



ACTS

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Church Witnesses

You shall be My Witnesses in...

Jerusalem		Judea/Samaria	
Birth 2:41-42	Testings 7:51-60	Persecution 9:1-4	Gentiles 10:44-45
1 -2	3-7	8-12	

Antioch & the entire world!	
To Gentiles	To Rome
13-21	22-28

“And you shall receive power after the Holy Spirit has come upon you” 1:8

Welcome to the book of Acts!

To begin your study of Acts, investigate the references listed in the overview chart above. Use these verses as guideposts to unlock the message of the book. The key verse we have chosen for Acts is 1:8. This provides an outline for the natural divisions of the book: chapters 1-7, the witness in Jerusalem; chapters 8-12, the witness in Judea and Samaria; and chapters 13-28, the testimony to the ends of the earth. What do you learn from this overview of Acts? Note the persecutions of 7:54 and 12:1-25 and the impact of each!

The Writer and Setting

We conclude that Luke the physician and author of the Gospel of Luke wrote the book of Acts. The book was probably written around 63 A.D. during Paul's first Roman imprisonment.

Why the book of Acts?

It is popular today to talk of “superstars,” those marvels of athletic ability or artistry who excel at one particular sport or in another public field. To say someone is a superstar is often a veiled admission that “I could never be like that person, or do what that person does.” Perhaps, after reading Acts, you are tempted to label Paul a superstar when it comes to testifying about Christ. After all, look at all the obstacles he was able to overcome: ridicule, beatings, imprisonment, stoning, shipwreck, snake bites, even a “thorn in the flesh” (2 Corinthians 12:7-9).

But consider:

1. Paul testified in spite of physical handicap.
2. Paul testified in spite of infamous background.
3. Paul testified in spite of work responsibilities.

The Holy Spirit in the book of Acts!

In his Gospel Luke shows what Christ “BEGAN to do” on earth. In Acts he gives an account for what He CONTINUED to do by the Holy Spirit in the life of the Church (Acts 1:1-2,8). The ascension of Jesus is the closing scene in Luke. It is the opening scene in Acts (Luke 24:49-51 and Acts 1:10-11). **In the Gospels we hear Christ's teachings. In Acts, we see the impact of His miraculous teachings in the acts of Apostles.**

Because Luke was not one of the twelve and came later as the explosion occurred, his insights are unique. He was not Jewish but Greek, and being a physician he was concerned about accuracy in the facts of what had occurred. One can only assume he interviewed many eyewitnesses as he compiled his books. Acts demonstrates what men and women who are empowered by the Holy Spirit can do to honor Jesus Christ with our lives. This is why a more accurate title for this book might be “The Lord Jesus Christ at work by the Holy Spirit through the Apostles and others.” Each of the three major sections of the book (chapter 1-7, 8-12, 13-28) focuses on a particular audience, a key personality, and a significant phase in the spread of the gospel message. The following chart should clarify this overview of the book:

	1-7	8-12	13-28
<i>Audience.....</i>	<i>Jerusalem</i>	<i>Judea & Samaria</i>	<i>Uttermost Part of Earth</i>
<i>Key Person.....</i>	<i>Peter</i>	<i>Philip</i>	<i>Paul</i>
<i>Key Phrase.....</i>	<i>Established</i>	<i>Extended</i>	<i>Expanded</i>
<i>Time Period.....</i>	<i>Two Years</i>	<i>Thirteen Years</i>	<i>Fourteen Years</i>

Open Your Heart as You Read!

The Lord Jesus Christ promised He would build His Church (Matthew 16:18)! We can learn much from the interaction between Jesus and the early Church. As you study the book of Acts, carefully consider the principles of Church life that were manifested in these early years! The events of the so-called "new testament" were not meant to be duplicated or copied, but were recorded so we might have opportunity to be as dedicated to pleasing Christ as those first disciples!



