

-Who has read Acts?

-What do you know about the book of Acts?

Title: Acts/The Acts of the Apostles

-Greek word: Praxeis (commonly used in Greek to summarize the accomplishments of outstanding men)

Author: According to tradition, written by Luke the Physician

-a companion of Paul on his second and third missionary journeys and on the voyage to Rome

-How do we know he was the author?

-Credible sources from the early church claim that he is

-By the writing style we can tell the author is an educated Gentile, which would make sense, as Luke was a physician

-Acts 1:1, Luke 1:3 (both written to Theophilus; the “first book” or “former account” was the gospel of Luke)

Date and Setting

-suggested dates range from A.D. 62 to the middle of the second century

-recent archaeological discoveries have shown that Luke was a trustworthy historian, and that the information in his books is precise; recent discoveries have also shown that his work should be dated in the first century.

-most likely before Paul’s trial in A.D. 62 (Luke ends Acts while Paul was awaiting trial in Rome, but does not tell of the outcome—must have been written before his trial, which took place in A.D. 62)

-other events going on around this time: persecution of the Christians under Nero (A.D. 64), Paul’s death (A.D. 68), destruction of Jerusalem (A.D. 70)

-None of these events are mentioned in Acts, so most likely Acts was written before they occurred.

-Most likely written sometime around A.D. 62 or a little before.

Theme and Purpose

-only book that carries on the story from the Ascension to period of N. T. Epistles (historical link between the Gospels and the Epistles)

-Acts records the initial fulfillment of the Great Commission of Matt. 28:19-20: traces beginning and growth of the N.T. church (Acts 1:8); Acts 1:8 basically outlines the whole book (Jerusalem, 1-7; Judea and Samaria, 8-12; and ends of the earth, 13-28)

-strong emphasis on the ministry of the Holy Spirit (Acts of the Spirit working in and through the apostles)

-Luke personally involved in process of story; not written from detached point of view. (was with Paul for many of the experiences recorded)

Key Idea -growth of the church

Key Verses -1:8, 2:42-47

Key Chapter

-Chapter 2: records major earth-changing events of the Day of Pentecost (what is that?). The Day of Pentecost was basically the fulfillment Christ's promise that the Holy Spirit would arrive to empower and direct the witness of believers.

-During the Day of Pentecost, the Spirit transformed a small group of fearful men into a thriving, world-wide church which is continuing to fulfill the Great Commission.

-2:1-13; Peter gives sermon; 38-41

Christ's Role in Acts

The resurrected Savior is the central theme of the many sermons in Acts. 10:43; 4:12

Contribution to the Bible:

-When Luke and Acts are joined together, they provide an account of the foundation and initial development of Christianity.

-Acts does not attempt to have recorded everything about the first 30 years of the Christian church, but it is very valuable (essential) as the background history for most of the epistles

-Without Acts, the Epistles would be quite difficult to understand

-Another major importance of the book: many speeches and sermons (mainly by Peter and Paul)—about 24 messages in 28 chapters

Review

Title means?

Author?

Date/setting?

Theme/ purpose?

Why do you think it is a good idea to read the book of Acts?

Review

- Remember, as we survey the book of Acts it is essential that you read the book.
- Luke wrote the book of Acts most likely around 62 A.D.
- Key purposes of Acts include: the bridge between the Gospels and the Epistles, showing the initial fulfillment of the Great Commission, showing the beginning of the N.T. church, focusing on the work of the Holy Spirit.
- The resurrected Savior is the central purpose of all the sermons in the book of Acts.
- The book of Acts does not cover every little detail of this time period. Like all the books in the Bible it records specific points that God wanted revealed to his people.

The Power of the Church

- Read 1:4-5, 8. Verse 8 is one of our key verses in Acts. This is the promise of Christ for the power that will grow the church. The Holy Spirit is the true power of the early church, and still is the only true power of the current church.
- At the end of chapter one we see the Apostles choosing a new man to replace Judas. The Bible calls the same men both Disciples and Apostles. Not all of the Apostles were Disciples, though. So what is the difference? Disciple means pupil or learner, and Apostle means emissary or representative, one sent with the authority of the sender. The Apostles were agents of God's revelation of the truths that would become the Christian rule of faith and life.
- The key chapter of Acts, chapter two, shows the Apostles being filled with the Holy Spirit [2:4], and being transformed into bold men who proclaim the Gospel.
- The spirit fills the Apostles on the day of Pentecost, which is a feast celebrated fifty days after the Passover. Many Jews from all nations [2:5] were in Jerusalem celebrating Pentecost. By the power of the spirit the Apostles spoke in tongues and Peter gave a sermon with the central theme of Christ's resurrection, and the need for repentance and faith in Christ as the Messiah. Verse 41 tells us that 3000 people became Christians that day.
- Verses 42-47 describe the community among the believers.

