**The Unstoppable Savior**

Acts 1:1-3

**Do you know for sure** that if you died today you would go to heaven and be with God forever? Do you know FOR SURE? Are you absolutely certain that you belong to Jesus - that He has paid for your sins and covered you with His perfection? This is why Luke wrote his gospel account:

“It seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, **that you may have certainty** concerning the things you have been taught.” Luke 1:3-4

Luke did the research, conducted interviews with eyewitnesses, gathered all the written sources (like the gospel of Mark) and started writing things down, reviewing events and rehearsing messages with the apostles. And he clearly states **his purpose** - to give believers ***CERTAINTY*** - confidence that the Gospel is true - that Jesus really is the Savior of the world!

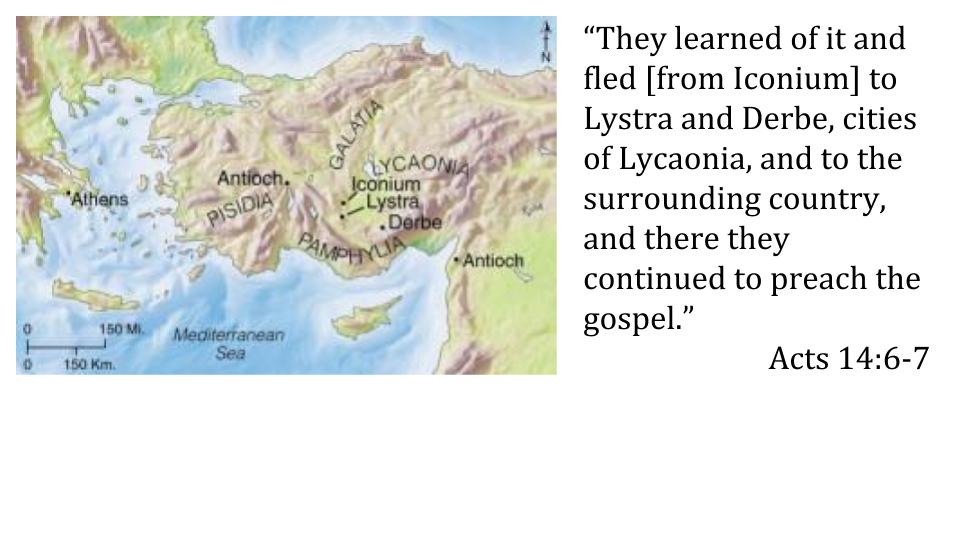
**Luke’s Purpose: to give believers Confidence** **in the Gospel**

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He says, “I have done the research. I’ve talked with the original eyewitnesses. I’ve met extensively with Peter, John, Matthew, Andrew, Philip - all those guys. I’ve read every scrap of parchment. I’ve been through the archives and meeting minutes of dozens of house churches - some of them collected by people like Terri Johnson who kept immaculate records. I’ve been over all of this so that you can have ***confidence, certainty, assurance*** - that what you’ve been told is true.”

Luke’s gospel and Acts are both FILLED with **historical details** that have been analyzed and questioned from every possible angle for the last 200 years. And every generation of Biblical scholars has proven the accuracy of luke.

In the late 1800s, **Sir William Ramsay**, who had been trained in the European mindset to question the authority and reliability of Scripture, set out to investigate the truth for himself about Luke. He later admitted that he had a bias AGAINST Luke, assuming his account would be full of historical errors. For example, look at Acts 14:6.

***Ramsay assumed that Luke was misinformed*** about where Iconium was - what province it was in. Acts 14:6 reads as if Iconium is in Phrygia and Paul left that province to go to neigboring Lycaonia. Ramsay smiled to himself, seeing this as just one more example of why you can’t trust the New Testament with the details. By saying they went from Iconium to Lycaonia it was like saying they went ***from Tampa to Hillsborough County***. If someone new to town said that you would smile and say, “Well, Tampa actually is IN Hillsborough County.” 

