

**A Study of
The Book of Acts
(Part 1: Chapters 1-8)**

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ACTS

(Luke's 2nd Volume)

- Theme:** The Birth and Expansion of the Church (The movement begins!)
- Author:** Luke, the beloved physician (Acts 1:1; Luke 1:1-4)
- Date of Writing:** c. A.D. 61 – 63 (see Acts 28:30-31)
- Purpose:** To provide an accurate, historical and theological record of the spread of Christianity in the first century from Jerusalem to Rome.
- Time Frame:** From Pentecost to Paul's arrival in Rome (about 30 years)
- Key Verse:** Acts 1:8
- Key Personalities:**
1. Peter (chs. 1 – 12)
 2. Paul (chs. 13 – 28)
- Outline:**
1. Preparation for Worldwide Witness (chapter 1)
 2. The Witness of the Church in Jerusalem (chapters 2 – 7)
 3. The Witness of the Church in Judea and Samaria (chapters 8 – 12)
- The Witness of the Church to the End of the Earth (chapters 13 – 28)

Introduction to the Book of Acts

I. Author

The author of Acts is Luke, the author of the third Gospel. Acts is the second part of a two-volume work. Luke's writings make up about twenty-eight percent of the New Testament, excluding the possibility of his authorship of Hebrews. Luke–Acts takes up more pages of the Greek text than the writings of John or Paul.

Luke does not name himself in the Book of Acts. The only places where he is mentioned by name are Colossians 4:14, II Timothy 4:11, and Philemon 24. However, there are indirect references to Luke in the prologue of the third Gospel (Luke 1:1-4), in the prologue of Acts (1:1), and in the “we” sections of Acts (16:10-17; 20:5–21:18; 27:1–28:16). Luke is usually viewed as being a Gentile, because in Colossians 4:10-14 he is mentioned separately from those “of the circumcision.” However, some NT scholars believe he was Jewish with the reference in Colossians being directed at Jews from Palestine. It is also believed that he was a physician because of Colossians 4:14.

II. Date of Writing

Three main dates have been suggested: (a) prior to A.D. 64, (b) A.D. 70-85, and (c) in the second century A.D. It seems best to view Acts as having been written prior to A.D. 64. This, of course, also would demand an early date for the Book of Luke. However, the absence of any hint of Nero's persecution (beginning in A.D. 64) or the fall of Jerusalem (A.D. 70) gives strong evidence that Luke–Acts must have been completed prior to A.D. 64. Further, the book finishes in a rather abrupt manner with Paul still in prison (Acts 28:30-31). This would suggest that Luke wrote before Paul was killed (tradition states that Paul was killed in the persecution under Nero, c. A.D. 65-67). However, one must be careful for Luke's ending also has theological overtones—the gospel being preached in Rome signifies the end of the “journey of the gospel” from Jerusalem to the rest of the world. Still, a date of A.D. 61-63 fits the evidence best.

III. Sources

The prologue of Luke seems to apply to the Book of Acts as well. Luke was an historian. He carefully researched his material (Luke 1:3) in order to write it in understandable order. Although there is dispute about what Luke meant by order in Luke (chronological or logical?) the dispute does not rage in Acts.

In Acts, Luke gives a more straightforward historical account of the spread of the gospel, though his theological interests also are presented as well. Luke was party to some of the material of which he wrote (16:10-17; 20:5-21:18; 27:1-28:16). However, it seems evident that the rest of the material came from Luke's careful investigation. He may have used some documents to guide him as he did with his Gospel. There is no consensus as to the documents. In fact, no documents have ever been identified by those seeking them.

The view that Luke wrote Acts from personal knowledge of the events, either from his own observations or from direct eyewitnesses, is quite credible and much more credible than most of the alternative suggestions.

IV. Purpose

It is too narrow to say that the purpose of Luke is to give only a historical account of the early spread of Christianity. The statement is true but not broad enough. Historical and true, Luke's book of Acts also has a theological purpose. The Gospel of Luke ends with the ascension of Jesus and the disciples returning to Jerusalem with joy and continually being in the temple praising God (cf. Luke 24:52-53). Acts begins with the ascension and the disciples in Jerusalem (Acts 1). In Acts, Luke portrays the theological development of the gospel message from Jerusalem (particularly the temple—the center of Jewish worship, thought, and life) to Rome (the center of the Gentile world at that time). He shows, by bringing out certain historical facts, that the gospel message is now active in the Gentile world. Religious Jewish opposition is evident throughout the book.

