



The Royal Task-Part 1

Confident in Our King

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Well, today we start a brand-new study through the book of Acts and it's a good time for us to start this book. It is a critical time in the history of our church. It's good that we're studying this book because it's not status quo time for us at Compass Bible Church. We are in a period, as you know, of really some ambitious ideas and plans that are being implemented, that are underway. Many challenges still yet to come in the months ahead. But this is a church that we're a part of that has some big plans and is moving in a direction that is very purposeful and we want to be very careful at this season of our church life to make sure we know what we're doing. What is this all about? And there's not a better book we could go to in the New Testament that's going to show us the purpose and intent of what God wants the church to do and what he wants the church to be.

Confessedly this is a transitional book in many ways. I understand that. But when it comes to the launch of the church this is a book that can keep us focused on what are we doing? Why are we doing it? Why are we building buildings? Why are we starting schools? Why would we plant more churches? What are our church programs all about? What is the purpose of assembling together every week? What is this all about? And Acts can make that very clear. We need to know what our purpose is. We want to make sure it's not our purpose. We want to make sure this is God's purpose for us. And so it's a time for us to hone in and clearly focus on what it is that God would have us be and what God would have us do. We want not only clarity but we'd like to have certainty about it. We'd like to know for certain this is God's will, this is what we as a church should do.

Which, by the way, certainly is something that's not a very popular idea, it's not a very popular concept these days. Modernity, the moderns of our culture, want you to be certain about nothing, except of course wanting you to be certain that you can't be certain, that's what they're very certain on, and that there can be no certainty. And yet the Bible says we need to be certain, very certain about not only what Christ has done but what Christ is doing. And that's really what the study of Acts is all about. That we could sit 2,000 years later and say we know why we're here, we know what the purpose is, we know what we're doing, we know what we're investing in, we know what we're working toward, we know why we're corporately coming together to make things happen the way they are.

So Acts, I provided a background supplement. I do that at the beginning of every book that we go verse-by-verse through and I do hope you would take some time in the next, I don't know, few days, maybe today before you're done with the day, that you would take time to read that through. You might have already snuck a look at it. There are a bunch of books on the back. It's a good time for you to kind of increase your library a little bit. All these are available electronically but they're also available in print, of course. It's a great book for us to maybe get a good atlas in our library. If you don't have one, I got a few options for you there. It's good for us to settle into this book for who knows how long. I won't talk about that. I know you like to make fun of me for



that but... I want to get through this book with a clear sense of what God's purpose is, to be clear about it and certain about it.

Now, what you're going to read on that datasheet there is something that most of you already know and that is that this is not a standalone book of the New Testament. This is the second volume of a two-volume part of what God has been doing through one particular author who combined through his gospel and this book is the largest section of all of the New Testament, written with more verses and words than even the Apostle Paul, who we often think of as writing most of the New Testament. Well, actually Luke has written most in the New Testament. We just got done studying his gospel.

And, matter of fact, just by way of introduction I'd like you to go back to the beginning of Luke because some of you weren't even here, some weren't born yet probably when we started that (smile), but we want you to look back to the beginning of Luke in the first three verses there and I want to remind you of what Luke's purpose is and intent in all this. Then we're going to read the first three verses here in Acts Chapter 1. So let's go back to Luke Chapter 1, turn there, get your eyeballs on this passage and let me remind you of the whole purpose of Luke writing this two-volume project.

Luke 1:1, "Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have delivered them to us, it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for sometime past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus." Now this is the guy he writes to. We don't know anything about him other than what the word means. "Theos," the Greek word for God. "Philos" means to love. It's loved by God. That's what this name represents. We assume it's a real historical person, perhaps even the benefactor who underwrote the project. "That you may have," now here's the key thing here, underline it, "may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught." People have been hearing a lot about Jesus, now this is now being codified into writing and it's done, obviously, under the direction of God's Spirit, as we'll see throughout this series. But we understand this: that he wants them to be, there's that word people don't like a lot, and that is certain. He wants you to be certain about it. He wants you to be certain about what has happened.

Now, let's start our book. Acts Chapter 1. Let's look at this introduction now. We've seen the introduction to Volume 1. Here's the introduction to Volume 2. Verse 1, Acts Chapter 1. Acts 1:1. "In the first book, O Theophilus," there he is again, "I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach." I love that because that's going to really set the tone for everything we're going to study. He says, "Look, I wrote you about what Jesus began to do." Well, how did it end in Chapter 24 if you were here when we finished the book. Well, it ended with him leaving. What? He left. Now he's going to recapitulation and re-describe that here in Chapter 1 and some of the details surrounding his ascension, but he's gone. He's not doing anything now, he's sitting down now, according to the Bible, at the right hand of the throne of God. So he's not doing anything. Well, he is doing something and that's the whole point of what he began to do. Luke says, "I'm going to give you Volume 2 of what he continues to do. That's what this book is all about."



Well, it's interesting he's going to do it now by proxy. He's going to do it through the mediation of the Church. He's going to work through his people to accomplish something, but a very specific group of people that verse 2 identifies. "Until the day when he was taken up, after he had given commands through," as though we didn't have enough authority vested in him as the risen one but here he is, "through the Holy Spirit," the perfect one. No one is perfect and good but God alone and the Holy Spirit, the Creator of all things. He's given commands to people with all the authority of heaven. He's given them to the apostles who we know were taught at the end of the Gospels to teach to the whole world everything that Christ had commanded them. So we have Jesus began some things, obviously by inference, he's going to continue some things, he's given a set of commands so that those things can continue through the authority of the Holy Spirit, he's giving them to a set of people called "the apostles," we'll look at that, "whom he had chosen." Very clear. They have the imprimatur of Christ. They have the authority and the credentials of Christ laid upon them.

