

Lessons for Living in a Pagan Culture

— Meditations on Acts —

James R. Hughes, 2024 [[Other publications](#)]

Unless otherwise noted, direct Bible quotations are taken from the English Standard Version (ESV).
References from the NIV are from the 1984 edition.

[Note: it is planned that this document will be updated weekly (usually on Friday) with an additional entry as it is included in our congregational bulletin.]

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1. Acts – An Historical Account

(Acts 1.1-2)

During the ‘Enlightenment’, Scientific Revolution, and Industrial Revolution it became fashionable to question the accuracy of the Bible’s historical sections. This included attacks on Luke’s account in his Gospel and in Acts. Some claimed that Luke did not identify historical figures correctly or that he used incorrect terminology. In the late 19th century and during the 20th century archeological discoveries (e.g., stones found with engraved titles of Roman government officials) vindicated Luke’s account. Today, the claim that Luke did not present an accurate historical account is unsupportable—except that people continue to question his reports of the miracles performed by Jesus and his apostles.

We are not told much about Luke in the Bible. We know that he was a friend of Paul (Col 4.14) and that he travelled with Paul during two of his missionary journeys. But we don’t know where he was born or grew up. Eusebius (c. 260-c. 340) mentions Antioch. Others suggest Phillipi, since he may have been known there and was not jailed with Paul and Silas (Acts 16.16, 19). Also, we don’t know whether he was a Jew by birth or a Gentile. Internal evidence in his Gospel and in Acts, shows that he had an extensive knowledge of practices in Judaism. This may indicate that he was a Jew. However, it also may indicate that, as a converted Gentile, he had a keen interest in the OT and learned quickly. That he was intelligent is evidenced by the fact that he was a physician (Col 4.14) and by his sophisticated use of the Greek language. His Greek vocabulary is extensive, rivalling that of secular writers of his day, and larger than that of any other NT writers (about 30% of the unique words in the NT occur in Luke’s two books). At times, he uses rarer linguistic forms (e.g., optative mood, verbal adjectives), indicating advanced skills. He also exhibits knowledge of classical writings in grammatical constructs, such as figures of speech, and through his use of literary techniques, such as the inclusion of a prologue. Regardless of his native ethnicity, he had the same vision Paul had—to bring the Gospel to the Gentile world.

Luke had an ability to do historical research (Lk 1.1-3) and to present an historical account in an orderly, detailed, and interesting manner. That he was a good storyteller is evidenced by his use of suspense, irony, and humour. We find examples of humour in the account of the servant girl Rhoda leaving Peter standing at the gate of the domestic compound (Acts 12.13-14) and of Eutychus falling asleep and out of a window as Paul droned on (Acts 20.9). His attention to detail is exhibited by his use of specific correct titles for Roman and Greek officials and his exact descriptions of nautical procedures during a storm (Acts 27.13-38). The inclusion of this detail contributes to the historical accuracy of the accounts and heightens the suspense of the history he is relating.

Luke was a participant with Paul in two of his missionary journeys and was with him during his imprisonments in Caesarea and in Rome (Acts 28.14-16; Phm 24; 2 Tim 4.11). It was likely that during the first two years of Paul’s imprisonment in Rome (Acts 28.30) Luke wrote Acts from information he had gathered during his travels with Paul. During his time in Palestine (Acts 21.3-27.1), he would have had an opportunity to meet with Jesus’ believing half-siblings (including James and Jude) and his mother Mary. In the early chapters of his Gospel, Luke records material about Jesus’ early life which neither Matthew nor Mark report. He would also have been able to obtain firsthand accounts of the ministry of Jesus from the apostles (Acts 21.18) and then information about the advancement of the early church from Philip (Acts 21.8), and probably from Cornelius (Acts 10.1-48; Acts 21.8) and Agabus from Antioch (Acts 11.28) who were in Caesarea (Acts 21.10) when Luke was there. He would have also learned from Paul about his conversion and early ministry before he joined Paul in Troas (Acts 16.11). From that point, much of what Luke reports in Acts would have been from his own eyewitness recollection. The abrupt ending of Acts, with Paul waiting in prison for his trial before Caesar, appears to indicate that Luke completed Acts in, or about, 64 AD, and then dispatched it to his friend Theophilus.

