

ACTS

(Luke's 2nd Volume)

Theme: The Birth and Expansion of the Church

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)
4. 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, for 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 investigations. 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 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 an 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. The 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.



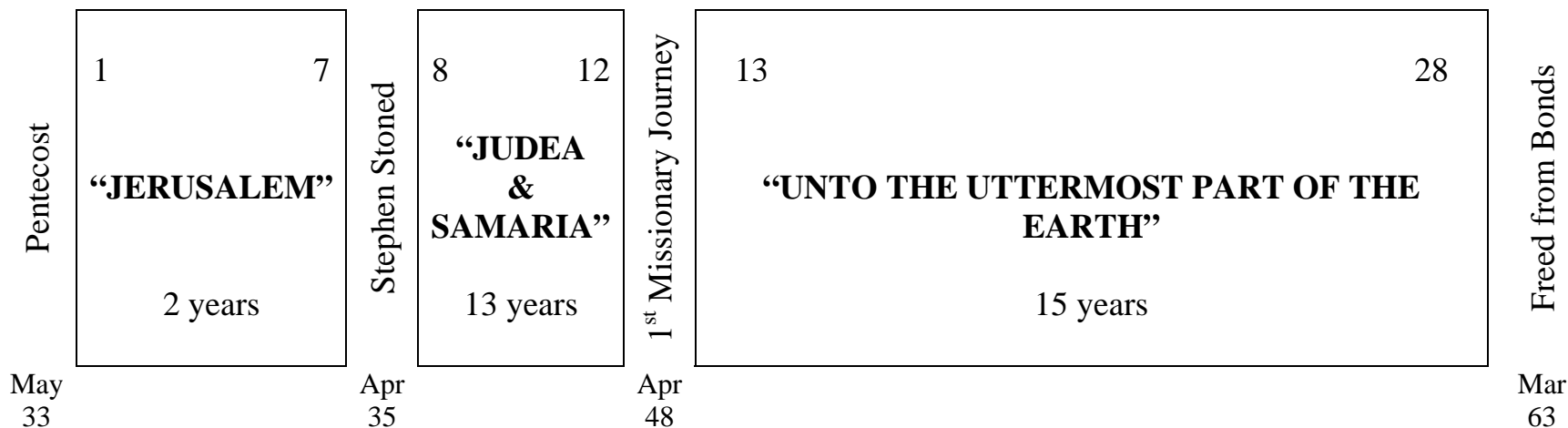
An Overview of the Book of Acts



“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

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		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 Church that Pleases God
Acts 2:14-47

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| I. | <u>Exalts the Savior</u> | 2:22-36 |
| II. | <u>Evangelizes Sinners</u> | 2:37-41 |
| III. | <u>Expounds the Scriptures</u> | 2:42 |
| IV. | <u>Edifies the Saints</u> | 2:42-45 |
| V. | <u>Embraces the Spirit</u> | 2:14-21 |
| VI. | <u>Encounters the Society</u> | 2:46-47 |
| VII. | <u>Expects the Supernatural</u> | 2:43 |