

Episodes in Life of T/lord 10 Life of Christ in Acts

by Robert Constable

The book of Acts sets forth the method by which Jesus' life is shared with men, and it reveals the principles and passion of the first generation of Christians.

Duration: 42:40

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Luke 1:1-4, Luke 12:49-50, Acts 1:1-4

Topics: "Book Of Acts"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the principles revealed in the Book of Acts that show how God is working in the world today. He cautions against getting in the way of God's purpose and losing the blessing of being used by Him. The speaker also warns against the appeal to go into the mission field solely based on the need of people, highlighting the importance of understanding how God works. The sermon references Luke chapter 12, where Jesus speaks about his purpose and the need to give his life for others before sharing it with others.

Transcript

...the word of God for you people. It's been a real privilege for me, and I'll be saying this again tonight, but it's been a real privilege for me to minister the word to you. But, in addition, and this is what I wanted to say this morning, there really has been a blessing for me in this, especially in listening to the prayers of my brethren in this place.

This has been a great refreshment for my heart. Men who so obviously and so thoroughly know the Lord and talk to him like a friend, this is great. It's a great fellowship.

Now, we've been considering during this week, of course, the incidents or episodes in the life of our Lord Jesus, and the things that we have been thinking about happened, oh, anywhere from 1935 to 1950 years ago. They're history, and the record is kept for us here that we might learn lessons out of his ministry while he was on earth. Then last evening, we stepped into rather a new phase of his ministry when he came when he was not expected.

He had always been expected before. Last night he came when he was not expected at all. But we were still in the gospels last night, and we were still in that part of the word of God that presents to us the

ministry of the Lord Jesus on earth.

Today and tonight, I want to move on from this, because there are other episodes in the life of the Lord Jesus that transpire after his ascension to heaven, and I want for us to enter into these things. They are part of our necessary experience today. So we're going to move from the gospels, which give themselves to the relation of what happened while he was here on earth, into the book of Acts today, both this morning and this evening, and we are going to consider together something of the incidents revealing the principles and passion of that first generation of Christians who really understood, as we need to understand, that though he had left them, he was still with them, that his life was being lived in them.

And I hope that as a result of this morning's meditation together, and as a result of what we have to think about this evening, we will get a new and a fresh sense of what is involved in this business of the life of the Lord Jesus. One of the things that I think was made clear in our consideration of the various incidents this week is that you never knew just what he was going to do. You never knew just what incident I was going to take up, for one thing, when you came to the meeting, and I'm sure many of you said to each other, I wonder what he's going to talk about tonight.

There were many incidents in the life of the Lord Jesus that we could have selected from, and we have had several kinds of things. We've had the call of a man to be a disciple, we've had the opening of blind eyes, we have had the raising of a man who'd been sick a long time, we've had different kinds of things in his ministry to consider. And this is one of the things that I'm sure we will find continues.

That is, that things don't follow a regular pattern. He doesn't always do just what he's expected to do. He seems all the time to do things that nobody thought he would do, but he did them, and he does that today.

I think we need to learn from this the argument against the stereotype, that is to say, that everything has got to be done just so. The Lord Jesus said himself, for instance, the wind blows where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, and canst not tell whence it cometh, nor whither it goeth. So is the Spirit of God.

And as the Spirit of God makes the life of Christ manifest in his people, it shows up in different ways, according to different personalities, in different circumstances. It is not stereotyped, it is not just so. Now, we have to watch this.

If they don't do it the way I do it, or the way we do it, then it must be wrong. It's a very easy trap to fall into, whereas the word of God teaches us that there is nothing quite so regular as the irregularity of the Spirit of God in his operations. And this is one of the things that I think we learn as we look into the book of Acts.

We live in a day like the book of Acts reveals, a day of great upset and confusion and chaos and problems, full of strife. Well, it is an hour of strife, the hour in which we live, as it was an hour of strife in the days in which the disciples lived. But of course, that makes it an hour of opportunity.

It is when things are upset that there is an opportunity for the Lord to work. In this book of Acts, let's take a look first, before we get into this, at the first four verses of the book of Luke. As you know, the gospel of Luke and the book of Acts were both written by the same man.

They were written to the same reader, and they have the same subject. Two very interesting books. Let's read the first four verses of the book of Luke.