As it turned out, scholars in the late 1800s were the ones who had it wrong. ***Luke had it right.*** In the first century, Iconium WAS in the province of Phrygia - the lines had been changed since the days of Cicero 100 years before Luke wrote. So after a detailed analysis of Luke’s writing, including the many historical, verifiable statements in the gospel and in Acts, Ramsay concluded:

“You may press the words of Luke in a degree beyond any other historian’s, and they stand the keenest scrutiny and the hardest treatment… He is a historian of the first rank.” Sir William Ramsay, 1893

This has been the experience of many skeptical scholars from Ramsay in the 19th Century to Josh McDowell and Lee Strobel in the 20th Century. When you actually study the details you don’t find more and more errors but more and more ACCURACIES. This was Luke’s stated purpose:

**Luke’s Purpose: To give believers Confidence in the Gospel**

“It seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, **that you may have certainty** concerning the things you have been taught.” Luke 1:3-4

He wrote to give believers ***certainty*** about the gospel - confidence in the truth they had been taught. So now let’s turn to ***the book of Acts***!

“In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus ***began*** to do and teach.” Acts 1:1

The first book - the gospel of Luke - described all Jesus **BEGAN** to do and teach. So THIS book - Acts - will focus on all that **Jesus** ***continued*** to do and teach. In chapter one the disciples obey His command to wait in Jerusalem and in Acts 2 the Holy Spirit is poured out and the story takes off. This book may be called “The Acts of the Apostles” but it is about **the Acts of Jesus** through His Holy Spirit working in the lives of His people.

And this should greatly encourage us - because ***the Acts of Jesus and His followers continue TODAY!*** The story of this book has not yet been fully told! Jesus continues to do His work through US right now! ***Jesus is unstoppable!*** As His servants, devoted to His mission and relying completely on His Spirit, WE are therefore unstoppable! To put it another way, Jesus is building His church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it.

Today we will just study the first three verses of Acts, which are intended to be a summary and recap of Luke’s Gospel account. Here Luke shows us why Jesus is unstoppable - three certainties about Him.

**Why Jesus is Unstoppable:**

* He is the Ultimate Prophet
* He is the Ultimate Priest
* He is the Ultimate King

These are not theories or wishes; they are not suggestions or ideas - they are CERTAINTIES. These are rock solid TRUTHS that we can hold onto. We can have absolute, unshakeable confidence in Jesus and the good news of salvation in Him.

He is the ultimate prophet. **Jesus came as a teacher** - presenting and explaining the kingdom of God. Jesus no only spoke the truth, He WAS the truth - the full and final revelation of the nature of God.

Jesus also came as **the ultimate priest** - the full and final mediator between God and man. He not only presented an offering to make peace with God, He WAS the offering that made peace with God!

Finally, Jesus is **the ultimate King**. When he preached the kingdom he was saying that He was the KING of the Kingdom - that their long awaited King had arried! And the ultimate proof of His identity as the divine Son of God and the all sovereign Lord of Lords was His resurrection.

First - we know the certainty of this Gospel we have heard, that Jesus is unstoppable - because Jesus was the ultimate prophet.

1. **Jesus was the Ultimate Prophet**

“All that Jesus began to do and **teach** until the day he was taken up, after he had given **commands**… appearing to them during forty days and **speaking** about the kingdom of God.” Acts 1:1-3

Even those who didn’t really know Jesus knew he was a teacher. His public ministry was as a travelling Rabbi. A **rich young Jewish man** approached Jesus to ask for advice for his soul and addressed Jesus as “Good Teacher,” wondering, “What must I do to inherit eternal life.” This young man suspected that just obeying the Jewish law, just avoiding adultery, theft and murder was not going to enough for him to really please God. He felt that in his heart, and he was right.

He was right that Jesus was a good teacher. He was right that his efforts to keep the law were not enough to really please God. And the young man was right that Jesus could tell him what else was needed.

For ***religious people***, like this young man, Jesus taught their need for humble surrender. For ***sinful people*** - like tax collectors and prostitutes, Jesus taught their need to receive mercy and grace.

