

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)

THE CONTENTS OF ACTS IN DETAIL:

- I. (1:1-12:24) **Part One: Witness from Jerusalem to Samaria (and Cornelius)**
 - A. (1:1-2:47) The Prologue
 1. (1:1-5) Introduction

“In the first book...” (1:1)

“...all that Jesus began to do and teach...” (1:1)

“...he had given commands through the Holy Spirit...” (1:2)

“...speaking about the kingdom of God” (1:3; cf. 28:31!)
 2. (1:6-26) Ascension of Christ
 - Theme of the Book:** *“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)*
 - Jesus will return “in the same way as you saw him go into heaven” (1:11).
 - Matthias chosen as “a witness to his resurrection” (1:22–26). Note from 1:21–22 what qualifies him.
 3. (2:1-47) Pentecost

- The Day of Pentecost in some ways is **the formal beginning of “the church.”** Of course, “the people of God” do not begin with Acts 2 but date all the way back to Genesis 12:1–3 and the calling of Abraham. But something new happens at Pentecost. It is the era of the church, the people of God defined by the New Covenant promised in Jeremiah 31:31-34 and inaugurated by the crucifixion of Jesus. There is also a newness in that the people of God are no longer organized as a nation with a priesthood. Now we are organized by the officers listed in Ephesians 4:11, “apostles...prophets...evangelists...shepherd-teachers.” Converted Israel and converted Gentiles come together in this new era as “one new man” (Eph 2:15).
- The Day of Pentecost (1:1) refers to a Jewish festival, one of the major events in the Jewish year:

“You shall count seven weeks. Begin to count the seven weeks from the time the sickle is first put to the standing grain. ¹⁰ Then you shall keep the Feast of Weeks to the LORD your God with the tribute of a freewill offering from your hand, which you shall give as the LORD your God blesses you. ¹¹ And you shall rejoice before the LORD your God, you and your son and your daughter, your male servant and your female servant, the Levite who is within your towns, the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow who are among you, at the place that the LORD your God will choose, to make his name dwell there. ¹² You shall remember that you were a slave in Egypt; and you shall be careful to observe these statutes. (Deut. 16:9-12)

The name “Pentecost” is from the Greek Old Testament. It means “50,” and refers to the 7 sabbaths (49) + 1 day, so that the event HAPPENS ON A SUNDAY! Both the resurrection and the day of Pentecost happen on a Sunday!

- A wind, tongues of fire, and speaking in “other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance (2:1-13)
- **The theological explanation:** “In the last days...” (2:14-21) – The day of Pentecost is the first day of “the last days.”
- The complete gospel of Jesus Christ, “both Lord and Christ” (2:22-36)
- Responding to the gospel: Conversion (2:37-41)
“Repent and be baptized...” (2:38)
- Responding to the gospel: The Church (2:42-47a)

“Without the Holy Spirit, Christian discipleship would be inconceivable, even impossible. There can be no life without the life-giver, no understanding without the Spirit of truth, no fellowship without the unity of the Spirit, no Christlikeness of character apart from his fruit, and no effective witness without his power. As a body without breath is a corpse, so the church without the Spirit is dead” (Stott, Acts, 60).

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

B. (3:1-6:7) Witnesses in Jerusalem

- Peter’s ministry in the Spirit – healing the lame man (3:1-10)
- Peter’s preaching - Times of refreshing (3:19-20)
- Peter’s boldness before the council (esp. 4:8-12, 19-20; 5:27-32)
- The introduction of deacons (6:1-6)

Transitional Marker: *“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)*

C. (6:8-9:31) Witnesses in Samaria (Stephen killed, persecution, Philip to Samaria, conversion of Paul)

- Stephen’s ministry, speech, and martyrdom (6:8-7:60)
- Introduction of Paul (7:58-8:3)
- Philip in Samaria – believe, be baptized, be baptized in the Spirit (8:4-17)
- Conversion of Paul (Saul) (9:1-30)

Transitional Marker: *“So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it multiplied.” (Acts 9:31)*

D. (9:32-12:24) Witnesses to Gentiles (Cornelius, Antioch, James killed)

- Peter raising Tabitha (9:36-43)
- Cornelius is saved (10:1-11:18)

- Barnabas the apostle goes to Antioch (11:19-30)

Transitional Marker: *“But the word of God increased and multiplied.”* (Acts 12:24)

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

A. (12:25-16:5) Paul and Barnabas (1st Missionary Journey) and the Jerusalem Council

- Barnabas and Paul sent out (13:1-3)
- First missionary journey (13:4-14:28)
- Book of **Galatians** likely written in the “no little time” of 14:28—“Galatians” then refers to Pisidian Antioch/Lystra*
- Jerusalem Council (15:1-32)
- Second missionary journey begins—Paul and Silas (15:35)

Transitional Marker: *“So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and they increased in numbers daily.”* (Acts 16:5)

B. (16:6-19:20) 2nd Missionary Journey (Gospel to Macedonia)

- Timothy joins Paul (16:1-2)
- Macedonian call (16:6-10)
- Fulfilled in Philippi (16:11-40)
- Continues through Greece (Athens, cf. 17:22-31)
- Books of **1-2 Thessalonians** written during the “year and six months” (18:11) in Corinth, about 49-51 A.D.*
- Returns to Antioch (19:22) and then leaves on 3rd missionary journey (19:23)
- Ministry in Ephesus for two years (19:1-20)
- Book of **1 Corinthians** written during the “two years” (19:10) in Ephesus in A.D. 53-55*

Transitional Marker: *“So the word of the Lord continued to increase and prevail mightily.”* (Acts 19:20)

- C. (19:21-28:31) 3rd Missionary Journey and Arrest of Paul (Gospel to Rome)
- Ephesus ministry continued with riot and departure (19:21-41) – note the speech of the “town clerk” in vv. 35-40.
 - 2 Corinthians** written Macedonia after departing from Ephesus (20:1; approx. A.D. 55-56)
 - Romans** written during the “three months” in Greece (20:3; approx. A.D. 57)
 - Paul speaking to Ephesian elders (20:17-35, note esp. vv. 24-31)
 - Paul’s arrest (21:27-36)
 - Paul’s speech to Jews in the temple, his complete conversion testimony (21:37-22:24)
 - Paul’s speech to the council (23:6)
 - Paul taken to Caesarea to Felix the governor (23:23-35) and speech to him, his conversion testimony (24:10-21). Stays in prison there two years (24:27).
 - Porcius Festus takes over for Felix and leaves Paul in prison (24:27)
 - Paul appeals to Caesar (25:11).
 - Before he departs, speaks to “Agrippa the king and Bernice” the queen, giving his complete conversion testimony (26:1-32).
 - Journey to Rome (27:1-28:14)
 - Ministry from house arrest in Rome (28:23-31)
 - Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon** written from Rome under house arrest (A.D. 62)

Transitional Marker/Conclusion: “He lived there two whole years at his own expense, and welcomed all who came to him,³¹ proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance.” (Acts 28:30-31)

- Paul will be released from prison, writing **1 Timothy** and **Titus** in these years (A.D. 62-64)
- Rearrested in Rome, writes **2 Timothy** and is killed between A.D. 64 and 67.