Now he, as long as we're talking about authorities and credentials, "He presented himself," Christ did, "alive to them after his sufferings by many proofs." He made that very clear by eating with them, talking with them, having Thomas touch him. I mean, clearly he was alive. They all watched him be executed by professional executioners but "by many proofs" he proved that he was alive, "appearing to them for 40 days." Now Chapter 2 is going to talk about the Feast of Pentecost. Pentecost means 50 days after the Passover. So we got a 50 day period of time, but for 40 days he's appearing to them, he's teaching them it says here "speaking" to them it says "about the Kingdom of God," which, by the way, that's how Luke starts, Jesus comes on the scene teaching about the Kingdom of God.

The Kingdom of God. What's that all about? The authority of God over people's lives, that God should be the boss of you, that God should be in charge of you. But the problem is you can't even have any relationship with God because you have a thing called a sin problem. God looks at you as the holy God and says you're not acceptable, you should be rejected, but Christ came to say, on an earthly ministry, I will live the life you should have lived, I will now die in a human suffering, a kind of human penalty, I will absorb the penalty that you deserve. So I'm going to be like the lamb of the Old Testament that gets killed so that you can, in this symbolic way, walk away feeling as though you're forgiven. You can have that sense of substitution. I will be the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world. I will come and give my life as a ransom for many people.

So here is Christ who is coming and talking about the Kingdom of God. God wants to reign over his people as he rightly should and your life would go so much better, not only now but throughout eternity, if you just let God be God. But you've got a problem called sin and Christ came to solve the problem. He solved the problem by dying on the cross. He validated that. The veracity and truthfulness and acceptance of God's Son as a sacrifice is now proven by the resurrection and then he takes off literally. He leaves. But the work continues. The Kingdom of God and the work of the kingdom continues. So much so that at the end of the book, the very last verse of Acts, Acts Chapter 28, the very bottom of the chapter, it ends with the Apostle Paul under house arrest and it says he's teaching about the Kingdom of God and the King and the Lord, the King, the boss, the one in charge, the Lord Jesus Christ. It's all about the Kingdom of God.



And right now we want people to enter the Kingdom of God. We want people to be under the auspices, under the authority, under the regal leadership of the God who created them. But they got a problem. They got a rebellious heart. They got a sinful life. We need to fix that problem. And that's the message throughout the book of Luke. It's the message throughout the book of Acts, is fix that problem, get right with Christ, get right with Christ, enter the kingdom, that's what this is all about.

But it starts with that very curious statement in verse 1 "what Jesus began to do," that was Volume 1, and by inference now, you know what, he's going to continue to do it right now among us. He's still at work. I want you to stop and think about what I just said. He's still at work. Are we sure he's still at work now? I know he's still at work for 28 chapters in Acts. He's still at work now, I know that. And I always tell you I love finding us in the text of Scripture which is less obvious than most people think. You can look at some passages like Matthew 28 when he says listen, I'm leaving you here to "go make disciples of all the nations baptizing them into the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you." And then he says this, "And I am with you always." Here's where we find ourselves in the text. We find ourselves in the text when he says, "even to the end..." of the book of Acts. Do you know that passage? What does it say? "Even to the end of the age."

Now I know one thing, the age has not ended yet. The world's still spinning. We're still in this particular dispensation, this time, this epic, this season, this age. We're still there. So I love looking at a passage like that and knowing that when God says, "My kingdom subjects, I'm going to be with my kingdom subjects, I'm going to continue to work among my kingdom subjects all the way until the end of the age." The age is not over, Second Peter Chapter 3, "until the last person repents and enters the Kingdom." So I know this: we're still winning people to Christ. I got to witness it on my break in all these other churches, hear testimony even on-screen this morning during announcements, people's lives are being changed and I know this: the work continues.

Jesus said this, Matthew 16, "I will build my church," and we're going to keep on pushing past the perimeters of the enemy's territory. We're going to take people that were, here's how John put it, "children of the devil" and make them "children of God," subjects of the kingdom. We're going to keep on doing that and we're still doing it and his work continues. You know how validating that is? For us to sit here, think about it, in the 21st century on the other side of the planet that when it's daytime here it's nighttime there and nighttime here it's daytime there. We're on the other side of the world from Jerusalem where this all started twenty centuries later. Think about it.

And I know this: God is still continuing the work that is by inference in that first verse, "I've dealt with all that Jesus began to do. Now, I'm talking about what he's continuing to do." I love the fact that it doesn't end in Acts 28, which by the way, I will state for you on that datasheet there about Acts, it is curious the way the book ends. It just ends without any kind of closure. Paul's there under house arrest in Rome, he's teaching about the Kingdom of God and about the King, about Jesus the Lord. And it's like, "Well, what happened?" But we assumed very clearly that's when Luke apparently stopped writing this book because we learned from Chapter 16 on he's a traveling companion with the Apostle Paul and that's where it was when he wrote it.



And as I say in the datasheet he wrote it in 63 A.D., we're very confident about that date at least within give or take 18 months, certainly before Nero's persecutions in A.D. 64. So we know this: even the way it ends it's like, well, what's next? Some ministries have even called themselves like Acts 29. Have you've heard of the Acts 29 Network? Why? Well, there is no Acts 29. Well, that's the point. We're in Acts 29. God continues his work. How validating is that? As we sit here thinking about let's train people to serve in the church. Let's build a facility to accommodate more people in South Orange County. Let's plant brand new churches in various places that need to hear the gospel. I mean, that is to know this: God is still doing church work today.

