The Acts of the Apostles

May 2014
Introduction

Title of the Book

“Acts” was added by copyists – some also added “of the apostles”


Written by Luke

All the great historians of the ancient world have been thoroughly scrutinized by scholars. Luke has been regarded as the most accurate historian of the ancient world and his work has been checked more carefully than anybody else’s.
For example: “Early in the twentieth century a British scholar by the name of William Mitchell Ramsay, a skeptic about Christianity, traced the missionary journeys of the Apostle Paul as recorded in the book of Acts. He looked for evidence in the landscape and ruins and in the titles of the local rulers or magistrates in foreign cities that were not common knowledge to people who lived in Jerusalem. Ramsay started out a skeptic and ended up a believer because he was overwhelmed by the evidence he was able to uncover. The stones were crying out that every title of every magistrate Luke recorded in the book of Acts was verified by the turning over of the shovel. Likewise, the description and accounts of the towns were just as Luke had described them.” R. C. Sproul

The Book of Acts Covers 30 years of history
Book of transition:

Theme of both Luke and Acts:

Key Verse: 1:8

Outline of the Book:
1. Reaching Jerusalem – 1-7
2. Judea and Samaria – 8
3. Remotest Parts of the World- 9-28

Importance for Today:
Chapter 1

Setting the Stage for the Rest of the Book – 1:1-5

Reached out to People
Transformed lives by the Gospel
Delivered people from Satan’s Power
Extended mercy to sinners
2. The Evidence That Changed the Apostles Lives – 1:3

He appeared to people who knew beyond a shadow of a doubt that He had died:

- Mary Magdalene
- The other women at the tomb
- Peter in Jerusalem
- Two disciples on road to Emmaus
- Ten disciples (w/o Thomas)
- All 11 disciples (including Thomas)
- 7 disciples while fishing on the Sea of Galilee
- 11 disciples on a mountain in Galilee
- A crowd of 500 hundred
- Jesus’ half brother, James
3. The Power God Would Give – 1:4-5
Power to Witness to the Whole World – 1:6-11
Three Principles:
1. It Is Easy to Get Side-Tracked from the Right Priority – 1:6-7

Because of OT prophecies, Jews expected their kingdom to be marked by revived activity of the Holy Spirit – Isaiah 32:15; 44:3; Ezekiel 39:29; Joel 2:28; Zechariah 12:10

2. God Has Empowered Us to Fulfill His Plan – 1:8
1:8 (continued)
Jerusalem=home – Acts 1-7
Judea and Samaria=neighboring area and nearby area with a different culture – Acts 8
Earth=Acts 9-28

3. Jesus’ Return Is Promised to Us and Becomes a Motivation for Our Fulfillment of His Plan – 1:9-11

Cloud is the same symbol Moses encountered on Sinai when God covered him so he saw only the afterglow of God’s presence
The same cloud that led Israel through the wilderness
The cloud that was over the tabernacle and filled the temple
The cloud that Ezekiel saw depart over the east gate
The cloud that surrounded JC on Mt of Transfiguration
The People God Uses – 1:12-14

1. People Who Obey – 1:12

2. People Who Are Ordinary – 1:13
3. People Who Pray – 1:14

We can assume their praying involved such things as:
ACTS (Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, Supplication)

- Adoration for God’s mercy in Sending Holy Spirit
- Confession of cowardice, scattering, selfish ambition, unbelief
- Thanksgiving for all JC had done, forgiveness, protection, etc.
- Supplication for the Holy Spirit, faithfulness and strength to do the job ahead
Lessons from the Death of Judas – 1:15-26
1. The Fulfillment of Psalm 69:25 – 1:15-20a
2. The fulfillment of Psalm 109:8 – 1:20b-26
Chapter 2

1. The Timing of the Holy Spirit’s Coming – 2:1

2. Evidence of the Holy Spirit’s Coming – 2:2-4
   (1) Audible Evidence – 2:2
(2) Visible Evidence – 2:3

(3) Oral Evidence – 2:4

3. Reactions to the Holy Spirit’s Coming – 2:5-12
   (1) Confusion – 2:5-6

   (2) Amazement – 2:7
Nations at Pentecost

c. A.D. 30/33

Pentecost attracted Jews from all over the world to Jerusalem to celebrate the annual festival. Those who heard the apostles’ message in their native languages at Pentecost came from various regions within the two great competing empires of the day—the Roman Empire and the Parthian Empire—with Jerusalem near the center.
(4) Denial – 2:13