We defend the authority of the NT books by referring to them as having *apostolic* authority. But only three

of the original twelve disciples, who were also apostles (Matthew, John, and Peter), authored books of the NT. Two of the books (James and Jude) were written by Jesus' half-brothers who did not believe that Jesus is the Messiah before his resurrection (Mk 3.21; Jn 7.5). However, they later became defenders of the truth and were viewed as equivalent to apostles. It is generally believed that Mark recorded what he heard from Peter and thus under Peter's apostolic authority. The rest of the NT, other than Luke's books, was written by Paul, who was a later appointed true apostle of Jesus (2 Cor 11.1-33). So, Luke, who was neither an eyewitness of Jesus' earthly ministry nor an apostle, wrote his two books (which make up over 25% of the NT) under Paul's apostolic authority. So, we can be sure that Acts was written under the direction of the Holy Spirit (2 Pt 1.21) and that it is God's word for our generation.

Luke was blessed by God with skills required to serve as an accurate historian. We should be thankful that Luke was careful to report accurately events from what he and other eyewitnesses observed during the early life of Jesus, the three years of Jesus' earthly ministry (what he did and taught), and the first thirty years of the expansion of the NT Church. Thus, as we begin our studies in Acts, we can be confident that we have before us an accurate historical account of selected events in the life of the early NT Church. Let us pause and pray that we will learn from this book about how the Church should live in a pagan culture, twenty centuries after it was founded.

Lessons for Living in a Pagan Culture (by Jim Hughes)

2. Acts – A History to Encourage Gentiles

(Acts 1.1-2)

Luke directed and dedicated his two books (his Gospel and Acts) to a person named Theophilus. It seems that this person was more than a mere associate of Luke. He may have been a personal friend, since Luke took considerable effort (Lk 1.3) to provide him with confirming information about the “certainty concerning the things you have been taught” (Lk 1.4). Speculation has been offered about who Theophilus was. It appears that he was a believer, or at least one having knowledge about Christ and the Gospel, before Luke authored his books (Lk 1.4). It has been suggested that the etymology of his name (‘lover of God’) indicates that Luke used a pseudonym, like Gentile seekers associated with synagogues were called ‘God-fearers’ (Acts 10.2), because they had not completed the steps of a proselyte converting to Judaism—which for a male would have had to include circumcision. Because Luke refers to Theophilus with the honorific, ‘most excellent’, he was probably an official of rank in the Roman government (compare, Acts 24.2; Acts 26.25), even possibly one among Caesar’s household (Phil 4.22).

An interesting suggestion is that Luke used a pseudonym to avoid calling attention to a high-ranking Roman official. Thus, it has been proposed, that he was Flavius Clemens, the cousin of Domitian who later became emperor. Clemens served as consul in 95 AD during Domitian’s emperorship. Clemens was married to Vespasian’s daughter. He was executed shortly after the conclusion of his consulship, in April 95 AD, on the charge of atheism. A Roman historian (Cassius Dio) who lived in the next century, indicated that the charge was because Clemens had gone over to ‘Jewish opinions’—in the early years of the NT Church, Christianity was viewed as sect of Judaism. He may have been a secret Christian (like Nicodemus was for a time) and an early Christian martyr. However, some Jewish historians claim that Clemens was a convert to Judaism.

Despite the uncertainty about Theophilus’ identity, it appears that Luke wrote his two books with the express purpose of addressing a Christian Roman patron. It may be that Luke intended for Theophilus to function as a sponsor who could finance the high cost associated with publishing books in those days and advance the dissemination of his books to a wider audience. If this is the case, then it would provide support for the belief that Luke’s Gospel and Acts are directed primarily to a Gentile audience with the goal of introducing them to a history of Jesus and of the early expansion of Christianity around the wider Mediterranean world (“to the end of the earth”, Acts 1.8).

We cannot establish definitively if Luke authored his books (or at least, Acts) primarily for a Gentile audience. Evidence supporting the view that he did, is provided by the way he defines and describes Jewish customs and practices (Lk 1.9; Lk 2.27, 42; Acts 21.21-26, 29). He also traces Jesus’ genealogy (Lk 3.23-38) to Adam, the father of all mankind, not just to David or Abraham (Mt 1.1). This would have been used as part of the polemic that God is the creator of (Acts 17.26, 29), and sovereign over (Acts 17.13-31), all mankind. In addition, much of Acts focuses on the evangelistic efforts of Paul, who stated that he was the apostle to the Gentiles (Gal 2.8-9; Eph 3.8; 1 Tim 2.7).

