

The Book of Acts Part 1 and Part 2
Introduction to the New Testament
Class 4 & 5

Your assignments: *What did you learn?*

I. Why We Need Acts

- A. Acts is a Bridge between the Gospels and the Epistles
 1. Takes us from the ministry of Jesus to the establishment of the church and its growth throughout the Mediterranean region.
 2. Without Acts, the epistles would be hard to understand. Who is Paul? To whom is he talking? What did his ministry look like?
- B. Acts Inspires us with a Vision for Church Life
 1. Acts gives us a picture of what a church filled with the Holy Spirit looks like.
 2. Acts challenges us with its vision of church commitment—loving and serving one another, sharing with one another what God has given to us.
 3. Acts reveals the true gospel and the power of the gospel when it is accurately preached by people filled with the Holy Spirit.
 4. Acts shows us a model for spreading the gospel beyond our church walls—church planting led by gifted men.
 5. Acts gives us direction in church structure—apostles, elders, deacons.

II. Who and When?

- A. How do we know that Luke wrote *Luke*?
 1. Most books give the author's name in the opening verses (all the epistles with the exception of 1-3 John). With the gospels and Acts we have to determine it through other means.
 2. (Internal) Evidence from the Bible
 - a. Introductions: Clear from Luke 1:1-4 and Acts 1:1-2 that the same man wrote both of these books.
 - b. The "We" passages: Clear from Acts 16:11; 20:13; 21:1; 27:1; 28:10 that author (Luke) was with Paul at each of these moments.

- c. Process of elimination: Col 4:14 shows Luke is with Paul in Rome during his Acts 28 house arrest. Col 4:14 is where Luke referred to as “Luke the beloved physician.”
 - 3. (External) Evidence from church history
 - a. Marcion – mid-2nd century
 - b. Muratorian Canon
 - c. Ireneus and Tertullian have no doubts about Luke
 - d. Oldest Luke manuscript (A.D. 175-225) includes “Luke” in the title, and no other name is ever given as its source.
- B. The author himself
 - 1. “Luke the beloved physician” (Colossians 4:14) – primitive medicine, but by this time a respected profession. Intelligent, inquisitive, part detective and part healer.
 - 2. Luke the historian (Luke 1:1-4 and similar Acts 1:1-5)
 - 3. Luke the theologian – Has a grasp on God’s work in history. See Acts 2:17-36; 7:1-68; 13:16-41; 17:22-31.
 - 4. Luke the evangelist – He wants a response from his readers and not simply their attentiveness for a few hours. Philippian jailer (16:31–35) and the Ephesian 12 (19:2–7) are meant to bring readers to salvation as well as give the history.
- C. When did Luke write the book? *Carson argues for A.D. 62¹⁴ on the following grounds, and I don’t think I’ll disagree with him:*
 - 1. At time of writing Judaism is a sanctioned state religion, which ended in AD 66.
 - 2. No mention of Nero’s persecution after the fire of AD 64.
 - 3. Vivid description of the shipwreck sounds recent to time of writing.
 - 4. Ends abruptly with Paul in Rome in house arrest, likely AD 62-64. He would be released and write 1-2 Timothy and Titus, martyred in 67. Seems likely that Luke wrote before his release—not only possible scenario, just the likely one.
 - 5. Thus, date is likely early in Paul’s 2-year house arrest in Rome (Acts 28:30-31).
 - 6. Carson also believes there is no evidence that Luke knew of Paul’s letters, but this feels overstated to me. Many, many ideas from Paul’s letters are found in Acts, and many of Paul’s letter make

¹⁴ *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Zondervan, 1992), 194.

better sense if Luke is a co-author with Paul (especially the Pastoral Epistles of 1–2 Timothy and Titus).

III. Luke's Introduction

1 In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach, 2 until the day when he was taken up, after he had given commands through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. (Acts 1:1-2)

- A. "First book"?
- B. To whom is it written?
- C. What does "began" tell us?
- D. How did Jesus minister?
- E. The title for "Acts"
 - 1. "The Acts of _____"
 - 2. "The Acts of _____"
 - 3. "The Acts of _____"

IV. Outline of the Acts of the Apostles

KEY ORGANIZING TEXT: “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” (Acts 1:8). It was common in ancient histories to use a sentence like this as a kind of table of contents for the whole work.

KEY ORGANIZING MARKERS IN BOOK: Luke uses repeating summary statements as section dividers. These are found in 2:47; 6:7; 9:31; 12:24; 16:5; 19:20; all-encompassing in 28:30-31. Here are the first two to see what to look for:

And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.
(Acts 2:47)

And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith. (Acts 6:7)

With these markers and 1:8 as the organizing text, here is the outline of Acts:

A. (1:1-12:24) Part One: *Witness from Jerusalem to Samaria (and Cornelius)*

Key figure in Part One is Peter

1. (1:1-2:47) The Prologue (Introduction, ascension, replacing Judas, Day of Pentecost)
2. (3:1-6:7) Gospel in Jerusalem (ministry of the apostles in Jerusalem)
3. (6:8-9:31) Gospel in Samaria (Stephen killed, persecution in Jerusalem, Philip to Samaria, conversion of Paul)
4. (9:32-12:24) Gospel to Gentiles (Cornelius, Antioch, James killed)

B. (12:25-28:31) Part Two: *Witness to the Ends of the Earth*

Key figure in Part Two is Paul

1. (12:25-16:5) Paul and Barnabas (1st Missionary Journey) and the Jerusalem Council
2. (16:6-19:20) 2nd Missionary Journey (Gospel to Macedonia)
3. (19:21-28:31) 3rd Missionary Journey and Arrest of Paul (Gospel to Rome)