Number one, you need to be assured of that. Talk about certainly, I want to be assured of the fact that Christ is ongoing in his work. Be "Assured of Christ's Ongoing Work." Number one on the outline. That needs to be clearly set in your mind. So that when a lot of people think well this is just an ancient thing, this is what Jesus did, he just left us some morals to think about and keep our kids off drugs and try and do the right thing at work and be ethical. No. Christ is continuing to bat back the gates of hell, in our case, in our mission field here in South Orange County California. We should be excited about continuing the work. And as Paul said in Second Timothy Chapter 2, "doing all things for the sake of the elect, that they might come to salvation." We want to see more people saved.

I called this series the first chapter of the six first sermons in the book of Acts. I called it The Royal Task. And the royal task sounds pretty lofty and big. It says God's task, this is the king's task for us and that's great. But the good news is I can say right now in terms of chronology it is ongoing. The task continues and Christ is in heaven, seated at the right hand of the throne of God with all authority and power saying I got work to do in South Orange County and I want to be a part of that work. I hope you sit here and say I want to be a part of a church that's about the work. Think about the mindset. You can just find a church that has the right kind of music, the right kind of preaching, the right kind of people, the right kind of programs, get my kid in camp and do all that and you can sit back and, like a lot of people put their feet up on the dashboard of this thing called church, and say, "Well, let's just coast through this."

Or you can think about church the way that the Bible thinks about church and that it as a moving, militant, ongoing, expanding organization to bat back the gates of hell until the last soul steps across the line into the purview of the Kingdom of God. Then it's all done and then the kingdoms of the world become the Kingdom of our Lord and Christ gets dispatched to get his Church. That is what this should be about. It should be the mindset, it should be crystal clear in your mind. It's the only reason we train people for ministry, it's the only reason we plant churches, it's the only reason we pour money into this facility for the next 20 years to see something happen here on this campus to win people for Christ. If you want a church that's static and has great potlucks or whatever, if churches still have those, then find another place. This is not about us being comfortable. It's about us being excited about putting our hand to the plow and continuing the work that Jesus started. And I say that because it's not easy. It's hard to struggle. You'd certainly have a more comfortable experience in a church that doesn't take the book of Acts seriously. You would. You'd have a much more comfortable experience. But it's not about comfort. It's about us doing the work of God in our generation. It's our turn now and this is our mission field.



Turn with me to a passage that is always so motivating to me, Colossians Chapter 1. When I think about the fact that God has work to do right here in our world, in your workplace, in your neighborhood, in our streets of South County, I want to think about the fact that I am continuing something that Jesus started. And that's hard to think about because it's almost a deficiency, isn't it? That Jesus didn't finish what he started? And you're right, he hasn't in his earthly ministry. There's more to do but it's hard. But he prayed for this. I think of this in this great passage in Matthew 9. He prayed that more workers would be thrown into the harvest. Why? Because there's more work to do. And then he would leave at the Ascension and say, "You guys get to work now. Finish the work." And you know what? They didn't finish it in the 3rd century. They didn't finish it in the 5th century. The reformers didn't finish it in the 16th century. And guess what? It's our turn to see if we can finish the work. That's an exciting thing.

I'm certain of this: I'm assured of the fact that Christ has work that's ongoing. Look at Colossians 1 with me, drop down to verse 24. Paul says I'm excited to be involved in that work. I'm ready to gear up to struggle and to work and to suffer through it. "I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake." You're happy about suffering? Yeah. Here's why. Because in my flesh, in my body, in my life, in my mind, in my fatigue and going home tired after my preaching, Paul says, "I'm filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions." Ding, ding, ding, ding, ding. Lacking? Is anything lacking in anything Christ did? Well certainly not the afflictions on the cross. Matter of fact, he said very clearly "Tetelstai" from the cross. What does that mean? It's finished. He was afflicted fully to pay for our sins but he was not afflicted nor did he suffer fully in finishing the building of his Church. But there are people today that need to take up the mantle of doing that work and Paul says, "I'm doing my work now." Christ is gone, 20-30 years later, he's saying, "I'm working among you. I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's affliction for the sake of his body, that is the Church."

We put up on the screen things like, you know, other great ministries do. Pastor Mark preach last week about ministry opportunities. It's not because we're sitting here trying to create a great little country club for Christians, to have a great church where all the program needs. It's not about that. You got to think "I can't wait to give of my time, my effort, my sweat, my blood, my tears, whatever it takes for me to see the church be all that it should be." And ultimately, all that it should be as a strong church is batting back the gates of the enemy's territory in our little corner of the world.

It's a struggle. But it's more than a struggle, verse 24. Look at verse 25. It's a stewardship "of which I became a minister," I love that word, a servant, one who serves, "according to," there's our word, "a stewardship from God that was given to me for you." A lot of people love to think about what God gives us for us. He gives us stewardship in many ways and in many things for others, "a stewardship for YOU." And in his case he says I know what I'm here for, "to make the word of God fully known. This mystery" of the Old Testament "hidden for ages and generations, revealed now, to his people, "his saints. To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory." Here's something about your neighbors, your neighbors don't know, that Christ needs to dwell in their hearts by faith. That they need to be right with Christ, the Lamb of God, so they can be a part of the Kingdom of God. That's not fully known in most people's minds. Most people don't even



know where to find, you know, the book of Numbers, let alone figure out how it is in their own heart they can be right with the living God.