1. **Jesus was the Ultimate Prophet** - He not only *spoke* the word of God, He *was* the Word of God

“All that Jesus began to do and **teach** until the day he was taken up, after he had given **commands**… appearing to them during forty days and **speaking** about the kingdom of God.” Acts 1:1-3

Jesus taught about the Kingdom - and from his earliest days of ministry people marveled at his authority. There was something about Jesus that made him different from all the other Rabbis in his day. Those Rabbis all pointed to other Rabbis for their authority - “Well, Gamaliel once said,” or “Hillel once said.” Jesus said, “You’ve heard it said, but I say to you.” Jesus exposed the problems with the Rabbinic traditions and pointed the Jews back to the Old Testament itself. He reminded the nation of Israel that the Kingdom was always meant to be SPIRITUAL and INTERNAL - that it wasn’t about being independent from Rome, it was about being FREE FROM SIN!

**Luke 24** presents Jesus as the ultimate prophet when he met those ***two men on the road to Emmaus.*** He very casually asked them what they were talking about and had them explain what they thought had happened in Jerusalem when he died on the cross. They obviously didn’t understand because they said, “We thought this Rabbi, Jesus, was the Messiah, but then he died and now we don’t know what to think.” Jesus said:

1. **Jesus was the Ultimate Prophet -** He not only *spoke* the word of God, He *was* the Word of God

“‘Everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.’ Then **he opened their minds** to understand the Scriptures.” Luke 24:44-45

What Jesus did with the two men, and then the 11 apostles - he OPENED THEIR MINDS - is what makes Him the ultimate prophet. Other prophets spoke the word of the Lord TO people. ***The ultimate prophet implanted the word of God IN people.***

* Jesus not only spoke the Word of God TO people, He opened their minds and hearts to get the Word of God IN people.
* And that was only possible **in HIM** - the King, the Messiah, the Savior.

As the fulfillment of everything written in the Old Testament, Jesus was the full and final revelation of truth. ***Jesus is the KEY that unlocks the meaning of the whole Bible.*** And when Jesus opens your mind, the light of truth suddenly floods in and everything starts to make sense. When you let Jesus in, you let the truth of God in. You see your sin, you see the glory of God, you start to understand the Word of God, you begin to understand the cross - the wonder of it all. You begin to feel the CERTAINTY of the gospel! Jesus was the ultimate prophet - enabling us to hear the Word of God and to know God personally!

The second certainty about Jesus - He was the ultimate PRIEST.

1. **Jesus was the Ultimate Priest**

“He presented himself alive to them ***after his suffering*** by many proofs.” Acts 1:3

Jesus did not just come to teach the truth about God - ***He came to open the way to God.*** He did not just come to speak God’s Word to people who would not listen, He came to change their hearts and open their minds so they could finally listen.What Israel needed - what the whole world needed - was not more information - ***they needed a TRANSFORMATION.*** And for that, they needed a better kind of priest.

For hundreds of years the Jewish priests had offered millions of animal sacrifices as the means of making atonement between sinful people and the holy God of heaven. The priests were mediators, standing between God and the people. The priests were holy, set apart, in their lineage from Levi and Aaron, in their clothing, in their work. Not just anyone could offer sacrifices. And only one High Priest could enter the most holy place once a year.

This whole system was designed to prepare the Jewish people, and the world, to appreciate the ultimate priest and the ultimate sacrifice.

***Lambs and bulls could only provide a temporary covering for sin.*** But Jesus was the Lamb of God - the unblemished Son of God who not only avoided sin his entire life but also fulfilled all righteousness. He never did anything wrong and He also did everything right. He is the only PERFECT person who ever lived - and because of His perfect righteousness, Jesus was both the perfect priest and the perfect sacrifice!

1. **Jesus was the Ultimate Priest** - He served as the perfect mediator and as the perfect sacrifice

“He has no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily, first for his own sins and then for those of the people, since he did this once for all when he offered up himself.” Hebrews 7:27

Jesus was **the ultimate high priest for two reasons**. First, ***He had no sin of His own*** to cover. Every human priest before Jesus had to offer sacrifices and perform cleansing rituals to deal with his own sin. Such a sinful high priest could never really speak to God on behalf of the people or to the people on behalf of God. There was always sin in the way. There were no perfect priests!