Once the account of the preaching of the Gospel expands beyond Judea, Acts presents a picture of general animosity to the Gospel and rejection of it by the Jews (e.g., Acts 13.45, 50; Acts 14.2; Acts 17.5; Acts 18.6). In contrast, Acts highlights instances of the reception of the Gospel by Gentiles—the Ethiopian (Acts 8.26-39); Cornelius, his family, and friends (Acts 10.33); preaching to Gentile Hellenists in Antioch who became believers (Acts 11.20-21) and the disciples there were the first to be called ‘Christians’ (Acts 11.26); and the reception of the Gospel by some of the polytheistic Athenians (Acts 17.34). Also, the council held in Jerusalem indicates that the Church leaders were concerned about making it easier for Gentiles to be

incorporated into the Church without imposition of the burdens of the ceremonial aspects of the law (Acts 15.1-35).

Luke's presentation of the impact of the Gospel on the Mediterranean world is balanced. He indicts unbelieving Jews who persecuted Paul and his ministry partners, pagans such as the riotous crowd at Ephesus (Acts 19.21-41), and Roman officials who persecuted the evangelists (Acts 14.5; Acts 16.19-24). But he also indicates that Jews and Gentiles were being converted (Acts 14.1; Acts 16.14; Acts 17.34). The Gospel is inclusive since anyone can be an heir of the promise made to Abraham, as Paul states (Gal 3.28-29).

We cannot be certain that Luke targeted Acts to a Gentile audience, such as Christians in Rome. But we can be certain that he intended to demonstrate the triumph of the Gospel. Even when faced with what might appear to have been unmovable obstacles, the Gospel advanced among the Gentiles as the chosen apostles carried its message from Jerusalem and Judea, to Samaria, and beyond (Acts 1.8). It progressed from its first reception in Antioch, a leading Gentile city in the eastern portion of the Empire, to Rome, the leading city of the western portion of the Empire. Acts ends with Paul spending two whole years "proclaiming the Kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance" (Acts 28.30-31). The readers of this series of Lessons for Living in a Pagan Culture will be mostly of a Gentile background. We are the beneficiaries of the triumphant work of the Holy Spirit as he drove forward the early advance of the Gospel into Asia (western Turkey) and Eastern Europe. Praise God that the Gospel is still going forward to the end of the earth!

Lessons for Living in a Pagan Culture (by Jim Hughes)

3. 'Acts of the Apostles'

(Acts 1.2-4, 13)

During the forty days (Acts 1.3) after his resurrection in which Jesus remained on the earth, “he presented himself alive” to the disciples as he met with them multiple times. The disciples to whom he appeared included more than just the remaining eleven apostles, after Judas’ betrayal and suicide (Acts 1.21-22). However, Luke specifically identifies the disciples whom Jesus had chosen and appointed as apostles (Mk 3.14-19). During those forty days, Jesus expanded on the training he had given to the disciples during his three years of ministry. The purpose of this additional instruction was to complete their training so that they would understand how he was the fulfillment of the OT Scriptures (Lk 24.27, 44-45). They needed to understand how his sufferings, death, and resurrection were the purpose for his coming into the world (Lk 24.46) so that he could bring repentance and forgiveness of sins to the nations (Lk 24.47). His purpose was to establish a world-wide everlasting spiritual kingdom (Dan 2.44-45; Dan 4.3), not to set up a temporal Jewish kingdom in a small territory at the edge of the Roman Empire, as they thought (Acts 1.6).

Luke reports that during those forty days of his post-resurrection appearances Jesus also gave commands to the apostles (Acts 1.2). In his opening words in Acts, Luke does not reiterate what those commands were. However, we can identify the core message of the commands from the conclusion of Luke’s Gospel and the parallel sections of the other three Gospels. He told the disciples to “Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation.” (Mk 16.15). They were to make disciples of the nations, baptizing them in the names of the Trinity, and teaching them to keep Jesus’ commands (Mt 28.19-20). They were being sent out to the entire world, as Jesus was sent into the world (Jn 20.21), to be witnesses to all that Jesus had done and taught (Lk 24.48). Luke provides a summary of these commands, which is that the apostles were to carry the message of the Gospel “to the end of the earth” (Acts 1.8). Later, Peter, the leader of the Church in Jerusalem at that time, stated that they were to “preach to the people and to testify that [Jesus] is the one appointed by God to be judge of the living and the dead” (Acts 10.42).