Forasmuch, Luke writes, forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us, even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word, it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus, that thou mightest know the certainty of those things wherein thou hast been instructed. Now let's turn to the first of Acts, the first chapter in the first four verses in the book of Acts, where Luke writes, The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen, to whom also he showed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God, and being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me." Now, in the Gospels we were given the promise of the Father, the glorious fact that Jesus revealed that he was going to share the life of God with men on earth, that that's what he came for, to give his life, that that life might become the possession of men on earth. That was the promise.

In the epistles we are given, of course, the fulfillment of this promise. We are told in the epistles about the things that must characterize the life of those and the activity of those who possess this life, how it is to be worked out in human experience. But the book of Acts is a sort of bridge between the promise of the Father and the fulfillment of that promise.

The book of Acts is sort of a book that sets forth the method by which this is to be accomplished. This is a question that comes to us, of course. We hear Christ died, and he died that we might live.

He shares his life with us. How does this happen? How does this happen? That's what the book of Acts was written for, that we might know how this happened. Let's turn back to Luke 12.

I think this is something that we ought to have in mind as we come to this study. Luke 12, and I just want to read the 49th and 50th verses. The Lord Jesus has been explaining one of his parables to the disciples, and he has gotten it pretty well explained, and he slips into a sort of soliloquy.

He's talking to himself more than he's talking to anybody else in these two verses. He says this, "'I am come to send fire on the earth, and to what will I, if it be already kindled, that I have a baptism to be baptized with? And how am I straightened till it be accomplished?' How am I straightened? How am I limited? How am I held down until it be accomplished? You see, he could not share his life with others until he gave his life for others. His life was available as a demonstration.

He could teach. He could share himself in a limited way with those who were with him. But this is all.

This is all he could do in the gospel. And he longed, he longed so much for the time when he could share himself with men everywhere, where his life could be the life of his people. Oh, this is what he wanted, and as he thought about this, oh, if I could only share my life, how I'm straightened, how I'm limited, until I am baptized with the baptism wherewith I am to be baptized.

This baptism was the baptism of his death. This was the giving of himself in death, that he might be shared with men everywhere. And now, in the book of Acts, he is no longer straightened.

He is no longer limited. He is no longer localized. And that's the explanation for the strange statement he made to his disciples on one occasion when he said, it is better that I go away.

None of them believed that. You would not have believed that if you had enjoyed the company of the Lord Jesus, if you had walked those streets and heard his blessed voice, if you had watched him minister to men and women, if you had entered into all of these circumstances, you would not have thought it would be better if he'd go away, would you? No, you'd say, like the disciples, oh no, no, we don't want you to go away. And that was the very depth of their bereavement when they took him from them and crucified him on a cross.

The depth of their desolation knew no bounds. He was gone. But he said, it is better that I go away.

Why? Why, because when he went away, he would be able to share himself in an altogether new way. Instead of walking beside him on the street, the disciples could have the experience of having him indwell them, of possessing him altogether, of having him move in their lives, and they express his life to men everywhere. Oh, this was an infinitely greater thing than simply having him physically present with them in the world.

In the book of Luke, as we read, that book was written for the purpose of telling about the things that Jesus began to do until the time that he was taken up. So in Luke, it's everything he did until. In the book of Acts, the same man goes on to write about what he did after.

It's just a continuation of the same story. So this morning, we're still considering the things, the episodes, in the life of the Lord Jesus. Let's remember this.

This is a book of beginnings, but it is a book of his beginning to do things, his beginning to do things, that have continued down until this very day. The things we considered in the Gospels happened nearly two thousand years ago. The things in the book of Acts are happening now.

He is still working. Now there are three beginnings, really, that we are told about in the word of God. One of these beginnings was in creation.

When God created the heavens and the earth, and we're told in the record in Genesis that God looked upon his creation and saw that it was good. It was perfect. It was perfect in the sense that it was potentially perfect.

Not that it was completely perfect, but potentially perfect, because God put man into the garden and said, cultivate it. Improve it. Work on it.

Bring it along. Make it better. Make it stronger.

Make it stronger. This was the work of man when he was put upon the earth, was to be the partner of God in the completion of what had been potentially perfect. And man was to work with God in the completion of his purpose and bring it to absolute perfection.

There was another beginning, and that beginning is in the incarnation. When God began a new work, you and I were chosen in him before the foundation of the world. God in his purpose knew all about all that was to transpire in all time.

But there came a point in the economy of God when Jesus left his Father's throne. Thou didst leave thy throne and thy kingly crown when thou camest to earth for me. There was a point at which that happened.