But Jesus had no sin in the way. He lived a life of perfect righteousness so he had no need to offer sacrifices for his own sins. And so Jesus was the ideal mediator. But Jesus was also the ultimate high priest because ***He was able to offer the perfect sacrifice*** - HIMSELF.

Through that single offering **all sin was covered**. “Once for all.” That is a beautiful and powerful phrase. One sacrifice to cover ALL sin! All of your sin - past, present and future - was paid for on the cross. “My sin, not in part, but the whole - was nailed to the cross and I bear it no more, praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul!” Listen to the glorious Good News in 2 Corinthians 5.

1. **Jesus was the Ultimate Priest** - He served as the perfect mediator and as the perfect sacrifice

“God made him who had no sin to be sin for us so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.” 2 Cor. 5:21, NIV

Human priests could only provide partial and temporary MEDIATION. ***Jesus was able to accomplish a total and eternal TRANSFORMATION.*** He is the ultimate High Priest! The Old Jewish priests - the best they could do was to provide a very temporary covering over their own sins and the sins of the people. But Jesus changed the HEART. “The heart of the human problem is the problem of the human heart.” As the ultimate mediator, Jesus fixed that problem. He gave us the heart transplant we needed - the internal transformation that set us free from the penalty and power of sin!

Here is **the CERTAINTY of the Gospel** we have heard. Jesus was the ultimate prophet - the full and final revelation of the nature of God. Jesus was the ultimate priest - the perfect mediator and the once for all sacrifice for sin. One more certainty:

1. **Jesus is the Ultimate King**

“He presented himself ***alive*** to them after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days…” Acts 1:3

If you had to give just one reason you are a Christian - one reason you are confident in Jesus as your Savior - this is the place to focus: **because He lives**. Because He rose from the dead. The tomb was empty. The Jews and Romans had every incentive to produce his body - and they could not. And it wasn’t just Peter, James and John who saw Jesus alive - it was also Thomas, Bartholomew, Matthew, Andrew… It was the women on Easter Sunday. It was the two men on the road to Emmaus. It was a group of 500 believers at one time! **For forty days** Jesus appeared and taught, he ate with them and hugged them. They heard his voice, they touched his hands and side.

“By many proofs.” ***This was not a ghost***. It was not a group hallucination. Jesus was alive. It was really him and he was really alive. He was really dead, really buried - and on the third day he really rose from the dead.

***Where does our confidence come from*** regarding what we have been taught? Are you CERTAIN about the gospel we preach? This is the cornerstone. This is the firm foundation for Christianity: Jesus rose. The Jews and Romans killed him but he did not stay dead. He walked out of that grave, just as he said he would.

***Jesus ultimate victory was not to defeat Rome.*** That’s what many of the Jews in His day wanted, including some of his disciples. And the day will come when every knee will bow, every king and nation will acknowledge Christ as the ultimate King. But that was not Jesus’ greatest victory. His greatest victory was over sin and death!

1. **Jesus is the Ultimate King** - He conquered sin and death through His resurrection

“For as by the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners so by the one man’s obedience the many will be made righteous.” Romans 5:19

By being obedient to the point of the cross, Jesus absorbed the full penalty of sin in His own body. Through Adam’s rebellion all people are born with a sinful nature. Through Jesus’ perfection, all who come to Him in faith can be declared righteous! Jesus defeated sin! He set us free from its penalty AND power. And Jesus defeated DEATH - our ultimate enemy.

1. **Jesus is the Ultimate King** - He conquered sin and death through His resurrection

“We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him.” Romans 6:9

When Jesus rose from the dead, that fearsome enemy - Death - was defeated forever. Covered with our sin, Jesus had to succumb to death. But because it was OUR sin, not HIS, Jesus was able to rise from the dead, proving His righteousness, proving His identity, proving His victory - proving He IS the ultimate King! Now Death is an enemy with no sting - the sting of death, his terrible weapon, is SIN. But Jesus paid for sin - so for the Christian, there is no fear in death anymore! Jesus is the ultimate conquering King!

And there was one more special flourish, one more exclamation point to prove that Jesus is the ultimate king - he ascended into heaven. Verse 2.