And Paul says, "I feel that stewardship." What's a stewardship? A responsibility. The baton has been passed to me. You're in a relay race and guess what? The 20th century just handed us the baton in the 21st century so that we can march into this period of time and take the stewardship of representing the truth in our generation. There's work to be done and Christ is doing it. He's doing it through us as we're willing to struggle, verse 24, as we're engaging in the stewardship, verse 25. Now, we've got to verse 28. Now, here's the thing. He wants to provide us the strength. "In him," he says, "we proclaim him, warning everyone." It's not just Jesus loves you, it's listen, the boat is sinking. You better get on this ark called Christ and you ought to get saved from the wrath that is to come. There's a lot of warning in this. It's a loving warning but it's an urgent warning. "And teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ."

We want everyone to be a part of this. We want to see everyone, this call to salvation, experience it. "For this I toil, struggling with all his energy." Well, there it is, it's a struggle. I get that. But it's an energy that "he powerfully works within me." He wants to provide the strength. There's that statement of, "I'm with you always even to the end of the age." When you feel like I don't want another night out, I don't want to be a part of that program, I don't want to sign up to lead a small group, I don't want to be involved in the kid's ministry. Would you stop asking me to give money to Compass 2020?" That seems to you in your own sense of what should I do, what do I want to do, am I motivated to do it, you're going to say no.

But for those of us who have the Spirit of God working within us, we're going to go, "Yeah, I'm going to go the extra mile, I'm going to stay the extra hour, I'm going to spend the extra dollars. I'm going to find it deep down as I dig to see in my toil and struggle that God actually is motivating me to get up tomorrow and do the same thing again and to spend another night out and to do another thing that relates to evangelism and share the gospel with my co-worker, even though the last one didn't go well. I'm struggling and toiling but God is moving me forward" because here's what Christ said, I'm walking among the lampstands. And I'm ready there among the churches, even of the 21st century, to empower them, to give them success. Be assured of Christ ongoing work. Hey, listen, if I didn't believe that Christ had any ongoing work to do here I certainly would not be a pastor, I would not be your pastor, I would go do something else. I swear to you something else that didn't involve so much toil and struggle, I guarantee you that. And yet I believe that God is at work. I believe he hasn't stopped his work, he's not done building his church. "I want to do all things for the sake of the elect," who are yet to be saved. That's the implication there in Second Timothy 2, "that they might be saved."

This whole series is about a royal task, an ultimate unfinished task. A task that Christ says I want to finish through us. I want to be a part of that. I don't want to be a part of a church that put our feet up on the desk and just get comfortable. I want to engage in the struggle. I want to see it as a stewardship. I want to find my strength, my motivation in Christ. Be assured of Christ's ongoing work. I love it. I love the fact that that is our opportunity. He started work that he's not yet done with. That's the implication of verse 1. Look at verse 2, "until the day he was taken up," back to

Acts 1. Acts 1:2, "until the day he was taken up after he'd given commands through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen."

I've told you this before when we run into words that we're so used to in church but we don't see anywhere else. Apostles is one of those words that is transliterated not translated. Remember that now. If you're new to the church maybe that's a new concept for you but there are some words that show up in the English New Testament that come from the original language of the New Testament which is Koine Greek, common Greek, of the early epic, of the early period, the Hellenistic Period. We have this language then that sometimes you pull words out that were so unique and they made it into usually Latin or maybe just got taken over in Wycliffe's day into English but they don't translate, they just transliterate. Right?

"Angelos" is the word "angel." We just transliterated but we don't translate it. We have to understand what angel means. Right? "Bapitzo." There's a word. We just transliterate it, a "baptism." It's a nonsensical English word unless you know something about what the Greek word means. Same word with this. "Apostolos." Apostolos is the word that just makes its way into English as "apostles." Right? And we have to know what that word means. Apostello. The concept of being sent out. To be sent out but not just sent out, because there are lots of people who can be sent out to do something, but this is a representative, an agent, a qualified representative who speaks for the other person. It's like a delegate who comes, like some kind of stand-in, a proxy, that sits there with all the authority of the one who sent him to do and to say what it is that the king wants said.

The apostelos. That is the picture here. And in the picture of this particular passage, which is what the whole book is named after in church history, the acts of the apostles, the works of the apostles, what Christ is going to ongoingly do, it starts with, at least in that first season, it starts with these apostolos, apostelloi if you want to be accurate, plural, the sent ones, the delegates, the authorized agents of Christ. Now we're going to learn a lot about these men. As a matter of fact, we're going to learn a lot about these because in the next few paragraphs in this chapter they're going to sit there and say, "Well, Judas is out. We need to replace him." Because the thing about the apostles is, it was very clear, Jesus picked 12 of them. And he talked often about the 12 by calling them The Twelve. And not only that, he said things about The Twelve, what they would be doing in the millennial kingdom like sitting on 12 thrones judging the 12 tribes of Israel, Matthew 19.

And so they knew there are supposed to be twelve. Now Judas went out and hung himself. He was a betrayer. He was the son of perdition or damnation, Jesus said. He would not be saved, he's not going to be in the millennial kingdom. So we need a 12th and they're going to deal with that at the end of the chapter. We'll look at that and figure that all out. But to start here we need to know this: the acts of the apostles is about what God does through The Twelve, what he does through the authorized agents. We'll figure out The Twelve later but right now we need to know this is a very special period of time, a transitional period of time. A transitional period of time where you could scratch your head and say, "Why should I listen to you?" And they would say, "Because I'm a representative of Christ, the living one who rose from the dead." And you'd have to ask a question, "Well, how do I know?" Well that's a really, really good question. Someone comes and



says I speak for God I want you to prove it. Now we can prove it because I can look at a body of work called the New Testament and say, "Well look, as long as I'm reiterating that you know I'm a representative of God." They couldn't say that when the New Testament wasn't codified and wasn't written. We needed some kind of verification and proof. And the Bible makes very clear throughout the New Testament that the apostles had a calling card that made it very clear that they were authorized to speak for Christ.