Peter Uses His Keys – 2:14-21
Acts 2-3 – Peter opens the door for Jews to come to salvation
Acts 10 – Peter opens the door for Gentiles to come to salvation
Acts 8:20-23 – Peter excludes an unrepentant sinner

1. Peter Boldly Addresses the Crowd – 14

2. Peter Answers the Crowd’s Foolish Charge – 15
3. Peter Explains What Has Happened in Light of Scripture – 16-21
The Messiah Is Identified – 2:22-36

1. God Endorsed Jesus by Working Miracles through Him – 22
2. God Endorsed Jesus by Planning His Death – 23

3. God Endorsed Jesus by Raising Him from the Dead – 24-32

The Response to Peter’s Sermon:

1. The Conviction – 2:37
2. The Conversion – 38-40

3. The Sign of Conversion – 2:41
4. The Evidence of Conversion – 2:42
   (1) Learning

   (2) Fellowshipping

   • We commit ourselves to faithfulness in getting together, openness and honesty w each other
   • We assume the responsibility to encourage, admonish, and pray for one another
   • We “watch out for one another, feeling a mutual responsibility for each other’s welfare.
   • We help each other through encouragement and accountability

   (3) Obeying

   (4) Praying
The Model Church – 2:43-47
1. A Church in Awe of God – 2:43

2. A Church Selflessly Sharing with Each Other – 2:44-45
3. A Church Joyfully Sharing in Word and Fellowship – 2:46-47
Chapter 3
Peter’s Use of the Signs of an Apostle – 3:1-10

1. God Delights in Working through People – 1

2. God Delights in Impossible Problems – 2
3. God Delights in Being the Only Answer – 3-7

4. God Delights in the Praises of the People Whose Need He Has Met – 8

5. God Delights in Creating Opportunities to Give the Gospel – 9-10
Peter Exalts Jesus by Giving 7 Declarations about Who Jesus Is: 3:11-18

1. Jesus Is the One Glorified by God – 3:11-13a

2. Jesus Is the Long-Awaited Servant of the Lord – 3:13b
3. Jesus Is the Holy and Righteous One – 3:14

4. Jesus Is the Author of Life – 3:15a

5. Jesus Is the One Raised by God from the Dead – 3:15b

6. Jesus Is the One with Authority – 3:16

7. Jesus Is the One Who Fulfilled Scripture – 3:17-18
The Results of True Repentance – 3:19-26

1. Forgiveness – 3:19

2. Kingdom Benefits – 20-21
3. Avoidance of Judgment – 3:22-23

4. God’s Blessing – 3:24-26
Chapter 4
The 1st Persecution of the Church Begins – 4:1-12

1. The Arrest – 4:1-4
2. The Handling of the Persecution – 4:5-12
   (1) They Were Filled with the Holy Spirit – 4:5-8a

   (2) They Were Bold and Used It as an Opportunity to Preach the Gospel – 4:8b-12
   #1 The Confrontation with the Sanhedrin – 4:8b-10

4 points to his sermon:
- They were guilty of crucifying JC
- Jesus rose from the dead
- The plan of God was accomplished in spite of their opposition
- Jesus is the one and only way of salvation

   #2 The Confirmation with Scripture – 4:11
#3 The Call to the Savior – 4:12
“There is much confusion in world today as to what Christianity is, but in this one verse we have the ultimate test. If anything that claims the name of Christian does not conform to this verse, it is false.” Martyn Lloyd-Jones

The Decision to Disobey the Governing Authorities – 4:13-22

1. The Leaders’ Dilemma – 4:13-16
2. The Leaders’ Command – 4:17-18

3. The Apostles’ Response – 4:19-20

Worshiping in the Midst of Persecution – 4:23-31

1. Their Prayer Was Instinctive – 4:23-24a

2. Their Prayer Was Submissive to the Will of God – 4:24b-28

Before making a request of God they filled their minds with who God is
* He is the God of creation – 24
* He is the God of revelation – 25-26
* He is the God of history – 27
3. Their Prayer Was a Request for Boldness – 4:29-30

4. Their Prayer Was Effective – 4:31
In 4:32-34 we have real evidence of changed lives which is described by John Piper in this way, “Two of the effects of believing in Jesus are that the heart is loosened in relationship to things and tightened in its relationship to people…faith in Christ creates a bond of love to people and cuts the bond of love to things.”