Another command which the apostles were given by Jesus before he departed for heaven, was that they were to return to, and remain in, Jerusalem until they had been clothed (anointed) with power from on high (Lk 24.49; Acts 1.4-5). Their receipt of this power would occur fifty days after Jesus’ resurrection and ten days after his ascension. We see the fulfillment of this promise in Acts 2.2-4. One of the reasons they were to return to Jerusalem was so that a replacement apostle for Judas could be identified—which we read about later Acts chapter 1. Another reason was so that the Gospel would be presented first to the citizens of Jerusalem (Acts 1.8) and the NT Church could be established first among believing Jews (Acts 2.47), God’s ancient covenant people. Then, the Church would be expanded to include Gentiles, to fulfill the promise that God would call the Gentiles into his covenant community (Gen 12.3; Gen 18.18; Gen 22.18; Ps 22.27-28; Is 49.6; Is 66.18-19; Lk 2.30-32).

Acts has traditionally been referred to as the ‘Acts of the Apostles’. Ancient manuscripts of Acts usually include the title (ΠΡΑΞΕΙΣ ΑΠΟΣΤΟΛΩΝ, ‘acts of apostles’) before the hand-written text of the narrative. An example, of this practice is seen in the single-page Greek majuscule (uppercase) [manuscript](#) of a portion of Acts (Acts 6.1-8) contained in the library collection in a university in the Netherlands. Likewise, printed editions of the Greek NT, from which we obtain our translated English versions, usually include the title. The first recorded reference to the book by this title is attributed to Irenaeus (c. 120–c. 200 AD) who was bishop of Lugdunum (Lyon) in Gaul, which included the territories of modern France and Belgium.

However, in Acts, we find that details of the acts of only two of the original twelve apostles are recorded. Peter is prominent in the first twelve chapters. John is also mentioned as he accompanied Peter (e.g., into

the temple precincts, Acts 3.1). Other than their names being listed (Acts 1.13), there are only brief references to the other individual original apostles (e.g., Acts 12.2). There are also collective references to them (e.g., Acts 15.2). But after chapter 15, which recounts the council in Jerusalem, and the delivery of the council's decision (Acts 16.4), the original apostles are no longer mentioned.

Saul appears on the scene in Acts 7.58 as an antagonist to Christ and persecutor of Christians. From chapter 13 onward, the account in Acts focuses primarily on the ministry of Saul, as Paul—Acts 13.9 records his two names. As we know from elsewhere (primarily in 1 Corinthians and 2 Corinthians) Paul defends his appointment to the apostolic office by a special miraculous appearance of Jesus (Acts 9.1-19) and a personal call from Jesus (Gal 1.15-16).

Acts does recount the acts of apostles—but only of three named ones. We can derive two lessons from this. First, the work of advancing of the Kingdom of Christ has often been undertaken by men and women whose names are lost in the shadows of history and are known only to God. Being prominent (a Peter or a Paul) in the work of the Church should not be our goal. Our goal should be to serve our Lord faithfully. Second, as some have suggested, Acts should probably be called 'The Acts of the *Holy Spirit*'. It was the Holy Spirit, working behind his human instruments, who carried the Gospel message from Jerusalem and opened Eastern Europe (Acts 16.9-10) and the world to the Gospel.

Lessons for Living in a Pagan Culture (by Jim Hughes)

4. The Holy Spirit (Acts 1.2)

We concluded the previous meditation noting that it was the Holy Spirit, working behind his human instruments, who carried the Gospel message from Jerusalem to the world. The work of the Holy Spirit is mentioned at least forty times in Acts. Actions attributed directly to him include:

- Guiding the authors of the OT (Acts 1.16; Acts 4.25; Acts 28.25).
- Communicating directly to believers (Acts 1.2; Acts 8.29; Acts 10.19; Acts 11.12, 28; Acts 15.28; Acts 20.23; Acts 21.4, 11).
- Endowing (filling, baptizing) believers with gifts and power (Acts 1.5, 8; Acts 2.4, 33, 38; Acts 4.8, 31; Acts 5.32; Acts 6.3, 5, 10; Acts 8.15, 17-19; Acts 9.17; Acts 10.44-45, 47; Acts 11.15-16, 24; Acts 13.9, 52; Acts 15.8; Acts 19.2, 6).
- Comforting believers (Acts 9.31).
- Anointing Jesus (Acts 10.38).
- Setting individuals apart for service (Acts 13.2, 4; Acts 20.28).
- Performing miracles (Acts 8.39).
- Directing the work of evangelism (Acts 16.6-7; Acts 19.21; Acts 20.22).

