



BIBLICAL TRAINING CENTER

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Book of Acts - (Part 1)

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- 1. Authorship - Who wrote the Book of Acts?**
- 2. Date - When was it written?**
- 3. Purpose - Why was it written?**
- 4. Distinctives - What is it about?**

1. Authorship

The author of the Book of Acts is Luke, a companion of the apostle Paul and a **physician** by profession (Col 4:14)

[Col 4:14 NKJV] 14 Luke the beloved physician and Demas greet you.

Internal evidence, i.e., that recorded within the Book of Acts, is strong:

The author of the Book of Acts asserted his authorship of the Gospel of Luke (Luke 1:3; Acts 1:1).

[Luk 1:3 NKJV] 3 it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write to you an orderly account, most excellent Theophilus,

[Act 1:1 NKJV] 1 The former account I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach,

The “we” passages in Acts point to the presence of the author during Paul’s **missionary** activity (cf. 16:10-40; 20:5–28:31)

It must have been Luke, by the process of elimination:

Since the author writes of Paul's many companions in the third person, they cannot have written the Book of Acts (see "we" passages).

not Timothy (16:1)

not Silas (16:25)

not Titus (wasnt on Paul's 3rd journey)

not many others (20:4) Sopater, Aristarchus, Secundus, Gaius, Tychicus and Trophimus

External evidence, i.e., outside of Acts, is also strong:

Early Church Fathers attribute the Book of Acts to Luke, including Clement of Rome, Ignatius, Polycarp, Irenaeus, Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria and Origen.

Even the Gnostic heretic Marcion accepted Luke as the author of Acts.

Overwhelming **archaeological** confirmation that Acts written by a knowledgeable companion of Paul and a contemporary of the events, as Luke was (see *Hemer- Book of Acts in Hellenistic Setting*)

Who was Luke?

Many believe Luke was a **Gentile** because he was not listed with those "of the circumcision" (Col 4:11)

[Col 4:11, 14 NKJV] 11 ...These [are my] only fellow workers for the kingdom of God who are of the circumcision; they have proved to be a comfort to me. ...

Luke may have been a native of Antioch of Syria given the number of times he refers to it in Acts (8X)

Luke lived in **Phillipi** for a while (16:11-17, 40; 20:5) and was with Paul when Colossians and Philemon were written (Col 4:14; Philem 24)

Luke was faithful to Paul to the end (2 Tim 4:11)

[2Ti 4:11 NIV] 11 Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, because he is helpful to me in my ministry.

2. Date

Temple still standing and Paul alive in a Roman prison when Acts ends, so date is before 70AD when Jerusalem fell and before 68AD when Paul was martyred.

[2Ti 4:6 NIV] 6 For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time for my departure is near.

Further, no indication Jewish War had begun (66AD)

Nor had Nero's **persecutions** commenced (64AD)

James, the brother of Jesus is still alive and he died, according to Josephus, in 62AD.

Luke likely wrote acts while Paul was in prison in Rome. Paul came to Rome in 60AD and was there for two years (28:30).

This makes 60-61AD as the likely date of Luke's authorship of Acts

3. Theme and Purpose

First, some **historical background**:

During Christ's arrest and crucifixion His disciples had **failed miserably**. They deserted the Lord and demonstrated a spirit of fear and unbelief (John 20:19).

Christ, however, reinstated Peter (John 21:15-20) and re-commissioned His disciples to spread the message of redemption throughout all the nations of earth (Matt 28:19-20; Luke 24:46-49).

During His ministry Christ had promised that He would send the Holy Spirit to enable them for this task (Luke 24:49; Acts 14-5).

The Book of Acts covers about **30 years**. From Ascension to imprisonment of Paul in Rome.

Why was it written?

Spiritually, it was written to confirm the faith of Theophilus

Legally, it explained Paul's journeys in the right light, showing that he wasn't a **traitor** to Rome, vindicating of the charges against him

Polemically, it showed that Paul was not apostate from Judaism or the law

Historically, it provided an accurate record of early Christianity, and an invaluable intersection with the non-Christian history of the period, revealing ten major Roman and Jewish dates with numerous Roman rulers

Ecclesiastically, it showed the **unity** of the Christian movement

Missiologically, it provided the Christian reader with an accurate account of the spread of early Christianity

Apologetically, it showed how God **authenticated** early Christianity by miracles through the apostles

What is the **theme of Acts**?