1. Sharing Saints – 4:32-37
   (1) Spiritual Oneness – 32
(2) Powerful Preaching – 4:33

(3) Sharing with Those in Need – 4:34-37

2. Sinning Saints – 5:1-11
The Ways of God: 5:12-26

1. He Works through Us – 5:12
2. He Draws Non-Believers to Himself – 5:13-16

“Believers were added to the Lord”:
- He chose them before the world was created – Ephesians 1:4-5; Acts 13:48 “as many as were appointed to eternal life believed”
- Someone told them the Gospel – Romans 10:13-14
- The Holy Spirit opened their understanding to see the truth
- The Holy Spirit convicted them of their sin
- They believed – John 3:16

3. He Sometimes Allows Trials – 5:17-18
4. He Sometimes Reverses Trials – 5:19-26

Persistence in the Midst of Persecution – 5:27-42

1. The Accusations against the Apostles – 5:27-28

2. The Persistence of the Apostles – 5:29-32
   (1) In Obeying God – 5:29
(2) In Telling the Truth about Their Sin and Jesus – 5:30

(3) In Exalting Christ – 5:31

(4) Uphold Divine Revelation – 5:32
3. The reactions of the Jewish Leaders – 5:33-40

4. The Continuing Persistence of the Apostles – 41-42

How is it possible to rejoice in persecution?
- We realize it’s a privilege to be persecuted for Jesus’ sake
- We have new opportunities to witness for Jesus
- We realize it gives us new opportunities to grow
- It drives us to God
1. Satan’s Attack – 6:1
2. God’s Counter Attack – 6:2-7
   (1) Godly Leaders Worked on Their Priorities – 6:2-4
(2) More People Began Serving – 6:5-6

(3) The Ministry Became More Fruitful – 6:7

Strong warning for us: Ephesians 4:1-16
• Grow in the traits of godliness mentioned in Ephesians 4:2
• When you are upset w another member of Christ’s body pray for that person
• When you are upset w another member of Christ’s body go to that person in the steps of Matthew 18:15-17
How to Make an Impact (the Example of Stephen) – 6:8-15

1. Build Spiritual Maturity in Your Life – 6:8

2. Speak God’s Wisdom – 6:9-10
3. Stand Strong in the Midst of Mistreatment – 6:11-14
4. Reflect the Glory of God – 6:15

Stephen’s Sermon – 7:1-53

Chapter 7

1. The Question by the High Priest – 7:1
2. Stephen’s Answer – 7:2-53
   (1) God’s Blessing to Abraham – 7:2-8
(2) Joseph and the Israelites in Egypt – 7:9-16

(3) Moses and the Exodus – 17-44

[1] Moses Was Rejected by the Jewish People – 17-29
Ways in which JC is like Moses:
- Raised up by God
- Was a Jew
- Stood between God & man
- Was a great like teacher
- Was a great guide and leader
- Was one who humbled himself
- Was a shepherd
- Was a redeemer

Stephen’s Triumphant Entrance to the Lord’s Presence – 7:54-60
1. Stephen Was Full of the Holy Spirit – 7:54-55a

2. Stephen Looked to the Lord – 7:55b-56d
3. Made Sure That All He Had to Do Is Die – 7:57-59

4. He Was Concerned for the Salvation of Those Who Were without Christ – 7:60-8:3
God Has Faithful Witnesses and Satan Has Clever Imitators – 8:4-24

1. God’s Faithful Witnesses – 8:4-8
   (1) God Brings Opportunities to Witness out of Trials – 8:4

(2) God Blesses His Faithful Servants with Greater Opportunities – 8:5-8
2. Satan’s Clever Imitators – 8:9-24
   (1) The Imitators Are Motivated by Selfishness – 8:9-11

   (2) God Works Despite the Imitators – 8:12

   (3) The Imitators Will Be Exposed by God – 8:13-23
“Long my imprisoned spirit lay fast bound in sin and nature’s night; 
Thine eye diffused a quickening ray, I woke, the dungeon flamed with light; 
My chains fell off, my heart was free; I rose, went forth and followed Thee 
Amazing love! How can it be that thou, my God, shouldst die for me?”

