

# Acts

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**AUTHOR:** Luke

**TIME WRITTEN:** Completed prior to Paul's trial in 62 A.D.

**POSITION IN THE BIBLE:**

- 44th Book in the Bible
- 5th book in the New Testament
- 1st and only book of History in the New Testament
- 43 have preceded it. 22 to follow it.

**CHAPTERS:** 28

**VERSES:** 1,007

**WORDS:** 24,250

**KEY WORD:** The Establishment and Growth of the Church

**TWO KEY PASSAGES:**

1. **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."
2. **Acts 2:42-47** - "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.
  - 43 Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles.
  - 44 Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common,
  - 45 and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need.
  - 46 So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart,
  - 47 praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.

**KEY CHAPTER:** Acts 2

1. Acts 2 records the earth-changing events of the Day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit comes to direct the apostles and give them the gospel message of salvation for the world.
2. The Lord's New Testament church is established in Jerusalem and the first converts are added to it.

**OBSERVATIONS ABOUT ACTS**

1. Jesus' last recorded words prior to His ascension back to Heaven have come to be known as the Great Commission: "You shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" (**1:8**).
  - a. The book of Acts is the story of the carrying out of that commission.
  - b. Each section of the book focuses on a particular audience.
    1. Acts 1:1 - 8:4 - Jerusalem.
    2. Acts 8:5 - 12:25 - Judea and Samaria.
    3. Acts 13-28 - To the end of the Earth - "Uttermost parts of the earth" (KJV)
2. Written by Luke as a continuing companion volume of the Book of Luke.
3. While there are four accounts of the life of Jesus, Acts is the only book that carries on the story from His ascension to the period of the New Testament epistles.

- a. Thus, Acts is the historical link between the gospel records of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John and the Epistles.
- b. Acts was written to trace the development of the body of Christ over the one-generation transition from a primary Jewish to a predominantly Gentile membership.
4. Luke is one of the most important books in the entire Bible in that it shows what the death of Christ accomplished in providing:
  - a. The means of forgiveness by reaching the blood of Christ through immersion.
  - b. The family of God (Church) the obedient believers were added to.
5. While the book is called the “Acts of the Apostles,” it could well be called the “Acts of the Holy Spirit” in that it is the record of the Holy Spirit guiding the events made possible by the sacrifice of Christ.

## **SUMMARY OF ACTS**

### **INTRODUCTION:**

- A. Luke begins the Book of Acts where he left off his gospel record.
  1. Records the initial fulfillment of the Great Commission of Matthew 28:19-20.
  2. Records the establishment of the Lord's church.
  3. Traces the growth of the church.
- B. Acts is a pivotal book of transitions.
  1. From the life to Christ to the Epistles.
  2. From Judaism to Christianity.
  3. From the law to grace.
  4. From Jews alone to Jews and Gentiles together.
- C. There are three major sections in the book:
  1. Witness in Jerusalem. (1:1 - 8:4)
  2. Witness in Judea and Samarria. (8:5 - 12:25)
  3. Witness the Uttermost parts of the Earth. (13 - 28)

### **WITNESS IN JERUSALEM. (1:1 - 8:4)**

- A. After appearing to His disciples for “forty days” (1:3), the Lord tells the apostles to wait in Jerusalem for the fulfillment of His promise concerning the Holy Spirit.
  1. Ten days after His ascension, this promise is fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost.
  2. Peter preaches the first gospel sermon.
    - a. It, like all the powerful sermons in the Book of Acts, is based upon the resurrection of Christ.
    - b. About 3,000 people obeyed the gospel that day.
  3. In Acts 3 Peter heals a lame man and continues His preaching of the gospel.
  4. The religious leaders arrest Peter and John, thus giving Peter an opportunity to preach a special sermon to them.
- B. The enthusiasm and joy of the infant church are marred by some internal and external problems.
  1. Ananias and Sapphira receive the ultimate from of discipline because of their treachery.
  2. The apostles are persecuted for their preaching and teaching. Arrested and beaten.
  3. Complaints arose about the daily distribution of goods resulting in the appointing of the first deacons.