Paul's ministry (the apostle to the Gentiles) parallels the ministry of Peter (the apostle to the Jews) as the central figure in the other half of the book. Luke theologically points out that the shift in the center is brought about by the Spirit

(i.e., it is in the sovereign work of God) and not by human personalities. The Spirit is central to the theology of Luke and it is his power that guides and empowers the church and the spread of the gospel. The key to understanding the book is in 1:7-8 where God's sovereignty, the Holy Spirit, and the spread of the gospel are all linked.



An Overview of the Book of Acts



“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*.” (Acts 1:8)

	Acts 1 – 7	Acts 8 – 12	Acts 13 – 28
Spread of the Church	The church witnessing in Jerusalem	The church witnessing in all Judea and Samaria	The church witnessing to all the earth
The Gospel	Proclaimed in the city (across the street)	Proclaimed in the provinces (across the states)	Proclaimed in the world (across the seas)
Focus	Power and progress of the church	Expansion of the church	Paul’s three journeys and trials
People Addressed	Jews	Jews and Samaritans	Jews and Gentiles (Hellenists)
Key Person	Peter	Philip	Paul
Approximate Time	2 years (c. A.D. 33-35)	13 years (c. A.D. 35-48)	15 years (c. A.D. 48-63)
Development	Triumph	Transition	Travels and trials
Scope	Local Missions	World Missions	

Five Phenomena Relating to the Structure of Acts

1. It begins, like the Gospel of Luke, with an introductory section, distinctly Lukan, dealing with the key events of the Christian mission (1:1-2:41) before it sets forth the advances of the gospel “in Jerusalem, and in Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (1:7-8).
2. This introductory section is followed by what appears to be a thematic statement (2:42-47). This material, while often viewed as a summary of what preceded, also serves as the thesis paragraph for what follows. It is key to the rest of the book in terms of the life of the Church.
3. In his presentation of the advance of the Christian mission, Luke follows an essentially geographical outline that moves from Jerusalem (2:42-6:7), through Judea and Samaria (6:8-9:31), on into Palestine-Syria (9:32-12:24), then to the nations in the eastern part of the Roman Empire (12:25-19:20), and finally culminates in Paul’s defenses and the arrival of the gospel to Rome (19:21-28:31).
4. In his presentation, Luke deliberately sets up a number of parallels between the ministry of Peter in the first half of Acts and that of Paul in the last half.
5. Luke includes six summary statements or “progress reports” (6:7; 9:31; 12:24; 16:5; 19:20; and 28:31), each of which seems to conclude its own “panel” of material.

Taking all these literary and structural features into account, we may conclude that Luke developed his material in Acts along the following lines:

Introduction: The Constitutive Events of the Christian Mission (1:1-2:41)

Part I: The Christian Mission to the Jewish World (2:42-12:24)

Panel 1—The Earliest Days of the Church at Jerusalem (2:42-6:7)

Summary Statement: “So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith” (6:7).

Panel 2—Critical Events in the Lives of Three Pivotal Figures (6:8-9:31)

Summary Statement: “Then the church throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria enjoyed a time of peace. It was strengthened; and encouraged by the Holy Spirit, it grew in numbers, living in the fear of the Lord” (9:31).

Panel 3—Advances of the Gospel in Palestine-Syria (9:32-12:24)

Summary Statement: “But the word of God continued to increase and spread” (12:24).

Part II: The Christian Mission to the Nations (12:25-28:31)

Panel 4—The First Missionary Journey and the Jerusalem Council (12:25-16:5)

Summary Statement: “So the churches were strengthened in the faith and grew daily in number (16:5).

Panel 5—Wide Outreach through Two Missionary Journeys (16:6-19:20)

