

BIB204 NT2 Early Church

Unit 1 Study Resource

Acts of the Apostles – Executable Outline

Presented by the



LANCASTER BIBLE COLLEGE
CAPITAL SEMINARY & GRADUATE SCHOOL

For Use by the

Blue Letter Bible Institute

[Web: Study.Bible](http://Study.Bible)

A Ministry of the

Blue Letter Bible

[Web: BlueLetterBible.org](http://BlueLetterBible.org)



Acts of the Apostles

Introduction to Acts of the Apostles

TITLE

Commonly called "**The Acts Of The Apostles**", it is simply titled "**Acts**" in some of the oldest manuscripts. It might appropriately be called "**Some Of The Acts Of Some Of The Apostles**" since it does not try to describe all of the acts of all the apostles. Rather, the focus is clearly on some of the acts or deeds of mostly Peter (the key figure in the first half) and Paul (the key figure in the second). It might also be called "**The Acts Of The Holy Spirit**", as that Person of the Godhead is very much an active participant throughout the book.

AUTHOR

Though he does not mention himself by name, the author is undoubtedly **Luke**, physician and frequent traveling companion of the apostle Paul. From **Act 1:1-3**, we learn Acts is the second historical account to Theophilus (see below), the first being the gospel universally attributed to Luke (cf. **Lk 1:1-4**).

Luke is described as "**the beloved Physician**" (**Co 4:14**), and the vocabulary of both the gospel and Acts shows evidence of a medical mind. Mentioned as a "fellow laborer" (**Phe 24**) who was with Paul in his last days (**2 Ti 4:11**), Luke often accompanied Paul on his travels beginning with his second journey. By carefully noting the use of "we" and "they" in the book of Acts, we glean that Luke joined Paul at Troas (**Act 16:10-11**), and remained at Philippi (**Act 17:1**) until Paul later picked him up on his way to Troas (**Act 20:1-6**). The book ends with Luke accompanying Paul to his imprisonment in Rome (**Act 28:16**).

It is evident Luke was very careful to provide a historically accurate account in the both the gospel and Acts (cf. **Lk 1:1-4,5; 2:1-3; 3:1-2**). **Sir William Ramsay**, archaeologist who started his career to prove Luke to be in error, offered this testimony as a result of his research: "Luke is a historian of the first rank; not merely are his statements of fact trustworthy, he is possessed of the true historic sense...in short, this author should be placed along with the greatest of historians." In fact, Luke provides the only record of the first thirty years of the early church.

RECIPIENT

Both the gospel and Acts were written to one man: **Theophilus** (**Lk 1:3; Ac 1:1**), whose name means "God lover". Ramsay suggests the use of "most excellent" (**Lk 1:3**) was a title like "Your Excellency" (cf. **Act 23:26; 26:25**) and that Theophilus was a government official of high rank. It is not used in Acts (**Ac 1:1**), and one intriguing possibility is that he became a believer in between receiving the gospel and Acts. Some have entertained the possibility that Theophilus was a Roman official in charge of administering Paul's case before Caesar, and that the gospel and Acts were written to help him understand the facts of Jesus Christ and Paul's role in the history of the church.

TIME AND PLACE OF WRITING

The book ends abruptly with Paul under house arrest awaiting trial in Rome (**Act 28:16,30-31**). This may indicate that the book was written before Paul's trial and eventual release. The dates for Paul's first imprisonment in Rome are 60-62 A.D. If the book was just before or after Paul's release, then it was likely written around **63 A.D.** from **Rome**.

PURPOSE OF THE BOOK

As indicated previously, the original purpose of both the gospel and Acts may have been to assist Theophilus in some official capacity in learning about Jesus and His apostles. Yet the inspiration and preservation of the book would indicate an important future role in the providence of God. Based on its content, I would offer the following purpose of this book:

- **To record the establishment and early growth of the church**

Other reasons could be given for why this book was written. The detail given to conversions and the involvement of the Holy Spirit would certainly suggest the book is designed to reveal:

- **Examples of conversions to the gospel of Christ**
- **The ministry of the Holy Spirit in the apostles and the early church**

The value of Acts is also seen in that it provides the historical framework for the epistles found in the New Testament. From Romans to Revelation, names, places, and events are mentioned upon which light is shown by the historical account of Acts. Without Acts, the gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John would be left without a satisfying answer to the question, "What happened next?"