To show the **propagation** of the gospel of Christ (Gospel goes from the Jews, to the Samaritans and to the Gentiles)

Luke shows that God sovereignly [by the Holy Spirit] directed the dissemination of the gospel message beginning in Jerusalem with the Jews and moving outwards towards Rome, the center of the Gentile world, for the purpose of building His church.

In spite of intense opposition the Gospel message continually **advanced**.

Most scholars say main purpose found in Acts 1:8:

"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

Distinctives of Acts - What is it about?

Acts: The Link between the Gospels and the Letters

Key Words and Phrases:

apostle (30x), baptize, baptism (27x), believe (38x), church (24x), Holy Spirit (42x), pray, prayer (32x), raise, stand up (44x), to witness (27x), the Lord's word (20x)

Some common messages between Luke and Acts:

- preaching **repentance** (Luke 24:47; Acts 1:8)
- being witnesses (Luke 24:48; Acts 1:8)
- the promise of the Father (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4, 2:1-4)

A comparison of the Gospels and Acts

Gospels

What Jesus **began** to do and teach

Foundations of the Church
(Matt 16:18, Eph 2:19-22)

Acts

What Jesus **continued** to do and teach

Origin and growth of the church
(Acts 2; 1 Cor 12:13)

1. The Book of Acts provides an important historical link to the Gospels and important historical background to the letters of the NT.

2. The Book of Acts traces the transition of God's working in Israel to His **establishment** of a worldwide church.

3. This book is often called the "Acts of the Apostles" but the apostles as a group only appear in the first chapter. Only the ministries of Peter to the Jews and Paul to the Gentiles are represented. The ministries of the other apostles were not chronicled.

4. The work of the Holy Spirit was emphasized by Luke:

- The Holy Spirit gave birth to the church (1:8; 2:1-8)
- He gave boldness to the believers (4:8, 31)
- He performed miracles (13:9-11)

- He convinced Peter that the Gentiles had access to God (10:19, 44-45)
- He led the apostles and the elders in their decisions (10:19, 44-45)
- He directed the life of the church and called the missionaries (5:3; 13:2)

5. The Book of Acts provides a **glimpse** into the life of the early church including its conflicts, persecutions, frustrations, theological problems, and the hope of the early believers.

6. The book shows that wherever the Gospel was powerfully preached, **opposition** arose. But in spite of strong resistance, the Gospel could not be stopped and many came to faith in Christ.

Key theme: There's strong opposition where the gospel goes; but opposition never succeeds; the Gospel continues to go forward.

7. Luke recorded three accounts of Paul's conversion (chapters 9; 22; 26)

8. This book provides a challenge to believers to carry out the **great commission**, and provides encouragement for believers undergoing persecution.

9. Luke gave **several progress reports** on the spread of the gospel (2:47; 5:14; 6:7; 9:31; 12:24; 16:5; 19:20; 28:31).

- Acts 2:47 (NKJV)

47 praising God and having favor with all the people. And **the Lord added** to the church daily those who were being saved.

- Acts 5:14 (NKJV)

14 And believers were **increasingly added** to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women,

- Acts 6:7 (NKJV)

7 Then the word of God spread, and the number of the **disciples multiplied greatly** in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith.

- Acts 9:31 (NKJV)

31 Then the churches throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria **had peace and were edified**. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, they were multiplied.

- Acts 12:24 (NKJV)
24 But the **word of God grew** and multiplied.

- Acts 16:5 (NKJV)
5 So the churches were **strengthened in the faith**, and increased in number daily.

- Acts 19:20 (NKJV)
20 So the word of the **Lord grew mightily** and prevailed.

- Acts 28:31 (NKJV)
31 preaching the kingdom of God and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no one forbidding him.