The Progress of the Church

- Chapters 4-7 details some of the progress of the church. We see accounts of miracles happening [3:1-10, 5:12-16], the effect of the Gospel on the leaders of the cities [4:1-22, 5:17-42], problems within the church [5:1-11], and fellowship among believers [4:32-37].

- Read 5:40-42, this is one of my favorite passages in Acts. It shows the devotion and passion of the Apostles for the Gospel of Jesus. This passion for the gospel and effect on the leaders is shown in 6:8-8:3 when the Apostle Stephen becomes the first Christian martyr.
- As you read through Acts notice the emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit. Before sermons many times the Bible indicates that the men were filled with the Holy Spirit (4:8). Also when it describes some men, it describes them as being full of the Holy Spirit (6:5).
- The Book of Acts can be most accurately described as the acts of the Holy Spirit in the new church.

Review

- The key purpose of the book of Acts is to bridge the gap between the Gospels and the Epistles. It shows the initial fulfillment of the Great Commission, the beginning of the N.T. church, and focuses on the work of the Holy Spirit.
- Jesus Christ as the resurrected Savior is the central purpose of the sermons in the book of Acts.
- The work of the Holy Spirit is emphasized in the book of Acts. The Holy Spirit is responsible for the growth of the church and the growth of believers. The Spirit is specifically mentioned throughout the book of Acts as empowering the apostles and transforming the hearts of the new believers.
- Chapter 2 is our key chapter because it shows the Apostles receiving the Spirit and being transformed into bold men proclaiming the Gospel.

Expansion of the Church

- Following the last section showing the progress of the new church, chapters 8-12 detail some aspects of the expansion of the church.
- Read 8:1-3. Saul's goal is to ravage the church, this verb is stronger than just harass. Saul meant to destroy the church. Despite the persecution, though, the Apostles continue to spread the Gospel and the church continues to grow.
- Chapter 9 is also a very key chapter in the book of Acts. God takes the man who is persecuting the church and completely transforms him to spread the Gospel. Read 9:13-19. Saul is filled with the Spirit. Notice in verses 20-22 Saul immediately begins preaching the Gospel. In verse 15, God reveals his purpose for Saul, to proclaim the gospel to the Gentiles.
- Up until this point the Gospel is only preached to God's chosen people, the Jews. From here on, though we see that it becomes clear that Christ died for all nations. Saul is God's chosen Apostle to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles. Peter is said to be the same to the Jews (Gal. 2:8)
- At the end of chapter 9 it mentions that Peter is staying with a tanner, someone who treats animal skins. The Jews thought this to be an unclean profession because it involved contact with dead animals. The Gospel was beginning to break down barriers between people.
- Read 10:9-16. Peter has a vision to preach to the Gentiles. This is a very big deal because you have to remember that before this you just didn't proclaim the Gospel to someone who was not part of God's chosen people.
- Read 10:33-36. Even though Saul (Paul) is God's chosen man for the Gentiles, Peter is the one that God initially uses to share the Gospel to them. And the

Spirit transformed the hearts of the Gentiles, read 10:44-48. All the other Apostles were still only preaching to Jews at this time (11:19).

- In 11:26 the disciples were called Christians for the first time. The word Christian only appears in the N.T. three times, here, 26:28, and 1 Peter 4:16. The term means belonging to or following Christ.
- The book of Acts is just filled with the workings and sovereignty of God. He uses men who ravage the church to share his word among all the nations. Some Apostles are killed and some are saved for his purposes, and through out all of this the Spirit is changing lives and the Gospel is spread.

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Paul's Three Missionary Journeys (Acts 13-21:16)

- Acts 1:8 –outline of the book of Acts “...You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”
- Talked about the power and progress of the Church, which began in Jerusalem
- Talked about the expansion of the Church, where the gospel was preached to the Gentiles; included Judea and Samaria
- Ch. 13-28 show the apostles bringing the gospel to the ends of the earth.
- We are going to look at ch. 13-21:16; this section of Acts describes Paul's three missionary journeys.
- Beginning with ch. 13, Luke switches the focus of Acts from Peter to Paul.
- A lot of places...following God's will; going to the ends of the earth; Holy Spirit working through them in every situation

The First Missionary Journey

- Saul (Paul) and Barnabas sent off from the church at Antioch—v. 2-3
- Went to Cyprus and Asia Minor; interesting situation with a false prophet in Cyprus (Bar-Jesus or Elymas)
- Paul, Barnabas, and John were meeting with the Proconsul, who wanted them to come and share the Word of God with him.
- Bar-Jesus, the false prophet, and also magician, went against them and tried to turn the proconsul away from the faith.
- What Paul said to him as a result: v. 9-12
- The Holy Spirit worked through this situation to bring the Proconsul to a saving faith.
- The rest of ch. 13 is two of Paul's sermons, and through his preaching of the gospel, many more believed
- Ch. 14, Paul and Barnabas at Iconium; preaching the gospel in Jewish synagogues; a great number of both Jews and Gentiles believed
- Heal a lame man; people think that Paul and Barnabas are gods; worship them. Paul shared the true gospel with them
- Many Jews were very angry with what Paul was saying; opposed the true gospel; persuaded the crowds to stone him (14:19-23); joyful in suffering; more people believed.