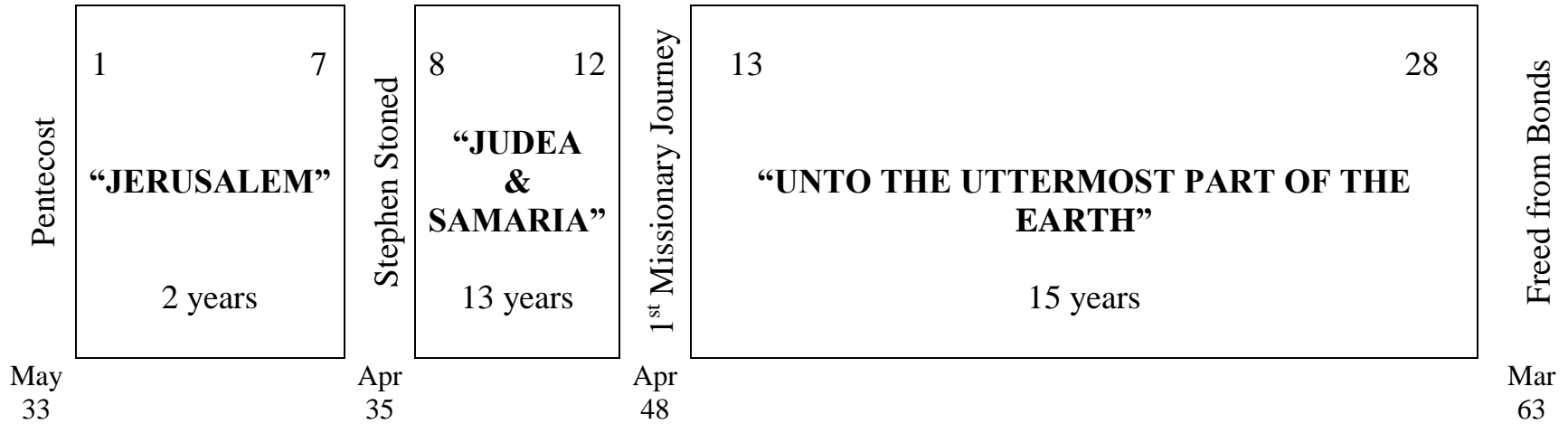
Summary Statement: “In this way the word of the Lord spread widely and grew in power” (19:20).

Panel 6—To Jerusalem and on to Rome (19:21-28:31)

Summary Statement: “Boldly and without hindrance he preached the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ” (28:31).

Laying out the Structure of Acts in this way highlights not only the parallelism that exists between Luke's second volume (Acts) and his first (Gospel of Luke) but also the parallelism built into Acts in its portrayal of the ministry of Peter in chapters 1-12 and that of Paul in chapters 13-28.

A Proposed Chronology of the Book of Acts



13:1 14:28	15:1 15:35	15:36 18:21	18:22	18:23 21:14	21:15 24:26	24:27 26:32	27:1 28:15	28:16 28:30
1st Missionary Journey	Furlough 1	2nd Missionary Journey	Furlough 2	3rd Missionary Journey	Arrest/Trial	Caesarean Imprisonment (Festus) (Agrippa)	Travel to Rome	1st Roman Imprisonment
	- Antioch - Jerusalem Council - Antioch		- Jerusalem - Antioch		- Caesarea - Jerusalem (Sanhedrin) - Caesarea (Felix)			
48	49	50	52	53	57	57	59	60
								63

The Movement Begins: The Seeds of Rebellion!

Acts 1

- I. The Christian movement proclaims a resurrected King. 1:1-3

- II. The Christian movement is empowered by the Spirit. 1:4-5

- III. The Christian movement has a mission to accomplish. 1:6-8

- IV. The Christian movement has a promise to sustain it. 1:9-11

- V. The Christian movement moves forward in prayer. 1:12-14

- VI. The Christian movement is rooted in Scripture. 1:15-20

- VII. The Christian movement is guided by godly leadership. 1:21-26

Pentecost and the Coming of the Spirit

Acts 2:1-13

- I. The coming of the Holy Spirit was a supernatural gift given by Christ. 2:1-4
 - 1) They were filled with the Spirit. 2:1-4
 - 2) They spoke by the Spirit. 2:4

- II. The coming of the Spirit reversed the curse of Babel. 2:5-11
 - 1) They heard God's word in their own language. 2:5-11
 - 2) They heard of God's work in their own language. 2:11

- III. The coming of the Spirit amazed and confused those who witnessed the event. 2:6-8, 13
 - 1) Miracles from God are often inexplicable. 2:6-8
 - 2) Miracles from God are often mocked. 2:13