ACTS Chapter Chart I-12

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Questions	Chapter	Title	Key verse (s)
Why were the Disciples at the Mount of Olives and what was the significance of the location? As you read the first few chapters of Acts make a list of what you think would have been major adjustments for the early Church.	1		
What was the importance of the day of Pentecost to the Jews? To what are the "last days" referring in this quote from Joel 2:28-32? What were the specific responses to Peter's preaching?	2		
Why does Peter refer to Jesus as "His Servant"? List all of the names used to describe Jesus. Why this emphasis on titles?	3		
In what areas did the Spirit bring the believers to "one?" If the Jewish leaders could not deny the miracle of 4:16, what kept them from coming to faith?	4		
What was the root of Ananias and Sapphira's sin? What was God teaching the Church through these events? What motivated the Jewish leader's persecution of the Apostles?	5		
What is the difference between a "hellenistic" and a native Jew? Why was it necessary to be filled with the Spirit in order to accomplish these tasks? (vs 3)	6		
Why did Stephen answer with a history lesson? What was the accusation against him? What is the main instruction you learn from the life of Stephen?	7		
How did Saul feel about events concerning the Church and why did he feel this way? What was wrong with Simon's perceptions?	8		
Why would Paul consider himself a full-fledged apostle?	9		
What was God trying to teach Peter? Why was this an important lesson and why was it such a difficult one for Peter?	10		
What was the "issue" that was taken up with Peter?	11		
This last persecution (11:19) certainly could have resulted in many deaths, including Peter's. What does this circumstance with Peter teach you can build your faith? What is the result of the events of chapters 1-12?	12		

What About Today?

The early church experienced many adjustments, not unlike the changes someone today might experience in choosing to follow Christ. We have many examples of devotion to Christ in these first twelve chapters. How do you feel devotion to Christ is seen in your life and the lives of those around you? What principles can you extract from these chapters which can help encourage your devotion to Christ?



ACTS Chapter Chart 13-21

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Questions	Chapter	Title	Key verse (s)
This begins the first missionary journey. How many miraculous effects are attributed to the Spirit, and what did He accomplish in each situation? Note each time the phrase "Word of God" (or something like it) is used in this chapter.	13		
Verse three is descriptive of the nature of this first journey. How did the response of the people in Lystra to the healing of a man born blind differ from that of the people in chapter 3?	14		
Note the phrase "door of faith" at the end of chapter 14. What are the evidences that this door to the Gentiles was indeed open? How do men try to close it? How does God preserve an open door?	15		
The second missionary journey begins in 15:36. What was the motivation for the effort? Why would Paul "cast out" the very spirit that was proclaiming the truth about them? What exactly was the "Macedonian Vision" and who was the first convert there?	16		
What was it about the Berean people that impressed Luke? What can we learn from Paul's example in Athens - about sharing the Gospel with those who have little background in the truth? What is the meaning of the "ignorance" mentioned twice in this chapter?	17		
Why do you think Paul needed the encouragement of 18:9,10? What was the significance of Paul's hairstyle?	18		
What were the main reasons Paul was opposed in Ephesus? Why was the "seven Sons of Sceva" incident so impressive to those in the area? What formed the basis for Ephesian worship and how did it impact the community?	19		
The third missionary journey begins in chapter 18. What was the purpose for it (18:23)? Why didn't Paul wish to return to Ephesus? What do you learn about Paul's relationship with the Ephesian church and his feelings about it's members?	20		
In what ways did Paul "become all things to all men"? Why is Paul seized in Jerusalem? Why was he so resolute in going to such a dangerous place?	21		

What about today?

Paul endured many hardships for the sake of the kingdom of God. His life circumstances were often less than stellar. Read 2 Corinthians 11:22-28 for a catalogued list of Paul's experiences with pain. What appears to be the most difficult pressure of all? We are also called upon to endure hardship for the sake of the Gospel. How do you see this being manifested in your spiritual walk?



