV

The work of redemption was paid for when the Son of God willingly died on the Cross. Nothing needed to be added to that sacrifice!

So why did Jesus descend to the lower parts; why did Jesus go to Hades?

Jesus went to announce to the Old Testament saints that He had fulfilled the righteous **requirement** for sin and because they died in Faith in God, Jesus told them they were now set free.

Then Jesus took Paradise with Him to Heaven.

Matthew 27:50 And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit.

Matthew 27:51 Then, behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth quaked, and the rocks were split,

Matthew 27:52 and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised;

Matthew 27:53 and coming out of the graves after His resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many.

Matthew 27:54 So when the centurion and those with him, who were guarding Jesus, saw the earthquake and the things that had happened, they feared greatly, saying, "Truly this was the Son of God!" NKJV

Picture what is happening here.

Jesus went to Abraham's bosom with a proclamation of who He is and then some of the OT saints were cruising around Jerusalem before they go to heaven.

Now, we have a victor on the throne, Jesus ascended to the Father as King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

Throughout time, people all received salvation the same way, by **Faith** in God, but the Old Testament saints had to wait for Jesus.

Titus 3:5 not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit NKJV

The difference between the Old Testament saints and us is Jesus has now shed His innocent blood, so when we die, we instantly go into His presence rather than to Paradise, having to wait!

Paradise no longer exists because Jesus took it to heaven.

If a believer dies today, they are **instantly** with the Lord!

2 Corinthians 5:8 We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord. NKJV

You see, the OT saints were always looking forward to the Cross, and we are gratefully looking back at the Cross.

Every believer throughout history gets to heaven the same way...not by works, but by Faith in the Lord.

Ephesians 2:8 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God,

Ephesians 2:9 not of works, lest anyone should boast. NKJV

Acts is the history of the early church and its followers.

If I encouraged you to **catch the wave** for New Year's, you would probably think I was referring to some new campaign the church is trying to start.

Salvation is a gift from God the Father Himself because of the Resurrection of the Son, it is not produced by anything we do.

John 1:11 He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him.

John 1:12 But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name:

John 1:13 who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. NKJV

And because we are born of the will of God, and not by man, we are given salvation by faith in Jesus!

Just like the Christ-followers of *Acts*, may have told others to **catch the wave** of following Christ, to be saved from their sin.

I am encouraging you to **catch the wave**, *seizing the opportunity presented to you*, to follow Christ and receive His salvation.