The angels in heaven were told about this. On earth, men had been given intimations of this. The prophets had spoken about the fact that this was to happen.

There were signs given by which men could watch for this and expect this. Men waited. God waited for a time in which he would begin an altogether new work.

It was my privilege once to write a tract, and the name of this little tract was Home for Christmas. Everybody goes home at Christmas, don't they? That is the idea. This is what makes Christmas.

Christmas is that the family gets together. Everybody comes home at Christmas. It is interesting that that's true, because Christmas is the celebration of the time when Jesus left home.

That was the time he left. All the preparations that are made for the Christmas holiday when we all get together with those we love. My, we look forward to this.

They looked forward to this in heaven. Not the getting together, but the coming of the Son of God into the world. And when it happened, the angels sang, and the choir sang so loudly on that day, and so gloriously at rent the heavens.

Men heard angels sing about the new work God was beginning in the earth. Oh, it was a great work, but it was only a perfect work potentially. He came into the world a perfect man, but he had a job to do.

He had to work out the purpose of his coming. The incarnation, while it was perfect in its essence, had to be developed, and the Lord Jesus had to consummate his life, and his death had to be accomplished before the purpose of the incarnation would be complete. There was another beginning, and that's the beginning we're talking about, and that's the beginning of the church, when an altogether new thing came into the world.

Men and women indwelt by the life of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. There never had been men in the world like that before. Oh, the Spirit of God had come upon men to help them to do the will of God in many days, many ways.

We read the stories in the Old Testament of the blood and the blessedness of a man having the Spirit of God come upon him, and he did things great and mighty things and wonderful things and beautiful things that in his own power and his own wisdom and in his own strength he never could have done. That was a great thing, but the idea that God Almighty, the God of heaven and earth, was to share his life with men and live inside of men and motivate and move and guide and strengthen and help the way that we can enter into this was never known on earth before. And sometimes we are inclined to forget this.

We're inclined to think we're only human, and to forget the glory of being inhabited by the very life of the living God. But you and I are not only human. You and I are, unfortunately, human, but we are indwelt with the divine life, and not just a spark, either.

We are indwelt with the divine life in power and glory, and this life wants to manifest itself through us to the world, and that's what the book of Acts is about, this wonderful, wonderful new thing that came into the world. Now, when we get into the book of Acts, we've got to be careful of something. It is so wonderful that

we are apt to fall into an imitation of the incidentals in the book, and we are apt to try and conform ourselves to incidental things.

And you know, when you imitate something, it becomes simply ritualistic. Imitation is no good anytime. Oh, the imitation of a boy, of his father, where he tries to express the life of his father, or a boy tries to walk like Dad walks, or a boy likes to fish because Dad likes to fish.

In a sense, this is imitation, but this is imitation in the best sense. This is a living of the life of his father, and we need this imitation. But the idea that we set down rules and we say, well, in the book of Acts it was done this way, therefore we must do it this way.

Let's not get caught on that one. That becomes ritual. Now, we've got to get at the essentials of the life in the book of Acts, and let the life express itself.

We have those essentials with us perpetually. No matter what the circumstances may be, then this life can express itself through us. So, we consider the life and the activity of Jesus in the gospel.

We are going to continue this morning to consider the activity of Jesus in his people, in his people. But it's the same activity, it's the same Jesus that was in the gospels. Now he reveals himself in his people.

The same Jesus, though. Now, in order to get to the point here, the teaching of the book of Acts has to do with his people, with the church, with this thing he was building in the earth, the thing he began to do. And as I say, there are certain principles that apply, and there are certain perils that have got to be avoided.

These principles have to do with the origin of the church. The church was created by the Son of God, and he spoke of the fact when he said, I will build my church. It is his creation.

It belongs to him. It is his in its origin. In its nature, well, the word of God expresses it this way in one place.

It is the bringing of many sons to glory. That's what the church is. It's not a building.

It's not just a group of people. We like to think of the church as the people, and of course, this is so. But we mustn't forget about the people.

What are the people in the church? They are the sons of the living God. Not just people, but the sons of the living God being brought to glory. God working and fulfilling and accomplishing his glorious purpose in human history through the people in the church, through you and through me.

That's the nature of the church. We're not just another group of people as though we were another chapter of the Masons, you know, or another group of these people that jump in the lake in the wintertime. What do they call them? We're not bound together by some human idea.

We're not a club. We are a living organism expressing the life of Jesus Christ, and we need to recognize in each other this fact. We're apt to think of each other just like club members think of one another.