ACTS Chapter Chart 22-28

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Questions	Chapter	Title	Key verse (s)
Paul defends his position before the Jews in Jerusalem. What was it that filled them with such anger? How is Paul's unique preparation for his God-use revealed in the events of this chapter?	22		
How does Jesus choose to continue to comfort Paul? What parallels do you see between Paul and Jesus' "legal trials" and their respective defences? In what ways does God choose to use ungodly authorities to help Paul? (It is a good thing the religious authorities didn't wield the same power that the secular authorities did!)	23		
Why do you think this sect (cult) of the Nazarenes was called "the Way?" Why were they considered a sect? Why was Felix frightened by a discussion of righteousness, self-control, and the judgement to come? What was the difference in political position between Felix (24), Festus (25), and Agrippa (26)?	24		
What was needed to prove charges before authorities? Do you sense Paul was defending himself?	25		
What was Festus' opinion of Paul? What was Agrippa and Bernice's opinion? What affect did Paul's testimony have on Agrippa and why?	26		
What is Paul's apparent state of mind during these events and to what do you attribute his actions? Why could this shipwreck and the related outcomes be considered a miracle? Did the soldiers ultimately appreciate Paul's help and prayers?	27		
Why do you think Acts closes as it does? Why was Paul wearing his chains? How do the final two verses of the chapter make you feel?	28		

What about today?

God's care on behalf of His children is evidenced over and over again in the life of the Apostle Paul. In Romans 8:31 Paul makes the statement, "What shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us?" His care for those who live for the Gospel far exceeds the calamity that any man or government may inflict upon a servant of God!



ACTS & The "New Testament" Letters

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This study is provided to help you see a general chronology of where the church letters fit in relation to the events of the book of Acts. This will prove valuable as you try to determine the circumstances of each author (particularly Paul) at the time each book was penned.

Pentecost (Acts 2)
Stephen martyred (Acts 6:8-7:60)
JAMES written
Agrippa's persecution, James martyred (Acts 12:1-23)
First Missionary Journey (Acts 13-14)
Peter at Antioch (Galatians 2:11-16)
GALATIANS written from Antioch
Jerusalem council, Paul's third visit (Acts 15)
Second Missionary Journey
1 THESSALONIANS written
2 THESSALONIANS written
Third Missionary Journey
1 CORINTHIANS written
2 CORINTHIANS written
ROMANS written
Paul's arrest and trial before Felix (Acts 21:26-24:22)
Paul before the Sanhedrin
Appearance of the Lord (night)
Trial before Festus (Acts 25:7-12)
Trial before Agrippa (Acts 26)
Voyage to Rome (Acts 27:1-28:29)
MATTHEW written
Arrival in Rome
EPHESIANS written
COLOSSIANS and PHILEMON written
PHILIPPIANS written
MARK written
LUKE written
1 TIMOTHY written
1 PETER written
JUDE written
HEBREWS written (author unknown)
TITUS written
2 TIMOTHY written
2 PETER written
ACTS written
REVELATION written
JOHN, 1-2-3 JOHN written



The ACTS of the Holy Spirit!

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The Acts of the Apostles has often been called the Acts of the Holy Spirit because of His prominence in directing and empowering the early church in proclaiming Jesus Christ as the Son of God to the world. An issue which concerns many today is whether or not the Spirit is working exactly as He did in the First Century Church. Should we not expect Him to do today what He did then?

This issue is both simple and complex. It is simple because the Scriptures tell us that the Spirit is bound to accomplish certain things on the earth, foremost of which is to glorify Jesus Christ (John 16:13,14). It is complex in that the Scriptures do not reveal the detailed plan of God, merely the overall blueprint, culminating in the fullness of God's Kingdom (Revelation 22). Based upon the book of Acts alone, however, Christians can still be extremely confident about the person and work of the Holy Spirit. The following is a survey of some references concerning the Holy Spirit in the Book of Acts and their application for believers today.

Acts 1:5

Baptism in the Holy Spirit 1 Corinthians 12:13

This takes place at the moment of belief as a direct cause of Holy Spirit's regeneration in the heart of the one being saved (Titus 3:5). It is essential to salvation and results in new life and new living.