1. **Jesus is the Ultimate King**

“All that Jesus began to do and teach, until the day ***he was taken up***, after he had given commands…” Acts 1:1-2

We’ll get into this more, but the ascension is important as a bookend to Jesus’ earthly life just as his virgin birth was important to start it. Jesus did not just vanish. He ascended to the throne of God - to take His seat of honor at the right hand of God the Father. Right now Jesus is seated - in the position of ultimate authority, glory and honor - and from that position of intimacy and authority He lives to intercede for us.

Brothers, sisters - ***this is why our mission is unstoppable*** - because ***our Savior is Unstoppable!*** The Jews could not stop him. The Romans could not stop him. Opposition could not stop him or persecution. Beatings and floggings and crucifixion could not stop him. Even death itself could not stop Jesus. Kill him, seal him in a tomb. Set your guards in place. That couldn’t stop Jesus.

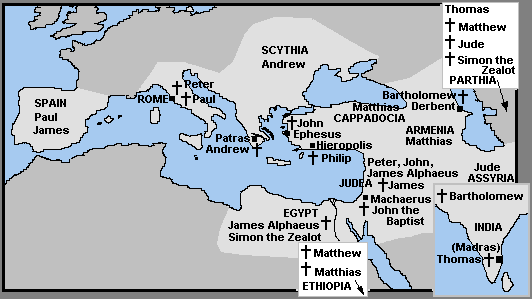
He was like - “Earthquake… what guards?” Zap. He shed his mortal body and was clothed with his immortal, eternal human body - the firstborn from among the dead.

***Do you FEEL the certainty of the things you have been taught?*** Jesus is alive! He is the ultimate prophet, the ultimate priest and the ultimate King. Jesus is unstoppable.

So don’t panic. Don’t be afraid. ***Trust in our unstoppable Lord.*** Rest in His finished work. Glory in His sacrifice. Call on Him as your great high priest. Bring your worries and fears to Him. You don’t have to deal with them on your own. Spend time with the King.

When we do - when we connect with the King of Kings, He refreshes us, refills us, encourages us and emboldens us - and He ALWAYS, always, sends us out with work to do. ***We have a mission to accomplish.*** God’s mission. We have a message to deliver. God’s message - the Good News that Jesus is the ultimate prophet, priest and king! And we do not advance alone. We have God’s own Spirit inside us. We are the church Jesus is building. This is God’s unstoppable plan!

Here is a map showing where the apostles ended up with the gospel, according to tradition. <https://www.ccel.org/bible/phillips/CN092MAPS2.htm>



The book of Acts will highlight **Peter and Paul** - both of whom end up dying in Rome. Paul’s desire was to reach Spain and bring the Gospel there but Acts ends with Paul chained up in Rome. But the Gospel was not chained!

* **Peter and John** were arrested, but that didn’t stop them from preaching the gospel.
* **James and Stephen** were killed, but that didn’t slow down the advance of the gospel.
* In fact, **the persecution** in which Stephen died, over which Saul the Pharisee presided, was the catalyst to scatter believers all over the Roman world - and they brought the Gospel with them!

According to tradition ***Paul was beheaded by Nero and Peter was crucified,*** upside down. Nero is known to history as an absolute lunatic. He burned Christians like torches to light up his carnival festivities. He actually burned down the city of Rome - and then blamed Christians for it!

**Herod Agrippa** was the King who had James the apostle killed. Acts 12 provides a fitting conclusion for us today. One day when the powerful and charismatic ruler gave a speech the people cheered for him and acclaimed him as a god.

“Immediately an angel of the Lord struck him down, because he did not give God the glory, and he was eaten by worms and breathed his last. ***But the word of God increased and multiplied***.” Acts 12:23-24

***Nothing can stop the advance of the Gospel*** - because nothing can stop Jesus. We do not just HOPE this is true or WISH it were true or THINK it is probably true. We KNOW Jesus is the ultimate prophet, priest and King. We have CERTAINTY about the things we have been taught. Jesus is the unstoppable Savior! As we follow Him we are on an unstoppable mission!

Let’s pray.