In addition, Luke reports instances of people sinning against the Holy Spirit (Acts 5.3, 9; Acts 7.51, 55).

We cannot develop a full doctrine of the Holy Spirit from Acts alone. But we can identify some dimensions of his person and character. The Holy Spirit:

- Is a distinct volitional person (Acts 15.28; Acts 16.7), not a force, or an emanation or mode of God.
- Communicates with humans through direct messages (Acts 8.29) and indirect methods such as visions (Acts 10.19).
- Has divine knowledge and wisdom which he imparts to humans (Acts 1.16).
- Can be sinned against (Acts 5.3), indicating that he is God since sin is breaking God's law (Ps 51.4).
- Has sovereign rights over the lives of human beings (Acts 5.9).
- Has the power of God to act directly in the world and not just through second causes (Acts 5.3, 5; Acts 8.39).
- Is commissioned and sent by God the Father (Acts 2.33) and by Jesus, the Son of God (Acts 1.2; Acts 16.7).
- Works in and through Jesus (Acts 2.38; Acts 10.38).

The final two items in the list above, indicate that the Holy Spirit represents Jesus to mankind, and Jesus represents the Holy Spirit. This bidirectional relationship between Jesus and the Holy Spirit demonstrates that there is total agreement between these two persons of the Trinity. However, this agreement extends to the Father as well. Within the Godhead, there is a tripartite relationship. We do not have a common English word to describe this complex relationship. During the early Middle Ages, Greek theologians used a term (*perichoresis*) to describe how the three members of the Trinity work lovingly together with a common existence, will, and purpose. Western theologians coined a Latin word (*circumincession*) to describe this relationship. Both terms can be understood as working with, in, among, and around one another.

In OT times, the Holy Spirit came upon believers and unbelievers (e.g., Num 24.2; Judges 3.10; Judges 11.29; 1 Sam 10.6; 2 Chron 20.14) so that they were empowered to prophesy or to serve God in another extraordinary way. During Jesus' ministry only a few people are described as having the Holy Spirit upon them. Jesus himself was identified as being blessed by the Father through the presence of the Holy Spirit (Lk 3.22). This was a fulfillment of OT prophecies which indicated that he is the Messiah (Is 11.2; Is 61.1-

2; Mt 12.18; Lk 4.18). Mary (Lk 1.35) and Simeon (Lk 2.25) appear to be the only others blessed in this manner before Pentecost. During the earthly ministry of Jesus, none of the disciples are described as having the Holy Spirit upon them.

Jesus tells the disciples that they will receive power as the Holy Spirit comes upon them (Acts 1.8). From that point, there are numerous instances of the disciples being endowed with the presence of the Holy Spirit. Some of these instances are associated with extraordinary actions on the part of the recipients such as when the apostles miraculously spoke in foreign languages (e.g., Acts 2.4). However, the gift of the Holy Spirit coming upon a person appears to take on a new dimension within the NT Church context. We will explore this idea later in this series of meditations when we consider Acts 1.4-5.

OT believers in the coming Messiah were indwelt by the Holy Spirit (Ps 51.11; Ps 143.10), just like post-resurrection believers are. There is no possibility of salvation without the Holy Spirit working in the heart of a person. However, there appears to be a fuller or heightened aspect to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon believers since Pentecost (Joel 2.28; Acts 2.16-21), even when they are not apostles performing miracles. The giving of the Holy Spirit is God giving himself to believers. In the NT Church, all believers have a fuller understanding of God's person and attributes (e.g., the Trinity) and the mystery of salvation that was veiled in OT times (Rom 16.25)—how God worked salvation through the incarnation and the death and resurrection of Jesus, and how he has called Gentiles into the covenant community. Also, NT believers are empowered to live in obedience to God's law (Jer 31.33) and to be witnesses to the Gospel in ways that OT believers were not.

5. Resurrected Presence

(Acts 1.3)

Acts 1.3 provides the only record of the time that passed between the resurrection and the ascension of Jesus. Luke tells us that it was forty days. No reason is given for why it was *forty* days. But it is a period that may have an association with the duration of Jesus' temptation (Lk 4.2) and Elijah's time on Mount Horeb (1 Ki 19.8). During these forty days, Jesus "presented himself alive" to the disciples as he met with them multiple times. He had two objectives: 1) To demonstrate the reality of the resurrection. 2) To complete their training so that they could carry the message about the Kingdom of God to the world.