And just like Christ said in the Gospel of John, "If you don't believe what I say you better start looking really hard at what I'm doing, because the things that I'm doing testify to the authority of what I'm saying. In other words, look at what I'm doing, the works that I do, they speak with the authority of the Father. There's a picture here where you know the message is divine, it's heavenly, because I'm doing things that only God can do and that is the suspension of natural law. I'm doing things like raising the dead. Guys with eyes that were sunk back in their head, I'm reaching out and touching them and they can see. A man with a withered hand who has no muscle in his forearm, I'm touching that hand and it's becoming whole and restored with a great tight grip. A person who was absolutely atrophied from his waist down because he's a paraplegic and can't walk, I'm saying get up and walk and they're taking up their mat that they're laying on every day and begging and they're walking with great looking calf muscles hopping and skipping along."

How does that happen? Well, only, I suppose you give the imprimatur of heaven, the authority of heaven. Well he sends out The Twelve now and he authorizes them by giving the same calling card. Second Corinthians 12:12. "The signs of a true apostle," here it is, "signs, wonders and mighty works." Those three things. They're all ways to describe the suspension or the breaking of natural law. These are miracles that would make the front page of the Orange County Register if you ever had a verified event of them here today. That picture of the miraculous breaking of natural law.

And that's what we have throughout the book. As a matter of fact, jot down a couple of references if you want. Let's start with Jesus, Acts 2:22. Acts 2:22. "Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man," here's a great word, "attested to you by God with mighty works, wonders and signs," there it is again, "that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know," you saw it. Now, Chapter 5 verse 12. We know that's how Jesus was verified in your mind. Now here it comes, verse 12 of Chapter 5, "Now many signs and wonders were regularly done among the people by the hands of the apostles." Now they're doing the same thing.

There's a movement and I'm rarely putting these kinds of things on the worksheet but I did it today for the discussion question for your small group, I named a group, The Red Letter Christians. Maybe you've heard of them. "What are the Red Letter Christians?" Well you know that convention in English translations has been when you're in the Gospels if you find the words of Christ we'll put them in red ink, which is kind of dumb in some ways. I mean, I hate to call these people dumb, I'm not saying they're dumb, I guess I'm dumb for saying that, but the idea is there's no need for us to make those red, I can read, I know syntax and grammar just like you. I know when Jesus is speaking, it's obvious in the past. But they want him to jump off the page. It's



become a tradition and so a lot of translations still have red letter edition Bibles where you have those words of Christ in red.

Well, the Red Letter Christians, they look at the red letters of Christ, they don't look at them very closely but they think, "Well, I like that Jesus there who talks about turning the other cheek and loving your neighbor and all that. I like that Jesus. I just don't like the Apostle Paul or James or any of the rest of the stuff that talks about hardcore things like your sexual ethics or obeying the government. I don't like any of that so I'm going to toss out the black letters and I'm only going to focus on the red letters and I'm going to just focus on what Jesus said because he seems much more cool about things like homosexuality than Paul was. So I'll stick with Jesus and not Paul.

Which is absurd by the way. If you think Jesus in the red is painted as a gentle butterfly loving, you know, hamster petting, you know, Rabbi you've missed... You have not read all the red letters. I mean this is Jesus who says, "Don't fear the one who can kill the body, fear the one who after he kills the body can cast your soul into hell." Let's preach that in the Red Letter Christian movement church this morning. Which by the way, they don't go to church very often because, of course, those words about not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, well that came elsewhere in the black letters. But the point is they like this copacetic kind of chilled-out Jesus of the red letters but they really don't read all the red letters. They also forget that all the red letters were recorded by the apostles. They don't get it.

But all it is is a truncation and the picking and choosing, kind of the potpourri, the cafeteria-style kind of religion people like today so they can get around doing what the Bible has to say, because they don't think that the Bible, unless you can find it in red, must be really authoritative because that's just the apostles, it's really not Jesus. Well that's just nonsense. It's nonsense.

And here's the reason why. Because Jesus promised in John Chapter 14 through 16, which is in red letters, which I understand is all circular reasoning because it's the apostles who wrote it anyway. But the point is they recorded the words of Christ, he said in those red letters, if you want to take the red letters seriously, that he's going to empower these 12 apostles and send them out so that they could teach and write the truth, the Spirit of truth would guide them into all truth, and they would be able to record the things that we now read, study, memorize and meditate on.

The apostles have all authority. The authority of Christ. If the apostle says that you can or cannot do something it has the authority of Christ because the imprimatur is the signs wonders and various miracles. Number two on your outline, we're going to read a lot about what the apostle said, a third of the book is the apostle's teaching. In other words, you're going to hear sermons and preaching and speeches from the apostles and all I want you to do, I want you to be "Confident in Christ's Apostles," number two. Be assured that Christ has got an ongoing work and the first season of that ongoing work was the apostles who were there teaching in the stead of Christ. And you need to be confident that Christ's apostles carry all the authority of heaven. They do. They are the prophets of the Old Testament. Think about that. The prophets. The great Hebrew word in Hebrew "navi." Navi is the word "mouthpiece." God picks up Isaiah and speaks through him. And Isaiah writes down "thus says the Lord."



And in the New Testament we have the same thing. Their prophetic office as apostles is to speak for God authoritatively. Just as Jesus said, "If they're disregarding...", he said this in his earthly ministry, "If they're disregarding you they're not rejecting you, they're rejecting me, the one who sent you." There it is apostolos, the one who sent out the apostles. So you can't reject the apostles and you can't reject the apostles' teaching without rejecting the King of kings.