Acts 1:8

Spirit empowerment for witness 1 Corinthians 2:1-5

Apart from the Holy Spirit imparting His power and enabling of us, we would be graceless and ineffective in our witness - as well as every day living.

Acts 2:33,38

The gift of the Spirit

Anyone whom God has graciously redeemed by the shed blood of Jesus Christ can have absolute assurance of the presence of the indwelling Holy Spirit (John 14:17).

Acts 4:8

Filling of the spirit Ephesians 5:18

Result of faith and obedience to God and His word - producing holiness and power for accomplishing the will of God (Romans 12:1-2; Acts 4:31; 6:3,10).

Acts 9:31

Comfort of the Holy Spirit John 15:26,27

This is the strength, peace, and stability during difficulties only God can provide. It comes often through the prayer of faith (Philippians 4:6-7).

Acts 10:19; 13:2; 16:6-7; 21:4*Direction of the Spirit*

Today He is directing all things God and is always in harmony with Scripture (He IS Scripture!). While many say that God tells them to do this or that, we can only validate by what is in harmony with God's revealed will in His Word.

Acts 20:28

Calling of overseers 1 Timothy 3; Titus 1.

God has ordained that certain men of good character be set aside as overseers and leaders in the church. They should not be in leadership of the people of God unless as servants and shepherds of the flock (1 Peter 5:1-5).

Many other aspects of the person and work of the Holy Spirit could be cited but these should be sufficient for realizing that He has been, and will continue to be, active in the church and in the lives of believers.

It should also be mentioned that much of the Spirit's work in Acts was especially unique because of the new beginnings taking place. The unfolding of the New Testament books and the limited life span of the apostles meant their contribution from the generation of thousands of eye-witnesses is unique in history.

Nevertheless, as those who follow Christ, we can gain complete assurance of His continued work until "the day of Jesus Christ". The Spirit will continue to glorify Christ, convict the world of sin, righteousness and judgment (John 16:8-12), and display His power through each living stone which composes the Body of Christ.

What About Me?

Are you open to all God's Spirit is doing in your life? Are you seeing His power at work, in your household, your job, at school, etc.? Why not begin searching the Scriptures and by faith, be "filled" with the Person who even now indwells you and Who has made you a child of God!

Fourthstream has a complete study investigating all that the Bible has to say about the Holy Spirit. It is available upon your request at Fourthstream.com.



Journey 1

Acts 13:1 - 15:41

Key Events:

- Confrontation with Elymias (13:5-12)
- Preaching Opportunities (13:16-41)
- The Gospel to the Gentiles with Power (13:44-52)
- Following up with the Saints (14:19-23)

Paul's first missionary journey was concentrated in the southern half of Asia Minor which borders on the north-eastern shores of the Mediterranean Sea. He also visited the Island of Cyprus which happened to be the home of this companion and fellow-worker, Barnabas. This first mission lasted approximately three years and established churches in Pisidian, Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, Derbe, and possibly Perga. John Mark, Barnabas' cousin, was along as a helper but left them at Perga and returned to Jerusalem.

The significance of the first journey lies with the initial preaching of the Word concerning Christ in places which had never heard the Gospel. The response was broad, as both Jews and Gentiles believed. However, the Gentiles proved to be far more receptive, while the Jews, who were so religious and so familiar with Old Testament prophecies, not only rejected the message, but also did everything they possibly could to destroy the messengers.

In the end, two items of spiritual profit seem to stand out. First is the result of preaching: "And when the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the Word of the Lord; and as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed." (13:48) As we proclaim Christ the same thing will happen. God has a plan and believers are right in the middle of it. Secondly, we have many illustrations which clearly indicate that the "abundant life" has almost nothing to do with the "good life". Paul teaches this as he encourages and strengthens churches he has established. Near the end of the first journey, he states that "...through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God".

