

New Testament Survey:  
Acts of the Apostles

Source: John R.W. Stott, *The Message of Acts* (Leicester, England: InterVarsity Press, 1990).

The Acts of the Apostles is a continuation of Luke's Gospel. Like the Gospel, the book is dedicated to "Theophilus." Acts tells the story of the spread of the Church from Jerusalem throughout the Roman Empire. Luke wrote the only true historical book in the New Testament.

Luke himself fills several roles in writing this book:

1. Luke as historian. Luke interviewed numerous eyewitnesses in writing his Gospel and Acts. Luke was with Paul during much of the action recorded in Acts. Luke arrived in Jerusalem with Paul before Paul's arrest. After Paul was arrested, he was imprisoned for at least 2 years, giving Luke plenty of time in Judea to interview witnesses for his books.
2. Luke as diplomat. Luke wrote for more than historical purposes.
  - A. Acts was an apologetic work written to demonstrate Christianity's harmlessness to the Roman government. Luke addressed his works to Theophilus, who may have been a Roman official.
    - a. Luke lists several Roman officials who were friendly to Christianity, including many who actually became Christians (Cornelius the centurion; Sergius Paulus, proconsul of Cyprus). In Philippi, the magistrates apologized for their mistreatment of Paul. In Corinth, Gallio refused to intervene against Paul, and in Ephesus many officials, including the town clerk, supported Paul.
    - b. Luke also points out that the Romans themselves found no fault in Jesus or His apostles. Stott points out that Paul was acquitted by 3 Roman officials: Felix, Festus, and Agrippa. According to Stott, these 2 acquittals corresponded to Pilate's 3 declarations of Jesus' innocence (Stott, p. 26).
    - c. Luke tries to convince the Romans that Christianity was not a new religion, but a fulfilled form of Judaism. This was important as Judaism was recognized as a *religio licita*, or lawful religion, in the Empire. Had Christianity been ruled a separate religion, it would have been made illegal.
  - B. Luke as a peacemaker in the Church. Luke demonstrates the unity in the early Church between Jews, Samaritans, and Gentiles. Any divisions by race were prevented by the actions of the Apostles, especially in the first council of Jerusalem. Luke records that both St. Peter and St. Paul were filled with the Holy Spirit, and both were called to minister to Gentiles and Jews alike. Both Peter and Paul raised the dead, both refused the worship of humans, and both called down the judgment of God on false teachers/sorcerers (Peter in Samaria, Paul on Cyprus). (Stott, p. 29)

Date: Luke ended the Acts of the Apostles with Paul under house arrest in Rome, awaiting his appearance before Caesar. Church history records Paul's appearance as occurring in A.D. 62.

## Outline

Source: English Standard Version, copyright 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers.