Charles Wesley, “And Can It Be That I Should Gain”

(4) The Imitators Want Relief from Consequences Rather Than Forgiveness – 8:24
A Divine Appointment – Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch – 8:25-40

1. Witnessing to Many – 25

2. Witness to One by Divine Appointment – 8:26-40
   (1) The Command – 8:26
   (2) The Contact – 8:27-30
(3) The Conversion – 8:31-35

(4) The Consequences – 8:36-40
Chapter 9

Paul’s Conversion
In 1:8 our Lord gave an outline of the plan for spreading the gospel:

- 1st to Jerusalem
- 2nd to Judea and Samaria
- 3rd to the entire world

1. Paul’s Conversion Was the conversion of a Totally Committed Opponent of Christianity – 9:1-2

2. Paul’s Conversion Was Sudden and Unexpected – 9:3

In Luke’s writing, repetition by Jesus of a name means rebuke of warning:
  * Martha – Lk 10:41
  * Simon – Lk 22:31
  * Jerusalem – 13:34

4. Paul’s Conversion Was a Humbling Experience – 9:8-9

Saul of Tarsus knew:
  • His previous life was displeasing to God
  • Jesus was alive, exalted, in some manner to be associated w God whom Israel worshiped
  • Jesus’ death on the cross (rather than discrediting Him as an impostor, fulfilled prophecy & was really God’s provision for sin
  • Jesus’ resurrection confirmed him as being Israel’s Messiah and Lord of all
God’s Power Transforms a Life – 9:10-31

1. Prayer - 9:10-12
2. Service to God – 9:13-16
   (1) He’s Chosen by God for Service – 9:13-15

(2) The Suffering – 9:16

3. The Ministry of the Holy Spirit – 9:17

The Holy Spirit had already been playing a role in his salvation:
* convicted him of sin – John 16:9
* convincing him of the Lordship of Christ – 1 Corinthians 12:3
* making him new – Titus 3:5
* Placing him in body of Christ and indwelling him – 1 Corinthians 12:13
4. Obedience – 9:18-19a

5. Fellowship with Other Believers – 9:19b

6. Speaking about Christ – 9:20-21

7. Spiritual Growth – 9:22
8. Opposition – 9:23-31

Paul returned w the great truths of NT fixed in his mind:

- Christ’s cross (Romans)
- Christ’s church (Ephesians)
- Christ’s coming (Thessalonians)
Peter Prepared by the Providence of God for an Encounter with a Gentile – 9:32-43

1. The Providence of God Moved Peter out of Jerusalem – 9:32-35
2. The Providence of God brought Peter into Contact with a Dead Body – 9:36-42

“Full of good works” is an important trait of a believer:
- John 15:5
- Ephesians 2:10
- Philippians 1:11
- Colossians 1:10
- 1 Timothy 6:18

3. The Providence of God brought Peter into the Home of a Tanner – 9:43
Chapter 10
Peter and Cornelius – 10:1-36

1. Cornelius’ Credentials – 1-2
   (1) Roman Centurion – 1

   (2) Reverent – 2a
(3) Feared God – 2bh

(4) Generous – 2c

(5) Prayed Continually – 2d

2. An Angel’s Appearance to Cornelius – 3-4

3. The Angel’s Instructions to Cornelius – 5-6

4. Cornelius’ Obedience – 7-8
God’s Preparation of Peter – 10:9-23a

1. Peter’s Eagerness to Spend Time with God – 10:9

2. Peter’s Eagerness to Eat – 10:10

3. God’s Eagerness to Transform Peter – 10:11-13

4. Peter’s Reluctance to Learn God’s Lesson – 10:14
5. God’s Explaining of the Lesson – 10:15-16


7. Peter’s Learning the Lesson – 10:21-23a

The Meeting between Peter and Cornelius – 10:23b-36
1. Peter’s Humility – 10:23b-26
2. Peter’s Honesty – 10:27-29

3. Cornelius’ Response – 10:30-33
Salvation Is through Jesus Christ – Acts 10:37-43
Peter Lifts up Jesus As:
1. A Person Anointed with the Holy Spirit and Power – 10:37-38a

3. A Person Who Was Killed in Spite of His Goodness – 39b

4. Alive from the Dead because God Raised Him after Three Days – 10:40-41

5. The Final Judge of Every Person – 42

6. The Source of God’s Forgiveness for Our Sins – 43
1. God’s Sign to the Jews – 10:44-48

The indwelling of the Holy Spirit was:
- promised in Old Testament – Ezekiel 36:26
- promised by Jesus in John 14:16-17; 7:37-39
- taught in epistles – Romans 8:9; 1 Corinthians 12:13
2. Criticism against Peter – 11:1-3