It seems that proclaiming and persevering are to be the life of the disciple of Jesus Christ, not silence and softness. Are you a silent, soft believer or do you proclaim the Gospel and stand for what's right regardless of opposition? This is reality Christian-style!

Journey 2

Acts 15:36 - 18:23

Key Events:

- Meeting Timothy (16:1-3)
- Macedonian Vision (16:9, 10)
- The Conversion of the Philippian Jailer (16:31-40)
- Mars Hill Sermon (17:22-31)

Having taken care of pressing duties and a controversy at home among the brothers, Paul embarks upon his second excursion into Asia Minor. It is now his deep desire to strengthen and encourage the churches he has planted, as well as to reach new areas with the "message of life". This includes follow-up in Galatia and extends to Macedonia.

With the sharp disagreement of Paul and Barnabas over John Mark's suitability for the coming mission, the two men part company and thus two missionary teams are formed. Barnabas and John Mark journey to Cyprus while Paul and his new partner, Silas, travel to Syria, Cilicia, and ultimately Europe.

The ministry of the Word was extremely fruitful with many disciples being made as well as many enemies. However, we see a shift in Paul's emphasis which surely must have left him heartbroken as he now becomes somewhat disenfranchised from the Jews. This estrangement took place in Corinth where the Jews again "resisted and blasphemed", so that Paul "shook out his garment and said to them, 'Your blood be upon your own heads! I am clean. From now on I shall go to the Gentiles'." Paul expressed his feelings with great emotion concerning his Jewish brothers in the Book of Romans where he says he could wish for separation from Christ if his kinsmen would embrace their Messiah. But, in any case, Paul now concentrates primarily on the Gentiles and their new churches.

This mission demonstrates the importance of believers encouraging and meeting one another's needs. It was on this journey that Paul wrote First and Second Thessalonians in which he emphasized these very things, laying down many central teachings concerning this life and the life to come. He exhorts them to "comfort one another with these words" (4:18).

What about you? Are you an encourager? Do you help your brothers and sisters to persevere? Are you a stabilizer or a stumbling block to growing faith? God has shown us through Paul the significance of the Body. You and I are to be working out our faith, laboring in love, and persevering in hope (1 Thessalonians 1:3). This is the best testimony to each other and the God-seeking world.

Journey 3

Acts 18:23 - 21:16

Key Events:

The Miracles at Ephesus (19:11-20)

The Ephesian Elder Farewell (20:17-35)

Paul's third missionary journey begins in Antioch, makes a complete sweeping tour throughout Asia Minor, and ends in Jerusalem. This tour took approximately two years to complete and shows Paul still preaching to Jews but focusing essentially upon the young Gentile churches. Here he was again reproving, teaching, encouraging, and admonishing with all long-suffering and doctrine.

There is a sense in which Paul realizes he will soon have to move on to his final destination; that is, to preach the gospel to those in Rome. Thus far, he has accomplished all that God has given him to do. Now he faces his greatest challenge of all as he prepares to confront the awesome and godless pagan might, power, and splendor that was Rome - with his simple message of love and grace in Christ Jesus. The application for our lives comes from Acts 20:24. Notice Paul's heartfelt words, "But I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, in order that I may finish my course, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify solemnly of the Gospel of the Grace of God". Can you presently say these words about your life?

What will you be considering as important regarding yourself ten, twenty, or thirty years from now when your life comes to a close? Will a soft, cozy retirement be nearest your heart or finishing the course and the ministry each of us has received from Christ? We must be careful how we walk, for many are sowing seeds and making decisions which will cause them to wander away from the faith!

Journey 4?!

Acts 21-28

Some have considered Paul's eventful trip to Rome every bit as much a "missionary journey" as his other three forays. Read 2 Timothy 4:1-8 as you consider the events of this journey: Paul's four trials: The Council (23:1-11), Felix (24:10-23), Festus (25:7-13), and before Agrippa (26:1-32). The incredible shipwreck (27:14-44). Paul's testimony before Rome (28:30,31).

Well run, brother Paul!