But that does lead us to think about all the things that God did in the book of Acts to put his seal of approval on those apostles that should make me think, "Oh wait a minute, that's a special group of guys." I mean there are guys like John Wimber up there in Pasadena who said, listen, I read the book of Acts and I just want to do all the stuff in the book of Acts. Well, we need to understand this is the acts of the apostles and the apostles have an asterisk next to that title and they're a very special band of people who are doing something, primarily the Bible says, to write Scripture for us. They represented Christ in the first generation but they laid a foundation on which every successive generation of the Church would be built.

And that's a paraphrase, by the way, of Ephesians 2:20. If you don't know that verse you should write the reference down, Ephesians 2:20, that the church is "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets with Christ himself being the chief cornerstone." That's important for us to catch. That the foundation of the Church, he doesn't keep laying the foundation, the foundation of the Church is the work of the apostles and prophets. And from that we build. And we have people now who simply are taught to reiterate that truth. I'm not creating the 28th book of the New Testament every time I preach a sermon series. I'm reiterating some part of the Scripture, in this case the 44th book of God's inspired library, the book of Acts, we're going to teach, for who knows how long, to try and talk about what God said in this book. Well, this is the work of God through the apostles.

Simon and Andrew - brothers. Simon called Peter, by the way. James and John, the sons of thunder, sons of Zebedee. Philip had a friend named Bartholomew also known as Nathaniel. We got groups of two so far. Peter and Andrew, James and John, Philip and Bartholomew. Matthew comes along, Levi is his Jewish name, the tax collector. Thomas, which you might forget, was a twin. The Greek word was "didomai." That was his nickname. Didomai in Greek means "the twin." His twin wasn't a part of the twelve. You know him because he was a... Thomas was a... Hello? A doubter. Right? One of the appearances of Christ there was when ten of the apostles were gathered and Thomas wasn't there. There's another James who was not the son of Zebedee. He was the son of Alphaeus and they often put it that way in Scripture when you read James just to make the difference and sometimes you'll see him called James the Lesser, which is not a great nickname if you have a big ego, I suppose. James the Lesser. Because he wasn't as prominent as the Sons of Thunder. His personality was certainly not like James the son of Zebedee.

You had another Simon in the group but he was designated from Peter with Simon the Zealot he's called. You might remember that, He's a zealot which meant it's not speaking to his personality although his personality probably reflected his political choice because his political choice was to overthrow the Roman government until Jesus came along like the tax collector Levi and pulled him out of that. He said forget the politics here. Let's get into now changing people's lives. You



can be a fisher of men. And so Simon the Zealot joins the band. And he didn't join by volunteering, by the way. Jesus puts his finger in his chest and calls him to this task.

Then there's Judas, who you think you know but I'm not talking about that Judas. Judas the son of James. He's also known as Thaddeus. And if you share the name with Judas Iscariot you'd want to change your name too. He's also called Thaddeus in Scripture. And then, of course, there is the betrayer. In a passage coming up here they're going to figure out what to do about him, because he had gone out and hung himself. The Twelve. Well we've got eleven here to deal with in the beginning of the book. A 12th by the time we're done with Chapter 1. We'll figure that all out later. But these were people who were attested by the works of God.

Now there's a lot more I want to say about this and I'll leave a lot of this to Thursday nights because we're going to start our apologetics series. But when I hold the Bible in my hand and I say here is an authoritative word that should affect the lives of people in high rises in Irvine, I want to make sure I know that I've got an authoritative word from God. When I start quoting the 27 books of the New Testament I want to be able to know that what I've got here is something that God is fully, not only supportive of, but speaking. God is speaking this. And that's what we need to be concerned with as we face our world that wants to doubt everything. We have a sure word from God and it comes via the apostles. So be assured of his ongoing work. I'm excited about church work and I'm excited about the book and the commands that come through the Holy Spirit through those apostles and I want to be confident in those apostles.

Number three, verse 3 Acts Chapter 1. "He presented himself," speaking of Christ, "alive to them." Not just them by the way. Read First Corinthians 15. Jesus presented himself alive after his sufferings by many proofs to many people. It says in First Corinthians 15, as many as 500 at one time, just to make it clear that these are not just random hallucinations of people who thought they saw the doppelganger of Christ. These are people who saw him and verified the resurrected Christ. But certainly to The Twelve.

He appeared to them, he presented himself alive appearing to them for 40 days and speaking about the Kingdom of God. If you hung out with Jesus hearing him teach again after three and a half years with him and now you've got him teaching for over a month, you start thinking to yourself he is really resurrected and all the vivid pictures of your mourning and grief as he hung on a cross and getting speared in the side and crucified naked and put in a tomb, you'd say this is a remarkable thing. The Christ of the Bible is not just conscious in the afterlife, he's physically, biologically alive. That's a game-changer. And by the way, the theme of the preaching of a third of the book of Acts, I said a third of the book of Acts is about the preaching and the teaching of the apostles and you'll see those recorded sermons. And guess what they're talking about over and over and over again? The fact that the Christ that they're serving is not only the fulfillment of all the Old Testament messianic prophecies, he is alive, the resurrection.

Number three. You need to be absolutely sure of that because that is the number one credential hanging off the shoulder of Christ, and that is his resurrection. Be "Certain of Christ's Credentials," number three. Be certain of them. And the number one credential that he has is not just that people saw him do miracles but the miracle that you're going to have a really hard time



talking your way around and that is the one who was professionally executed is now literally biologically bodily alive and presented himself for 40 days to all kinds of people, 100s of people, that when Paul speaks to the Corinthians who are many, many miles away from Jerusalem, he says listen, you can find people who saw him, I mean look them up. I mean many of them are still alive by the time he writes to Corinth. He says listen, you can dial them up on your cell phone and talk to them if you'd like. They are testifying to the resurrected Christ. That was an anachronistic joke. I know there were no cell phones back then, by the way. Great joke Pastor Mike.