- I. Introduction; the period between Easter and Pentecost (chapter 1)
  - A. Introduction (1:1-4)
  - B. Jesus' Ascension (1:6-11)
  - C. Replacement of Judas Iscariot with Matthias (1:12-26)
- II. The Church in Jerusalem and Judea (chapters 2-8)
  - A. Pentecost (chapter 2)
    - a. The descending of the Holy Spirit (2:1-11)
    - b. Peter's first sermon and the expansion of the Church (2:12-41)
    - c. Lifestyle and communion of the first believers (2:42-47)
  - B. First Miracle: the healing of the lame beggar at the Temple (chapter 3)
    - a. The beggar healed (3:1-10)
    - b. Peter's sermon at Solomon's Portico in the Temple (3:11-26)
  - C. Opposition (chapters 4-8)
    - a. The arrest of Peter and John; their defense before the Sanhedrin (4:1-22)
    - b. The prayer of boldness (4:23-31)
    - c. The provision of the early Church (4:32-33)
    - d. First Dissension: Ananias and Sapphira (4:34-5:11)
    - e. Signs and Wonders performed by the Apostles (5:12-16)
    - f. The arrest of the Apostles; Gamaliel's counsel; persecution of the Apostles (5:17-42)
    - g. The Choosing of the Deacons (6:1-7)
    - h. Opposition culminates in Stephen's martyrdom (6:8-7:60)
    - i. Paul's persecution of the Church (8:1-3)
- III. The Church in Samaria (chapter 8)
  - A. Philip preaches in Samaria (8:4-8)
  - B. Peter and John go to Samaria; the Holy Spirit comes to Samaria (8:9-17)
  - C. Peter's rebuke of Simon the Magician (8:18-25)
- IV. The Church in the World (chapters 8-28)
  - A. Philip preaches to the Ethiopian eunuch (8:26-40)
  - B. Saul's Damascus Road Conversion (chapter 9)
  - C. Peter and Cornelius; the Gentiles receive the Holy Spirit (chapter 10)
  - D. Opposition to the Gospel's spread to the Gentiles (11:1-18)
  - E. The Church in Antioch (11:19-30)
  - F. Opposition: James son of Zebedee becomes the first Apostolic martyr (12:1-2)
  - G. Opposition: Peter's imprisonment and supernatural deliverance (12:3-19)
  - H. Interlude: The death of Herod Agrippa I (12:20-25)
  - I. Paul's First Missionary Journey (chapters 13-14)
    - a. The calling of Barnabas and Saul (13:1-3)
    - b. Barnabas, John Mark, and Saul go to Cyprus (13:4-12)
    - c. Barnabas and Saul (now Paul) go to Antioch of Pisidia (13:13-52)
    - d. Paul and Barnabas at Iconium (14:1-6)
    - e. Paul and Barnabas at Lystra; Paul is stoned (14:7-23)
    - f. Paul and Barnabas return to Antioch (14:24-28)

- J. The Jerusalem Council decides the fate of the Gentile believers (chapter 15)
- K. Paul's Second Missionary Journey (15:36-18:23)
  - a. Paul and Barnabas separate (15:36-39)
  - b. Paul and Silas joined by Timothy (15:40-16:5)
  - c. The Macedonian Call: The Gospel goes to Greece and the West (16:6-10)
  - d. Paul and Silas go to Philippi; the conversion of Lydia (16:11-15)
  - e. Paul and Silas' persecution in Philippi; conversion of the jailer (16:16-40)
  - f. Paul and Silas go to Thessalonica (17:1-9)
  - g. Paul and Silas go to Berea (17:10-15)
  - h. Paul in Athens (17:16-34)
  - i. Paul in Corinth (18:1-17)
  - j. Paul returns to Antioch (18:18-23)
- L. Paul's Third Missionary Journey (18:23-21:16)
  - a. The conversion of Apollos (18:24-28)
  - b. Paul in Ephesus (19:1-10)
    - 1. The sons of Sceva (19:11-19)
    - 2. The riot in Ephesus (19:21-41)
  - c. Paul in Macedonia and Greece (20:1-12)
    - 1. Paul raises Eutychus from the dead (20:7-12)
  - d. Paul's journey back to Jerusalem begins; meeting the Ephesian elders (20:13-36)
  - e. Paul goes to Jerusalem (21:1-16)
- M. Paul's visit with James (21:17-26)
- N. Paul's arrest and imprisonment (21:27-chapter 28)
  - a. Paul's arrest in the Temple; his address to the Jews (21:27-22:21)
  - b. Paul's examination by the Romans (22:22-30)
  - c. Paul's examination by the Sanhedrin (23:1-11)
  - d. Paul's opponents seek to kill him (23:12-22)
  - e. Paul sent to Felix and his examination by Felix (23:23-24:26)
  - f. Paul's examination by Porcius Festus (24:27-25:12)
  - g. Paul's examination by Herod Agrippa II and Bernice (26:13-26:32)
  - h. Paul's trip to Rome (27:1-28:10)
    - 1. Trip to Cyprus and Crete (27:1-8)
    - 2. The mistaken departure and shipwreck (27:9-44)
    - 3. Paul on Malta (28:1-10)
  - i. Paul in Rome (28:11-30)