THEME OF THE BOOK

The book begins in Jerusalem and ends at Rome. It describes the establishment and growth of the Lord's church throughout the Mediterranean world through the work of the apostles and other Christians under the direction of the Holy Spirit. We read their sermons and see the conversions which resulted as they carried out the Great Commission (**Mt 28:18-20; Mk 16:15-16**). We learn how local churches were established, and much of their work, worship and organization. But mostly we see the faith and efforts of those charged to be witnesses of the Lord and of His resurrection from the dead. An appropriate theme of this book might therefore be:

"WITNESSES FOR THE LORD JESUS CHRIST"

KEY VERSE: **Acts 1:8**

"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."

Outline

I. **THEIR WITNESS IN JERUSALEM** (**Act 1:1-8:3**)

A. **PREPARATION** (**Act 1:1-26**)

1. Introduction to the book (**Act 1:1-3**)
2. The promise of the Spirit (**Act 1:4-8**)
3. The ascension of Jesus (**Act 1:9-11**)
4. The waiting for the Spirit (**Act 1:12-14**)
5. The selection of Matthias (**Act 1:16-26**)

B. **ESTABLISHMENT OF THE CHURCH** (**Act 2:1-47**)

1. The outpouring of the Spirit (**Act 2:1-4**)
2. The reaction of the crowd (**Act 2:5-13**)
3. The explanation by Peter (**Act 2:14-21**)
4. The first gospel sermon by Peter (**Act 2:22-36**)

5. The conversion of 3000 souls (**Act 2:37-41**)
6. The beginning of the church (**Act 2:42-47**)

C. THE CHURCH IN JERUSALEM (**Act 3:1-8:3**)

1. The healing of the lame man; Peter's second sermon (**Act 3:1-26**)
2. The first persecution against the church; the liberality of the church (**Act 4:1-37**)
3. The first trouble within; increasing persecution without (**Act 5:1-42**)
4. The disturbance within resolved; intensifying persecution without (**Act 6:1-15**)
- 5.
6. The address and martyrdom of Stephen (**Act 7:1-60**)
7. The persecution involving Saul against the church (**Act 8:1-3**)

II. THEIR WITNESS IN JUDEA AND SAMARIA (**Act 8:4-12:25**)

A. THE PREACHING BY PHILIP (**Act 8:4-40**)

1. The conversion of the Samaritans (**Act 8:4-25**)
2. The conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch (**Act 8:26-40**)

B. THE CONVERSION OF SAUL OF TARSUS (**Act 9:1-31**)

1. The appearance of the Lord on the road to Damascus (**Act 9:1-8**)
2. The baptism of Saul by Ananias (**Act 9:9-19**)
3. The initial ministry and persecution of Saul (**Act 9:20-31**)

C. THE MIRACLES OF PETER (**Act 9:32-43**)

1. The healing of Aeneas (**Act 9:32-35**)
2. The raising of Dorcas from the dead (**Act 9:36-43**)

D. THE CONVERSION OF CORNELIUS (**Act 10:1-11:18**)

1. The account recorded by Luke (**Act 10:1-48**)
2. The account retold by Peter (**Act 11:1-18**)

E. THE MINISTRIES OF BARNABAS, SAUL AND PETER (**Act 11:19-12:25**)

1. The work of Barnabas and Saul in Antioch (**Act 11:19-26**)
2. The work of Barnabas and Saul in Judea (**Act 11:27-30; 12:25**)
3. The persecution by Herod; James beheaded, Peter arrested (**Act 12:1-4**)
4. The release of Peter from prison by an angel; Herod's death (**Act 12:5-24**)

III. THEIR WITNESS TO THE END OF THE EARTH (**Act 13:1-28:30-31**)

A. THE FIRST MISSIONARY JOURNEY OF PAUL (**Act 13:1-14:28**)

1. The departure from Antioch of Syria (**Act 13:1-3**)
2. The ministry on the island of Cyprus (**Act 13:4-12**)
3. The preaching in Antioch of Pisidia (**Act 13:13-52**)
4. The work and persecution in Iconium, Lystra and Derbe (**Act 14:1-20**)
5. The confirmation of churches and appointment of elders (**Act 14:21-23**)
6. The return trip to Antioch (**Act 14:24-28**)