A 1st Century Vision for the 21st Century Church

Acts 2:14-47

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|------|---|-----------------------|
| I. | <u>Exalt the Savior.</u> | 2:22-36 |
| | 1) Tell of His accreditation. | 2:22 |
| | 2) Tell of His crucifixion. | 2:23 |
| | 3) Tell of His resurrection. | 2:24-32 |
| | 4) Tell of His exaltation. | 2:33-36 |
| II. | <u>Exposit the Scriptures.</u> | 2:17-21; 25-28; 33-36 |
| | 1) Joel 2:28-32 – The Spirit has come from the Son. | 2:17-21, 33 |
| | 2) Psalm 16:8-11 – The Son has been raised by the Father. | 2:25-28 |
| | 3) Psalm 110 – The Father has exalted the Son. | 2:33-36 |
| III. | <u>Edify the Saints.</u> | 2:42-47 |
| | 1) Be a teaching church. | 2:42 |
| | 2) Be a loving church. | 2:42 |
| | 3) Be a praying church. | 2:42-43 |
| | 4) Be a giving church. | 2:44-45 |
| | 5) Be a worshipping church. | 2:46-47 |
| IV. | <u>Embrace the Spirit.</u> | 2:14-21, 33, 38 |
| | 1) Welcome the Spirit as promise. | 2:14-21, 33 |
| | 2) Welcome the Spirit as a gift. | 2:38 |
| V. | <u>Evangelize Sinners.</u> | 2:37-41, 47 |
| | 1) We must speak to sinners about the Savior. | 2:37-40 |
| | 2) We will see sinners come to the Savior. | 2:41, 47 |

When God Gives You More Than You Ask For

Acts 3:1-10

- I. Miracles from God will truly bless those who are hurting. 3:1-5
 - 1) Do we see the hurting? 3:1-2
 - 2) Do we hear the hurting? 3:3-5

- II. Miracles from God will bring glory to the name of Jesus. 3:6-7
 - 1) What people need is not what we can give them. 3:6
 - 2) What people need is what Jesus can give them. 3:7

- III. Miracles from God will result in praise, wonder and amazement. 3:8-11
 - 1) True miracles will be authenticated. 3:8-10
 - 2) True miracles will be amazing. 3:10

Boldness in the Face of Opposition

Acts 4:1-22

- I. Expect mixed results to the preaching of the gospel. 4:1-4
 - 1) Some will get angry. 4:1-3
 - 2) Some will believe. 4:4

- II. Be filled with the Spirit as you respond to those who oppose you. 4:5-8
 - 1) Opposition can often come from those with power and influence. 4:5-7
 - 2) Opposition gives us the opportunity to seek the Spirit and speak boldly. 4:8

- III. Stay focused on Jesus and the salvation He provides. 4:9-12
 - 1) Point to the good things that come from the gospel. 4:9
 - 2) Point to the good news that is the gospel. 4:10-12

- IV. Remain bold in the confidence you have in Christ. 4:13-22
 - 1) Jesus is all you need. 4:13
 - 2) Let your good works be your witness. 4:14-17
 - 3) Remain faithful regardless of the outcome. 4:18-22

Trusting the Lord in Times of Crisis

Acts 4:23-37

- I. Be a praying people. 4:23-30
 - 1) Acknowledge that He is in complete control. 4:23-28
 - 2) Ask for strength to remain faithful. 4:29
 - 3) Trust the Lord to keep honoring Jesus. 4:30

- II. Be an evangelistic people. 4:31
 - 1) Seek the filling of the Holy Spirit.
 - 2) Share the gospel with boldness.

- III. Be a unified people. 4:32-37
 - 1) Be of one heart. 4:32
 - 2) Share what you have with others. 4:32, 34-37
 - 3) Keep on testifying about Jesus. 4:33
 - 4) Trust your leaders. 4:34-37

Judgment Must Start at the House of God

Acts 4:36-5:11

- I. Avoid the sin of jealousy and the recognition of others. 4:36-5:2

- II. Pursue a pure heart and be truthful with others. 5:3-4

- III. Recognize God takes sin seriously and there will always be consequences. 5:5-6

- IV. Understand we do not sin in a vacuum and others will be influenced. 5:7-10

- V. Godly fear is a good thing and everyone needs it. 5:11

The Revolution Continues and the Opposition Grows

Acts 5:12-42

- I. Expect a genuine movement of God to have the touch of the supernatural. 5:12-16

- II. Expect opposition to come but just be faithful to the Lord. 5:17-21

- III. Expect God to confuse those who stand against you and watch Him work. 5:21-26

- IV. Expect your enemies to try to silence you but simple obey God rather than men. 5:27-32