I don't have time to go through the whole book but there are so many references to the resurrection. They are so enamored with the resurrection. We are serving a bodily resurrected Christ. I'm going to live in a body in a new place in a new world after I die and Christ, the one who we're preaching about that makes that possible, the Lamb of God, he physically rose from the dead. "This Jesus," Chapter 2 verse 32, "God raised him up and we were all witnesses of it. Acts 4:33. "With great power the apostles are giving testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus." Acts 17 was the reason they were being mocked, "Now when they heard about the resurrection they mocked him." Chapter 23. Paul there before the Sanhedrin. "It is with respect to the hope of the resurrection of the dead that I'm on trial." It's about the resurrected Christ. Chapter 26 as he stands before King Agrippa. He sits there and says, "Listen, I'm just testifying to," the great and to the not great, "the small and the great saying nothing." Of what? "Nothing but what the prophets and Moses said would come to pass: And that is that Christ would suffer, and by that being the first to rise from the dead, he would proclaim light." Right? The point of life. He proclaimed that both, "to our people Israel and to the Gentiles.

And as he was saying all this," speaking of mocking, "Festus," decorated in all the pomp of his leadership role stood up and "said with a loud voice. 'Paul you are out of your mind; your great learning," we know you're a smart guy, but it "must be driving you mad.' And Paul said in response, 'I'm not out of my mind, most excellent Festus, I'm speaking true and rational words.'" The first thing to go, the first thing to go in liberal theology that's going to move a church away into absolute irrelevance is saying that Jesus did not bodily rise from the dead. It is the whole point of the book of Acts. And so in the future if ever from this platform or any platform in Compass Bible Church a preacher stands up and says he did not bodily rise from the dead. Right? It's the beginning of the end. This is the central message of the teaching of the apostles, that the hope of eternal life is bound up in a physical bodily resurrection of Christ.

And Paul turns to King Agrippa. Think about this. He's the great-grandson of Herod who killed all the babies there in Bethlehem. He says, "The king knows about these things, and I speak to him boldly with certainty. I'm persuaded that none of this has escaped his notice, for this has not been done in a corner. King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know you believe." You knew this was called in the Old Testament. And King Agrippa said to Paul, which is an interesting statement. It would be great to preach in this passage if Christ doesn't come back first. He says, "In a short time would you persuade ME to become a Christian?" There are so many ways to take that response. I'd love to see a videotape of that. Right? That dates me, right? I'd love to see that streamed on the Internet. There's a lot of good stuff. Listen to it twice. You'll catch all of these on the second go.



The reason for boldness is because they serve the living Christ. Be certain of Christ's credentials. There's a kingdom coming and that King's is going to come with Christ returning in a bodily form. He will be physical with toenails and fingernails and eyelashes and ear lobes. And he's going to come back and he's going to ascend a throne in Jerusalem.

Romans Chapter 1, Paul said, "I'm a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, which he promised beforehand through the prophets in the holy Scriptures, concerning his Son, who is descended from David according to the flesh and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by the resurrection of the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord," our King. There are a lot of things that the book of Acts is going to ask you to do. And you and I are going to have a choice. Is he our Lord, is he our King and his assignment a royal assignment, is it a regal assignment, is it something that we must do, is it optional, is it extracurricular, is this something that I can choose not to do or are these the King's instructions? Now be a good Berean and make sure I don't ever command you to do anything from this platform that the Bible is not commanding you to do. But if these are authoritative words of heaven, we've got to do what the Bible says and it's going to start next week with the great assignment as it unveils itself here in the first chapter of Acts.

But I'll tell you this, I don't think you're a candidate for doing what the Bible says unless you are sure. You are sure about the fact that God has work for us to do, that the authoritative message that I'm telling you is coming from the apostolic band and the folks who have authority to say it, and that Christ is one who has all the credentials to be the one that I say, "Yes sir" to. I mean, you better be sure of those. I can't sell your car for you if I don't think it's a good car. I can't hail the benefits of something you're trying for me to peddle to someone if I don't believe that it really is beneficial. I'm going to have you step out of your comfort zone here in the next few weeks, next few months, and I hope you feel the authority of God and of heaven saying I got work to do in South County and you're called to do it. But you better be sure, you better be certain.

I was handed a book, I think was the last service of the last day I preached before I took this break. And they were distressed, they said, "Could you read this book?" Someone in his family, I believe, had been given this book and it had rattled their faith. Of course, I knew the author and I thought, "Oh boy. OK." And so I took that book and I get a chance on my break to read stuff I wouldn't normally read and so I read this. I mean, I'd rather good theology but I knew I was reading a bad book and I knew it from the title. If you want to know the exact opposite of everything Luke was trying to accomplish in you, that Christ was trying to accomplish in you, then read the title of this book. It sells really well, better than any book I've ever written. OK? Here's the title. "The Sin..." it's talking to Christian now. "The Sin of..." (drum roll) I mean, think about it. Wow! What's the sin you're going to attack? "The Sin of Certainty." That's the name of the book.

Hey, Christian, you better not be sure of anything. If you have been around the block a few times in Christianity, you know that the Emergent Church movement was big on that. Right? Can't be certain about anything. Remember Doug Pagitt's book about preaching, "Preaching Reimagined" I think it was called. I'm not supposed to be certain about anything. I can't be confident about anything. I mean, they took the whole doctrines, the perspicuity of Scripture, the clarity and the



authority of Scripture and just set it aside. You know, is really cool for us to stand back and say, "Well we don't really know. I mean, who knows? Really, we don't know." This is written by an Old Testament scholar. Right? He used to be in our camp. He used to be someone at least who by his words on paper was all about whatever the Bible says. He was going to be in submission to the authoritative word of God. Well, now he's not.