-14:26-28 Report on the First Missionary Journey

The Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:1-35)

-Argument about whether the Gentile believers should follow the Jewish law; the apostles and elders gathered together to discuss this matter; Peter preaches salvation through grace; the Council decides to send the Gentiles a letter to guide them about the important issues

-Pharisees were troubling them; they needed to be instructed on general issues, not the law in its entirety, which would be impossible to follow. But the laws were completely new to the Gentiles...needed to know what issues were really important

-Abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols, and from blood, and from what has been strangled, and from sexual immorality

-Gentiles read the letter, and were strengthened and encouraged by it.

Paul's Second Missionary Journey (Acts 15:36-18:22)

-Return to Asia Minor and go to Europe; Paul joins Timothy and Silas

-Fortune-telling slave girl; owners put Paul and Silas in prison; singing hymns at midnight in jail; earthquake and everyone free; conversion of the Philippian Jailer and baptism of his family

-Paul addresses the people of Athens about their idol worship, and they brought him to the Areopagus to speak (a public place, where many people met and heard what he had to say).

-Paul stayed in Corinth for a year and six months, preaching to the Gentiles; Paul returned then to Antioch

Paul's Third Missionary Journey (Acts 18:23-21:16)

-Strengthening the churches of Asia Minor, Macedonia, and Greece

-Paul in Ephesus for three years

-During this time, many miracles were being done in the name of Jesus Christ (19:11-12); why were miracles like that performed so much then? To prove the power of the resurrected Christ, so many people would believe and build the church...Now, the church is established and the power of Christ is clear; we have the full Word of God (they didn't have a New Testament then).

-3 Months in Macedonia and Greece

-Eutychus falls from sitting at the window 3 stories up, and is raised from the dead; people greatly comforted (19:7-12)

-20:22-24 Paul's whole life is centered on testifying to the gospel of the grace of God. His missionary journeys were years (not a couple of weeks here and there). For believers, our entire lives should be comprised of missionary journeys, whether we travel somewhere else or not. The important thing is that we are testifying to the gospel of the grace of God, proclaiming the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul on Trial

- Last week we saw Paul continuing to fulfill the Great Commission by preaching the Gospel around the world to all nations.
- God used his preaching to save many people during his three missionary journeys. Paul's preaching is continuing to make the Jews more upset as well.
- Acts 20:22-24 sums up what the next section will be about and Paul's attitude during this time of trial
- Read 21:27-36. The Jews are so bothered by Paul and his message that their whole goal is really to kill him.
- Why are these Jews so upset? Paul is preaching salvation in Christ alone apart from the law. The Jews whole focus is following the law. Another reason is that Paul is preaching that Gentiles can become Christians and that they are not bound by the law. Paul does not have a problem with Jews keeping some of their ancient customs, but anything that is looked at as necessary for salvation is against what Paul is preaching.
- From chapter 21 until the end of the book, Paul is in custody the whole time. The Jews have all kinds of false accusations against him, but no real charge is ever brought up against him. This goes on for several years.
- God is not threatened by Paul's arrest. Paul is not all of a sudden useless to God now. If God wanted Paul to stay out of prison then he would have protected him. God uses Paul to preach to the leaders and those around them (23:11, 27:24).
- We are not going to read, in here, all of the accounts of Paul's three trials. The whole time, Paul is being passed around to different officials. Paul is actually saved by the officials because they refuse to kill him based on false charges. Paul brings up that he is a Roman citizen which scares many of them and eventually Paul seeks to have a trial in front of Caesar. The Jews follow him around trying to find something to accuse him of.
- This section of Acts is a great picture of our attitude in preaching the Gospel. Paul has such a zeal for preaching the resurrected Christ. Paul also displays great trust in God and the Holy Spirit.
- It is not a tragedy that Paul was arrested, he didn't worship safety. God is ruler of the universe, if we are seeking to follow his will, safety should not be an issue. We need the Holy Spirit to help us realize what true trust in God really is.

Overview of Acts

- Acts is written by Luke. The book gives us accounts of the early church and the initial fulfillment of the Great Commission.
- The Gospel is spread to all nations, including the Gentiles, it is not just for the Jews.
- Acts focuses on Peter, God's chosen person for the Jews, and Paul, God's chosen person for the Gentiles. Their preaching is on the resurrected Christ as the only savior.
- Acts can be most accurately described as the acts of the Holy Spirit. The work of the Spirit is clearly seen as the only changing power in the believer's life.