- V. Expect your critics to hate and want to kill you. 5:33

- VI. Expect surprising help you never saw coming. 5:34-39

- VII. Expect some beatings but keep on preaching. 5:39-42

Why Having Godly Deacons Is a Good Thing

Acts 6:1-7

- I. They are important to God's plan of Church growth. 6:1

- II. They provide service to the body that fosters unity. 6:1

- III. They free up the leaders to preach the Word. 6:2, 4

- IV. They are Spirit-filled men with a good reputation. 6:3

- V. They are men of wisdom fit to serve others. 6:3

- VI. They are those recognized by all as full of faith and the Spirit. 6:5-6

- VII. They are those who enable the Lord's work to prosper. 6:7

The Blood of Martyrs Is Seed for the Church

Acts 6:8-7:60

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| I. | <u>The Arrest: A Spirit-empowered believer is ready to suffer.</u> | 6:8-15 |
| | 1) Be full of grace and power. | 6:8-9 |
| | 2) Be equipped with wisdom and the Spirit. | 6:10 |
| | 3) Be ready for opposition and misrepresentation. | 6:11-15 |
| II. | <u>The Sermon: A Spirit-empowered believer is ready to witness.</u> | 7:1-53 |
| | 1) Abraham: God called him and made a covenant. | 7:1-8 |
| | 2) Joseph: God rescued him and saved His people. | 7:9-16 |
| | 3) Moses: God raised him up and delivered the nation. | 7:17-43 |
| | 4) Joshua: God used him and conquered the land. | 7:44-45 |
| | 5) David: God favored him and built a kingdom. | 7:45-46 |
| | 6) Solomon: God chose him and built the temple. | 7:47 |
| | 7) The Lord: God created everything and needs no house. | 7:48-50 |
| | 8) The Holy Spirit: God spoke through His Spirit and the people rejected the prophets. | 7:51-52 |
| | 9) Jesus: God sent His Righteous One and they murdered Him. | 7:52-53 |
| III. | <u>The Death: A Spirit-empowered believer is ready to die like his Savior.</u> | 7:54-60 |
| | 1) Be filled by the Spirit. | 7:54-55 |
| | 2) Look to the Lord. | 7:55-59 |
| | 3) Forgive your enemies. | 7:60 |
| | 4) Go to sleep and wake up with Jesus. | 7:56, 60 |

The Value of Persecution for World Missions

Acts 8:1-25

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| I. | <u>Persecution will lead to a scattered church.</u> | 8:1-4 |
| | 1) Some must go but some must stay. | 8:1 |
| | 2) Some will die and others will be imprisoned. | 8:2-4 |
| II. | <u>A scattered church will be a witnessing church.</u> | 8:4-8 |
| | 1) Preach the gospel. | 8:4-6 |
| | 2) Help the hurting. | 8:7-8 |
| III. | <u>A witnessing church will be a growing church.</u> | 8:9-13 |
| | 1) Be wary of sensationalism. | 8:9-11 |
| | 2) Baptize those who believe in the gospel of Jesus Christ. | 8:12 |
| | 3) Be careful with those enamored with miracles. | 8:13 |
| IV. | <u>A growing church will be a vulnerable church.</u> | 8:14-25 |
| | 1) Recognize the importance of the Holy Spirit. | 8:14-17 |
| | 2) Expect the presence of false converts. | 8:18-21 |
| | 3) Realize that true conversion involves both the heart and the head. | 8:22-24 |
| | 4) Continue to preach the gospel to everyone. | 8:25 |

Essential Elements in Leading a Soul to Christ

Acts 8:26-40

When someone comes to Christ, there will be:

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|------|---|-----------------------------------|
| I. | <u>A soul winner (messenger).</u> | 8:26 |
| | 1) Be a spiritual servant. | 6:1-7, 21:8-9 |
| | 2) Be Spirit sensitive. | 8:26, 29, 39 |
| II. | <u>A sinner (man).</u> | 8:27-28, 30-31 |
| | 1) He had position. | 8:27 |
| | 2) He had power. | 8:27 |
| | 3) He had prestige. | 8:27 |
| | 4) He has a problem. | 8:27-28, 30-31; (cf. Romans 3:23) |
| III. | <u>The Spirit (motivation).</u> | 8:29-31 |
| | 1) Be able to hear His instruction. | 8:29 |
| | 2) Be willing to obey His direction. | 8:30-31 |
| IV. | <u>The Scriptures (message).</u> | 8:32-34 |
| | 1) Scripture promised a deliverer. | |
| | 2) Scripture predicted a death. | |
| V. | <u>A Savior (master).</u> | 8:32-35 |
| | 1) He was a sacrifice. | (cf. Isaiah 53) |
| | 2) He was a substitute. | |
| | 3) He was a satisfaction. | |
| VI. | <u>Surrender (miracle).</u> | 8:36-38 |
| | 1) There should be a confession of Jesus. | 8:36-37 |
| | 2) There should be a baptism in Jesus. | 8:38 |
| VII. | <u>Satisfaction (ministry).</u> | 8:39-40 |
| | 1) There is rejoicing by the saved. | 8:39 |
| | 2) There is preaching by the servant. | 8:40 |