4. Stephen is brought before the Sanhedrin where He uses the Scriptures to prove that the Man they condemned and crucified was the Messiah Himself. The members of the Sanhedrin reacted to Stephen's words by dragging him out of the city and stoned him to death, making him the first Christian martyr.

### **WITNESS IN JUDEA AND SAMARIA. (8:5 - 12:25)**

- A. Philip goes to the province of Samaria and successfully proclaims the gospel to a people hated by the Jews but loved by the Lord as He loves all people.
  1. Peter and John confirm this work and exercise their apostolic authority by imparting the Holy Spirit to these new members of the body of Christ.
  2. Philip teaches and converts the Eithiopian Eunuch.
- B. Movement in the book continues in remarkable ways.
  1. Saul the persecutor becomes a Christian and is transferred into Paul the apostle to the Gentiles.
  2. God uses Peter to open the door of the church to the Gentiles wherein Cornelius and his household in Caesarea become the first gentile converts.
  3. Peter convinces the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem that "the Gentiles had also received the word of God" (**1:11**)
  4. Herod kills James, the brother of John, with a sword.
  5. The church continues to increase in members, spreading throughout the Roman Empire.

### **WITNESS TO THE UTTERMOST PARTS OF THE EARTH. (13 - 28)**

- A. Beginning with chapter 13, Luke switches the focus of Acts from Peter to Paul.
  1. Antioch in Syria becomes a major center of Christian activity.
  2. All three of Paul's missionary journeys originate from Antioch in Syria.
  3. Paul's three missionary journeys and imprisonments constitute more than half of the book of Acts.
    - a. **First Missionary Journey.**
      1. Concentrates on the Galatian cities of:
        - a. Antioch of Pisidia
        - b. Iconium
        - c. Lystra
        - d. Derbe
      2. Concerning the first missionary journey:
        - a. Recorded in Acts 13 - 14:28
        - b. A.D. 48-49
        - c. Paul's work associate was Barnabas.
        - d. The duration of the journey was two years.
        - e. The distance covered was approximately 1,235 miles.
      3. After the journey, a council is held in Jerusalem to determine that the Gentile converts need not submit to the rite circumcision or the Law of Moses.
    - b. **Second Missionary Journey.**
      1. Brings Paul once again to the Galatian churches, and there for the first time on to Macedonia and Greece.
      2. Paul spends much of his time in the cities of:
        - a. Philippi
        - b. Thessalonica
        - c. Corinth

- d. Later returns to Jerusalem and Antioch
- 3. Concerning the second missionary journey:
  - a. Recorded in Acts 16:36 - 18:23
  - b. A. D. 50-52
  - c. Paul's work associate was Silas.
  - d. The duration of the journey was 3 years.
  - e. The distance covered was about 2,703 miles.
    - 1. 1,290 miles by sea.
    - 2. 1,410 miles by land.
- c. **The Third Missionary Journey.**
  - 1. Paul spent almost three years in the Asian city of Ephesus before visiting Macedonia and Greece for the second time.
  - 2. Although he is warned not to go to Jerusalem, Paul cannot be dissuaded.
  - 3. Concerning the third missionary journey.
    - a. Recorded in Acts 18:23 - 21:26.
    - b. A. D. 53-57
    - c. Neither Barnabas nor Silas are with Paul.
    - d. The duration was four years.
    - e. The distance covered was about 2,515 miles.
      - 1. 1,190 miles by sea.
      - 2. 1,325 miles by land.
- d. In Jerusalem, it is not long until Paul is falsely accused of bring Gentiles into the temple.
  - 1. Only the Roman commander's intervention prevents his being killed by the mob of Jews.
  - 2. Paul's defense before the people and before the Sanhedrin evokes violent reactions.
  - 3. When Paul's nephew informs the commander of a conspiracy to assassinate Paul, he sends his prisoner to Felix in Caesarea.
  - 4. During his two-year imprisonment there (A. D. 57-59), Paul defends the gospel before:
    - a. Felix
    - b. Festus
    - c. King Agrippa
  - 5. His appeal to Caesar requires a long voyage to Rome, where he is placed under house arrest until his trial.
- c. Concerning the journey to Rome:
  - 1. Recorded in Acts 27-28
  - 2. The distance covered was about 2,130 miles.
    - a. 1,920 miles by sea.
    - b. 210 miles by land.