10. The author apparently saw **parallels** between the ministries of Peter and Paul.

<u>Miracles of Peter</u>	<u>Miracles of Paul</u>
Heals a man lame from birth (3:1-11)	Heals a man lame from birth (14:8-18)
Exorcisms (5:16)	Exorcism (16:18)
Peter's shadow heals (5:15-16)	Handkerchiefs and aprons heal (19:11-12)
His success caused jealousy (5:17)	His success caused jealousy (13:45)
He was freed from prison (5:19-21; 12:1-11)	He was freed from prison (16:19-30)
Simon the magician (8:9-24)	Bar-Jesus the magician (13:6-11)
Raising of Dorcas (9:40)	A young man raised (20:11)

A fulfillment of John 14:12: “Greater works than these he will do...”
The works of the apostles, while not greater in kind, were certainly greater in extent since they carried the Gospel to the ends of the earth.

A fulfillment of Matthew 16:18: “I will build My Church and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it.”

Israel **rejected** their Messiah, but God had plans to set them aside “until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in (Rom 11:25) at which time all Israel will be saved (v. 26) when the “**natural branches** will be grafted into their own olive tree” (v. 24)

Titles given to Acts

Acts has been called the Gospel of the Holy Spirit, the book of Act(ion), the Gospel of the Resurrection, the Fifth Gospel, and the Acts of the Holy Spirit.

A Book with No Conclusion

In one non-canonical sense the Book of Acts **never ends**; the work of the church continues until Jesus comes.

Prominence of Persons

God's plan features persons, **110** of which are named in Acts.

Names for Christianity

First, it was called “the Way” (9:2), next, “the sect of the Nazarenes” (24:5), and its followers were called “**Christians**” (11:26)

Acts is a Book of Great Sermons

Sermons by Peter and Others

- Peter to Jewish proselytes 2:14-41
- Peter to Jewish people 3:12-26
- Stephen to Jewish leaders 7:1-53
- Peter to Gentiles 10:23-43

Sermons by Paul

- To Jews in Antioch 13:14-49
- To pagans in Lystra 14:14-18
- To Gentiles in Athens 17:16-31
- To Christians in Ephesus 20:7

Various Ways to Outline Acts

Geographically

- I. From Jerusalem to Antioch (chaps. 1-12)
- II. From Antioch to Rome (chaps. 13-28)

Ethnically

- I. To the Jews (chaps 1-7) neapolitan
- II. To the Samaritans (chap 8) metropolitan
- III. To the World (chap 9-28) cosmopolitan

Biographically

- I. Ministry of Peter and Others (chaps. 1-12)
- II. Ministry of Paul and Others (chaps. 13-28)

Theologically

- I. The Ascension of Christ (chap 1)
- II. The Descension of the Spirit (chap 2)
- III. The Extension of the Gospel (chaps 3-28)

Dispensationally

- I. Formation of Christianity (chaps 1-7)
- II. Transition to Christianity (chaps 8-12)
- III. Expansion of Christianity (chaps 13-28)

The Outline, as recorded

- I. The Formation of the Church - Jews
 - A. First days
 1. Ascension of the Christ
 2. Descension of the Spirit
 3. Expansion of the Church
 - B. First deliverance of the church
 - C. First discipline in the church
 - D. First deacons in the church
 - E. First death (martyr) in the church
- II. The Transition of the Church - Greeks
 - A. The three conversions
 1. Eunuch, an Ethiopian - a son of Ham
 2. Saul, a Tarsian - a son of Shem
 3. Cornelius, an Italian - son of Japheth

- B. The two persecutions
 - 1. Because of Stephen
 - 2. Because of Peter
- III. The Expansion of the Church - Romans
 - A. First missionary journey
 - B. First church summit
 - C. Second missionary journey
 - D. Third missionary journey
 - E. First imprisonment
 - F. Second imprisonment

Next Week

Excerpts from the Book of Acts

- Pentecost (Acts 2)
- Ministry in Samaria and Gaza (Acts 8)
- Conversion of Saul (Acts 9)
- Conversion of Cornelius (Acts 10)
- First Sermon of Paul (Acts 13)
- The Jerusalem Council (Acts 15)
- Paul message in Athens (Acts 17)
- Journey to Rome (27-28)

- **Apologetics - Responding to critic's questions**