3. The Answer to the Criticism against Peter – 11:4-17
   (1) The Vision from God – 11:4-11

   (2) The Witness of the Holy Spirit – 11:12-15

   (3) The Witness of the Word of Jesus – 11:16-17

4. The Acquittal – 11:18
2. Witnessing the Grace of God in the Spiritual Growth of the Gentiles – 11:25-26

James Killed and Peter Imprisoned – 12:1-17

1. The Death of James – 12:1-2

“To understand the persecution cited in this text, we need to understand what King Herod was like. His father, Aristobulous, had been murdered by his own father, Herod the Great, the ruler who had ordered the slaughter of the innocent babies at Christ’s birth. After the death of Aristobulus, the Herod of Acts 12 was sent to Rome to be educated, and there he grew up as a close friend of the imperial family. He was something of a playboy, and in A.D. 23 he fled to Palestine to escape his creditors. In Palestine he lived in humility and poverty under his uncle, Herod Antipas. Upon his return to Rome, he was imprisoned by the emperor Tiberius for some critical remarks he had made. His life hit bottom. But then Tiberius died, and Herod’s childhood friend, Caligula, came to power – not only freeing him from prison, but giving him a gold chain weighing as much as his iron fetters in prison. Soon Herod was named ruler of some Palestinian provinces. When another childhood friend, Claudius, succeeded Caligula, Herod became ruler of Judea and Samaria. Murder and intrigue had been the currency of his entire life.” R. Kent Hughes, *Acts the Church Afire*
2. The Detention of Peter – 12:3-4

3. The Release of Peter – 12:5-17
   (1) Human Intercession – 12:5
Angels are sent by God to minister to His people: Hebrews 1:14
- Jacob had an angel protect him from Laban – Gen 48:16
- Daniel had an angel protect him from the lions – Dan 6:27
- Children have angels who report to God any mistreatment they receive – Matt 18:10
- Paul had an angel who strengthen him on board the sinking ship – Acts 27:23
In chapter 12 God turns Herod’s desire into futility in 3 ways:
  * By taking his prize prisoner right out from under his nose
  * By taking Herod’s life
  * By making the Word of God multiply

1. The Vindictiveness of Herod – 12:18-19

2. The Anger of Herod – 12:20

3. The Pride of Herod – 12:21-23
4. The Superior Power of God – 12:24

Christians Doing Their Job – 12:25-13:12

1. Meeting Needs of Other Believers – 12:25
3. Sending Their Own into the World – 13:3-4

4. Proclaiming the Word of God – 13:5

5. Confronting Satan’s Kingdom – 13:6-12
Paul and Barnabas at Antioch in Pisidia – 13:13-52

1. A Discouraging Conflict – 13:13

2. A Difficult Journey – 13:14a

   (1) An Eager Audience – 13:14b-16

Paul made 3 points:
#1 the anticipation of and preparation for the coming of the Messiah 16-25
#2 the rejection, crucifixion, and resurrection of Jesus the Messiah – 26-37
#3 The application and the appeal – 38-41

Fear God= Gentile “God fearers”
Evidence of David being a man after God’s own heart:

- Eager to give his enemies a 2nd chance (twice when friends advised he kill Saul he spared his life)
- Welcomed Abner when he defected from the phony king Ish-bosheth
- Kind to Mephibosheth
- Patient with Shimei’s spiteful cursing
- Pardoned those who rebelled against him during Absalom’s insurrection
- David knew how to forgive and love his enemies
Among the prophecies fulfilled by Jesus on the cross were:

He would be led (not dragged or driven) to His execution – Isaiah 53:7 – John 19:17
He would be a reproach, One at Whom people wagged their heads – Psalm 109:25 – Matthew 27:39
His executioners would divide His clothing among themselves by lot – Psalm 22:18 – John 19:23-24
He would be given vinegar and gall for His thirst – Psalm 69:21 – Matthew 27:34
He would cry out “My God, My God why hast Thou forsaken Me?” – Psalm 22:1 – Matthew 27:46
His executioners would not break His bones – Psalm 34:20 – John 19:33
He would be pierced – Zechariah 12:10 – John 19:34
“Begotten” refers to 2 important times in Jesus’ life:
- His virgin conception – Hebrews 1:5-6
- His resurrection and enthronement in Heaven – Acts 13:33

(6) The Judgment to Avoid – 13:40-41

   (1) The Word of God Is Received by Jews – 13:42-43
The Bible teaches that those who are saved continue in the grace of God

John 8:31
1 John 2:19
Col 1:21-23


(4) The Word of God Divided the City – 13:50-52