Not so. We are to see in each other the manifestation of the life that has been put there by the grace of God. My, it would make a difference, you know, in our assemblies.

It would make a difference in the church everywhere if as Christians looked upon each other, they looked upon each other this way and saw in each other the life of Christ and the potential in the world that that involves. So much for his origin and its nature, but it has a job to do, and that's what the book of Acts is full of. What's its function? Well, its function is to bring other men into this knowledge and into this life.

It is to reveal it attractively, and the work of the Son and the work of the Spirit through the book of Acts is to choose people and indicate places and initiate programs that are worthy of the Son of God. That's what he's doing, and he's doing it through us. And it is still episodes and incidents in the life of Jesus, though they may happen in Park of the Palms in 1969.

Those are the principles that are revealed to us in the book of Acts by which God is working in the earth today. There are perils that stand in the way of the accomplishment of what the Lord is trying to do. Trying to do? He's not frustrated.

No, he will accomplish his purpose, but sometimes we get in the way. We can get in the way, and we can lose the blessing of being used in the accomplishment of his purpose. I'm very much afraid of the appeal, though I know it's a legitimate appeal.

I'm afraid of the appeal to go into the mission field on the basis of the need of men. People aren't very pleasant. And when you get out into the world and you get out into the mission field among a people with a foreign language and a different culture and a different way of doing things and a completely different way of life, it's very easy to get sick and tired of it in a hurry.

And if a man goes to the mission field because of the need only, chances are he won't stay there. Some men will. But if we go to the mission field because we have been called into partnership with God and given the privilege of representing the very life of God in a new culture and in new circumstances and among a new people, oh, then it's something else again.

Then it's doing the work for the glory of the Lord Jesus. And that is the motivation. That's the principal motivation, not only in missions but in life.

This is what we're called to do. This is why we are called to live this day, because we have been called into the blessed place of manifesting the life of Jesus Christ and doing his work. You notice I didn't say doing like he would do.

There is a book that was written, and it is a good book. It's called *In His Steps*. It was written by a man named Sheldon, and it's one of the best-selling books in all of English history.

It's a book that was written to talk about a group of people in a little community in the United States that decided they would live their lives just like Jesus would. That is, if he was here, what would Jesus do is the idea. It's a very interesting book.

These people tried to live their lives by doing what Jesus would do. This is not what I'm talking about. It is not what Jesus would do, it is what Jesus is doing, because what you do is what Jesus is doing.

Ever realize that? What we do every day is not what Jesus would do. What you and I do every day is what Jesus is doing. Are you a little bit surprised that he's doing some of the things that we do? This is the life of Christ, and we are called to manifest this life.

Now, what are some of these perils that get in the way of our perfectly manifesting it? Well, one of the perils here is prejudice, and this is shown to us wonderfully in the book of Acts. Oh, how hard it was for these disciples to get over their old prejudices. How hard it was for Peter to bring himself to go into the house of a Gentile.

How difficult it was in the time when Peter and Paul had that argument in Jerusalem. Peter was saying that the gospel was for the Gentiles, but he was acting very much like a Jew because of his prejudices. And prejudice is one of the perils that we're told we have to be careful of.

We have prejudices. We go back to our old ways. In this case, it was back to Judaism, back to the legal way of doing things.

Our prejudices that lead us to think it can only be done this way. This hinders the life of Christ if we think it can only be done one way. But there's something else, and that's our lack of confidence in the power of the Holy Spirit of God.

We think it depends upon our strength and our wisdom and our doing it the right way and all this, and we forget that there is a spirit indwelling us that overrides us, that says things we would not have thought of saying, that does things that would not have occurred to us to do, that takes our personality and uses our personality as though we were nothing more than a wrench, just a tool. This is the life of Christ working in the lives of his people, and we lack confidence in this. We think, oh, well, you can't do it that way.

We'll have to do this, do that, do the other that appeals to our reason and our ideas, and that is according to our strength. We fail in our confidence to rest in the Spirit of God and let him live in our lives. And then there is the peril of passion.

That is to say, we think we must do things in the power of the flesh. If we want to run an evangelistic series of meetings, we seem to think it's necessary to put signs on the outside of the church and make them big. We have to say what a real preacher is.

We have to build him up and say what he's done before and all of this kind of thing. You know, it would be a whole lot better if an evangelist would come into a church or into an assembly and nobody know it, and maybe they put a sign outside that says this guy can't preach for sour apples. And then if he had a successful revival, people would say he's no preacher, but God worked.