And he tells his story to a popular crowd in this book that sells very well. And he says, listen, if you're certain about anything theologically, it's a sin. God doesn't want you to be certain. And he tells a story at the beginning of a book and it is so fundamental and it's so contradictory, which I guess is fine in the new world he lives in. But I think listen to what you're saying. He tries to explain it and if you go to his Web site and read his other books he tries to be very scholarly about why we can't trust the Bible as an authoritative word from God. And even if you could you can't understand it. So we none of us should be certain or emphatic or dogmatic about anything.

But in this book he reveals too much. And he speaks of his journey, sitting on a plane, watching a movie on a plane about a characterization which we've had since Pollyanna, I suppose, of the fire and brimstone preachers who were just distasteful and presented in a distasteful light. He saw the distasteful Christian in this movie and he said, "I don't like that. I don't want that." That's exactly what he said. I mean, I'll quote. He asks us, the reader, "In the quiet of your own heart what kind of god do you believe in, really? What kind of god do you WANT to believe in?" He says, "I realized that on that film it was the default god of my life. But the other person who was arguing in this film, "Deep down that's the god I wanted to believe in."

Well that's fantastic. He argues that the reason, this is the contradictory part I just think it is so simple, he says the reason you stick to your Bible, quoting your Bible and acting so certain about what it says and all your confidence and certainty and assurance, he says the reason you do that, you know why you do that? Because it's a safe place for you to be. It's a comfortable place for you to be. I'm thinking, listen to what you just wrote. Your whole point at the beginning of the book is "I was uncomfortable with that God" and you know what? So am I. I'm so uncomfortable with that God I fear that God. He's a consuming fire. I worship him with reverence and awe. I mean, I'm not comfortable with the God of the Bible. I'm not and you shouldn't ever get comfortable with the God of the Bible. And yet that's his accusation. I'm just comfortable with this.

But he says I'm not comfortable with that God so I'm going to choose a god of Hollywood. I want that God. And to do that I've got to start watering down everything in the Bible and he spends all these pages trying to help us to do it. And don't be certain. Matter of fact, that's a great philosophy to live by, he would recommend. Don't be certain about anything. Smart guy, I know that. He knows Aramaic and Hebrew far better than I do. But here's what he says. I just love this. It's one example of many. I forget what page this is on. He says "Geologists have known that the Bible is wrong because the Earth is several billion years old - 4.5 billion to be exact." This is in a book about you never being certain about anything. Right?

Look for that in the philosophy of the guy in the lunchroom who says we can't be sure about anything as it relates to God. Notice how sure they are about a lot of things. How certain, how dogmatic they are. They say, "Well, I believe this. And this is absolutely sure. We know the Bible's



wrong because I'm certain about these things and I'm certain about these things because these are the things I've been told from people. These are the things you can prove in a laboratory." Let's pin that number here, by the way in the 21st century, of how old this earth is supposed to be and how old this universe is and how vast it is. Just put a pin in that and let's just see where that is if Christ tarries 200 years from now and let's see if any of that changes. No, but he's giving me the exact date of the creation of the world. Why? Because geologists tell us that. Because they're into radiometric dating and they know about parent isotopes and daughter isotopes and they figured all that out. But you know that Bible stuff is fable and foolish because the geologists tell us it's wrong.

Here's why we need Thursday nights, our Thursday night study on apologetics. We need to be able to present people mature in Christ with all wisdom. We need to know why. We need to have an answer for people who ask us for the reason for the hope that we're holding up these 27 books in the Bible and saying, "This is the truth." The only thing that the world wants you to be certain about is that you cannot be certain about anything. And don't you dare be certain about religion, don't you dare be certain about politics, don't you dare be certain about philosophy, don't you dare be certain, certainly, about Christ. Don't be certain about those things.

We got our work cut out for us. But the answers are there. Theophilus was the first one to hear it. Luke to wrote him and said listen I've written these things so that you can be certain, certain about what has happened and certain about what God is continuing to do. And I hope that's a good foundation for us as we continue our study of the royal task here in Acts Chapter 1. Some things to chew on.

Let's pray. God, help us as we study this book together to really examine what we believe and why we believe it, even though that's even mocked. That line is even mocked in that book. I think about the moderns today who have their Christianity and they go through academia and they sit there without any real devotion or connection to you. They claim they have some but I've seen it up close. I've known some of these scholars, I've gone to school with some of them, I understand their heart is disjointed and disconnected from you. In they're learning they have gone mad with all their intellect and claims of wisdom, they become fools and they've exchanged the glory of God for the glory of the creature.

And today they're telling us that if we stand up and say to our friends and neighbors and coworkers and extended families, "Hey, you know what, you need to put your trust in Christ, the risen one. You're going to face at the end of your life the Creator and there's one of two places to go. You need to pay for your own sins or you can trust now to have your sins paid for by Christ. God, help us to have a confidence. Confidence in the verses that we're quoting are authorized from the God of heaven. That the Christ that we serve is the Son of God and has the answer. He is the way, the truth, the life and no one's going to come to the Father except through him. And God, help us to know that the work continues because you have a plan even for this church to continue the work of pushing back the gates of hell. God, let us have a great season of spiritual growth and a great season of numerical growth, not only at this Compass but all the Compass Bible Churches and, frankly, all the Bible-teaching churches everywhere in this world.



In Jesus name. Amen.