The multiple appearances of the risen Lord had a purpose. If he had appeared to only a few disciples or only once to the original disciples, questions could have been raised about the truthfulness of the report and whether they might have succumbed to a personal or mass delusion. With multiple appearances, there was an opportunity for doubters to be convinced that Jesus really had been raised from the dead, as with his demonstration to Thomas (Jn 20.24-28).

The inhabitants of the first-century Greco-Roman world clung to superstitions about gods performing supernatural acts. Nevertheless, when presented with an account of a true miracle—the resurrection of Jesus who had really been dead—they were cynically sceptical (Acts 17.32; Acts 26.23-24) just like many people of our day reject the miracles in the Bible. Therefore, it was necessary that Jesus' resurrection be confirmed with multiple convincing proofs given to numerous dependable witnesses. Luke does not inform us in Acts what those proofs were. We can surmise that it included Jesus showing witnesses the remnants of the wounds on his body resulting from the crucifixion (Jn 20.27) and performing miracles (Jn 21.6). He likely also presented arguments for why a resurrection is not an impossibility for God (Gen 11.6; Lk 1.37; Acts 26.8; Heb 11.19) and why it was necessary for him to rise from the dead in order to fulfill OT prophecy and to conquer death (Lk 24.25-27).

We are not informed of the total number of times that Jesus appeared to people after his resurrection. However, he appeared to his disciples collectively at least three times (Jn 21.14) and he had appeared to

Peter individually (Lk 24.34) and later to two of the disciples on the road to Emmaus (Lk 24.13-32). Paul informs us that Jesus also appeared to more than five hundred people at one time (1 Cor 15.6), many of whom were still alive when he wrote about this appearance. Neither Paul nor Luke informs us of when Jesus appeared to this large crowd. It could have been in Jerusalem, to a crowd that gathered at the time Jesus commissioned the apostles (Mt 28.16-18) or at his ascension (Acts 1.6-9).

Paul also reports of a private appearance to James (1 Cor 15.7). This James was likely not one of the original disciples but probably a half-brother of Jesus. He did not initially believe that Jesus is the Messiah (Mk 3.21; Jn 7.5), but later believed (Acts 1.14). It may have been this special appearance of Jesus to James that convinced James that he is the Messiah. If so, we can imagine the meeting as Jesus in his glorified body appeared to James and encouraged him to believe. This is a clear indication of the love Jesus had for his own human family. It is reported by early Church historians that James later became the bishop (elder/pastor) of the Jerusalem church.

It is interesting that neither Luke (in his Gospel or in Acts) or Paul (in 1 Corinthians) reported the appearances to Mary Magdalene (Jn 20.14-18) and the collected women (Mt 28.9-10). These appearances are likely not mentioned by them because the witness of women in the ancient world had little legal standing. By excluding these instances, they were not supporting the prevalent view that a woman's testimony was worthless. But referring to the appearances of Jesus to eyewitnesses whom Gentile unbelievers could not respect was not going to decrease the scepticism of the doubters in Corinth or Rome.

It was essential that the resurrection be proved infallibly to the apostles so that they could serve as dependable witnesses to the fact (Acts 1.8, 22; Acts 2.32; Acts 3.15; Acts 5.32; Acts 10.39-41; Acts 13.31). During the decade or two following the ascension of Jesus, none of the NT books existed. Therefore, there was not yet a written record about the life of Jesus, his death, and his resurrection. This would only become available after the Gospels were written. Thus, the apostles were able to speak with confidence to the early converts in the congregations which they were founding, because they had personally been with Jesus through his ministry on earth and had seen the risen Lord Jesus.

Jesus not only gave the apostles proof of his resurrection but continued to teach them about the Kingdom of God. We are not told what additional he taught them that he had not already taught them during the three years of his ministry. However, we can surmise that additional instruction helped them understand how his death and resurrection was the fulfillment of the OT Scriptures (Lk 24.27, 44-46) so that he could bring repentance and forgiveness of sins to the nations (Lk 24.47). He likely also informed them that his purpose was to establish a world-wide everlasting spiritual kingdom (Dan 2.44-45; Dan 4.3), not to set up a temporal Jewish kingdom in a small territory at the edge of the Roman Empire, as they thought (Acts 1.6). Jesus completed his ministry on earth during those forty days. But his work did not end. It would be advanced as the apostles began the task of carrying the message of the Kingdom of God to the world.