But we think we have to do it the other way. We've got to build it up. We've got to make something out of this.

This is a great mistake. It's a great peril in the work of the church. It's a great peril in the manifestation of the life of Christ that we think we have to help.

We have to build it up. And this grows out of our carnality, out of the fact that we are worldly. Oh, we've got other ideas about worldliness.

We've got it all beautifully cataloged, you know. We know what's worldly and what isn't worldly. But this is the heart of the matter.

If we think we have to do things in our own strength, that is real carnality. That's real worldliness. That's thinking like the world thinks, not like Jesus thinks.

And it comes out of a failure on our part to yield to the leading of the Holy Spirit of God, and to put in the place of the leading of the Spirit of God human ideas that God can do very little with. And then there's another thing that's a peril, and that is the pride of our heart, the lure of the world. We have to be like other people.

We have to be big. We have to be like other people. So when folks see us, they'll accept us on the human level.

We need to watch this. We need to watch this. It's real easy to become like the others in the expectation that becoming like the others will strengthen the work.

That was the error in Israel. They wanted to be like the other nations and have a king, and it was their undoing. And when we have to become like other people, watch it.

Watch it. And it's a terrible lure to the people of God. It leads to apostasy.

It leads to the displacement of the work of the Holy Spirit of God and the word of God by men's ideas, by men's word, by man's program. And it is really nothing short of a lack of obedience to the Holy Spirit. Yes, Lord, I'll do this, but wait till I get it all set up to do it so it'll be a success, instead of just going ahead and doing the thing that Jesus asks us to do.

So what does this all add up to? It adds up to the fact that the life of Christ as manifested in his people has got to have as its master passion the glory of God. This was the thing that was important to the Lord Jesus. Was it to the glory of his Father? Do you remember the man born blind? And the interesting question that was raised, how come this man was born blind? Who did sin? And Jesus said, neither this man nor his Father, but that we may work the works of him that sent me.

Glorify God. Don't get into discussions about side issues. Get on with the business of living for God, the Lord Jesus said.

It is the zeal of thine house has eaten me up, he said. This is wonderful language. The zeal of thine house has eaten me up.

It was his consuming passion every day that everything he did be for the glory of God. To honor his Father, to unveil him, to make him known, to establish him in the world, to establish his kingdom. And the principle behind this passion that made it operative was loyalty.

The Lord Jesus said, I have done everything you said to do. This is the thing we are called to, is loyalty to the Lord Jesus. That we absolutely refuse to indulge in anything that would be unseemly for the Lord Jesus to do.

That we refuse to do anything that he would not do. That's the principle. You get away from a lot of problems when you follow that principle.

A lot of arguments. Not whether a thing may be done or whether it's right or whether it's wrong. It's a matter of whether it is consistent with the life of Christ.

And it leads us to the realization of his life and to the prosecution of his work. Loyalty to the Savior. And then we may be sure that moved with a zeal for the glory of God and loyalty to the Lord Jesus, there will be sufficient power to do it.

Because what you're thinking now is this, and it comes into my mind, too. Well, it sounds great. But how is anybody going to do that? How can I live my life for the glory of God every minute of every day? How can I live my life loyal to the Lord Jesus and refusing the things that are inconsistent? You can't do it.

But he says he'll give the power for it if you want it to be. The trouble is, as I said the other day, we don't want to. We've got too many other things we like.

But as this power moves into our lives, it will conform us to the image of his Son. And impossible as that seems, impossible as that seems, even we shall remind people of Jesus, and we shall be the revelation of God on earth. And we'll know what his will is, and he will be glorified.

Isn't that a great thing? These are part of the episodes of the Lord's in the life of Jesus, the things you do today. Shall we pray? Well, Lord, as we speak of these things, our hearts are overwhelmed with the realization that in ourselves we can do absolutely nothing. When we look at these things, we say, who is sufficient for these things? But we thank thee, we thank thee from our hearts that it's not called us to do these things in our own strength.

Thou art not concerned about our sufficiency or our insufficiency, for thou hast promised to move in and to undertake for us in every aspiration of our hearts to glorify the Savior, the name thou delightest to honor. So help us, we pray thee, to appropriate this life and to live it for his glory. Amen.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/10/SID10010.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/robert-constable/episodes-in-life-of-tlord-10-life-of-christ-in-acts/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net