B. THE ISSUE OF CIRCUMCISION AND THE LAW (**Act 15:1-35**)

1. The problem surfaces in Antioch (**Act 15:1-3**)

2. The problem resolved in Jerusalem (**Act 15:4-29**)
3. The letter delivered to Antioch (**Act 15:30-35**)

C. THE SECOND MISSIONARY JOURNEY OF PAUL (**Act 15:36-18:22**)

1. The separation of Paul and Barnabas (**Act 15:36-41**)
2. The addition of Timothy to Paul and Silas (**Act 16:1-5**)
3. The call to come to Macedonia (**Act 16:6-10**)
4. The conversion of Lydia in Philippi (**Act 16:11-15**)
5. The conversion of the Philippian jailor (**Act 16:16-40**)
6. The proclamation of Christ in Thessalonica, Berea, and Athens (**Act 17:1-34**)
7. The year and a half at Corinth (**Act 18:1-17**)
8. The quick trip back to Antioch (**Act 18:18-22**)

D. THE THIRD MISSIONARY JOURNEY OF PAUL (**Act 18:23-21:17**)

1. The strengthening of disciples in Galatia and Phrygia (**Act 18:23**)
2. The conversion of Apollos by Aquila and Priscilla (**Act 18:24-28**)
3. The three years at Ephesus, ending with a riot (**Act 19:1-41**)
4. The trip through Macedonia, three months in Greece, and return through Macedonia (**Act 20:1-5**)
5. The breaking of bread and miracle at Troas; heading toward Jerusalem (**Act 20:7-16**)
6. The meeting with the Ephesian elders at Miletus (**Act 20:17-38**)
7. The warnings on the way to Jerusalem; brief stays in Tyre and Caesarea (**Act 21:1-14**)
8. The arrival in Jerusalem (**Act 21:15-17**)

E. THE ARREST OF PAUL AND JOURNEY TO ROME (**Act 21:18-28:31**)

1. The counsel of James and elders of the church in Jerusalem (**Act 21:18-25**)
2. The arrest of Paul in the temple (**Act 21:26-40**)
3. The defense by Paul to the Jewish mob (**Act 22:1-30**)
4. The defense by Paul before the Sanhedrin council (**Act 23:1-10**)
5. The plot against Paul and deliverance to Felix (**Act 23:11-35**)
6. The trial before Felix; procrastination by Felix (**Act 24:1-27**)
7. The appearance before Festus and appeal to Caesar (**Act 25:1-12**)
8. The defense before Festus and King Agrippa (**Act 25:13-26:32**)
9. The journey to Rome; shipwreck along the way (**Act 27:1-28:16**)
10. The explanation of Paul to the leaders of the Jews in Rome (**Act 28:17-29**)
11. The waiting in Rome for two years, yet preaching and teaching (**Act 28:30-31**)

Review Questions for the Introduction

1. Who is the author of the book of Acts? What was his profession?

- Luke
- Physician

2. To whom was this book written? What other book is addressed to this person?

- Theophilus ([Ac 1:1](#))
- The gospel of Luke ([Lk 1:3](#))

3. What might indicate that this person was an official of high rank?

- Being addressed as "most excellent" ([Lk 1:3](#))

4. When was this book likely written? From where? What may be indicative of this?

- 63 A.D.; Rome
- It is when and where the book abruptly ends ([Ac 28:30-31](#))

5. What is proposed as the primary purpose of the book of Acts?

- To record the establishment and early growth of the church

6. Based on content, what else does the book appear designed to reveal?

- Examples of conversions to the gospel of Christ
- The ministry of the Holy Spirit in the apostles and the early church

7. What is offered as the theme of the book of Acts?

- Witnesses for the Lord Jesus Christ

8. What is the key verse?

- "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." - [Ac 1:8](#)

9. What are the main divisions of the book as suggested by the key verse and the outline in the introduction?

- Their witness in Jerusalem ([Act 1:1-8:3](#))
- Their witness in Judea and Samaria ([Act 8:4-12:25](#))
- Their witness to the end of the earth ([Act 13:1-28:31](#))