

AN INTRODUCTION TO ACTS

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I. MAIN IDEA

The book of Acts is primarily about the birth and growth of the early church. It provides a detailed, orderly, eyewitness account of the birth and growth of the early church and the spread of the gospel immediately after the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

II. INTRODUCTION

- A. It's the only biblical book that describes the history of the church immediately after Jesus' ascension.
- It provides us with a valuable account of how the church was able to grow and spread out from Jerusalem into the rest of the Roman Empire, including the Emperor of Rome.¹
 - Various Titles: "Acts" (NIV, NLT); "Acts of the Apostles (ESV, KJV); "Acts of the Holy Spirit" could be a more proper title. The title was added later after its writing.
- B. The church was empowered by the Holy Spirit

¹ Chuck Swindoll < <https://www.insight.org/resources/bible/the-history-of-the-early-church/acts>>. Accessed September 2, 2021.

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." (Acts 1:8 ESV)

- This verse also provides a geographical outline of Acts and is much like the table of contents of a book.

C. Author: The book of Acts was written by Luke.

- He was a physician (Col. 4:14), who probably treated Paul when he was sick or injured. He was a Greek and the only Gentile Christian writer of the NT. Scripture indicates that he was a careful researcher and an accurate historian (Luke 1:1-4).
- A very educated man - writes in excellent Greek, a more formal academic style.
- He had an intimate knowledge of Roman laws and customs, as well as the geography of Israel and Asia Minor (Turkey)
- Not one of the 12 disciples, but a close companion to the Apostle Paul.
- Later in Acts, he uses the first-person plural narrative, "we" and "us" indicating that he was present with Paul and an eyewitness to many events recorded in Acts.

D. Recipient: The designated recipient was Theophilus.

- He was probably the person who put up the money for the publication of Luke's literary effort.
- Acts 1:1 Θεό-φίλος, GNT, meaning "Lover of God," or "Beloved of God"
- Luke also had a broader audience in mind...everyone.

E. Context: The book of Acts is a continuation of Luke's Gospel.

- The Luke-Acts connection: Acts is a continuation of what Luke wrote in his gospel. In one sense, Acts could be called "Second Luke."
- Acts is the sequel to Luke's Gospel, furthering his story of Jesus, and how he built his church.
- The book ends quite abruptly, suggesting to some scholars that Luke may have planned to write a third book to continue the story.

F. Date: The book of Acts was most likely written around AD 62-63 just before Jerusalem was destroyed

- Place: probably as Luke traveled with Paul (missionary journeys)

III. WHAT THE BOOK OF ACTS TEACHES US

A. About God

- Christ's death was predetermined by sovereign God (Acts 2:23).
- Jesus Christ's crucifixion and death was not an accident (Acts 2:23).
- God not only raised Jesus from the dead but also exalted him to a position of authority (Acts 5:31).

B. About Jesus Christ

- Jesus Christ's resurrection was predicted in Psalm 16:8-11.
- Jesus would return in just the same way as he had seen him go into heaven...visible, physical, and personal (Acts 1:9-11).

C. About the Holy Spirit

- The Holy Spirit is a person of the Godhead and not a mystical force (Acts 5:3-5).
- That the Holy Spirit fills believers for witness (Acts 1:8; 2:4; 4:31; 5:32; 9:17) and in leading them in ministry (Acts 8:26-30; 10:19; 11:19; 16:7; 20:23; 21:4, 11).

D. About salvation

- Salvation is through faith in Christ (Acts 20:21).
- Believing involves repentance (Acts 2:38; 3:19; 5:31; 8:22; 11:18; 17:30; 20:21; 26:20).
- Salvation is through the grace of God (Acts 18:27; 16:14; 13:48).
- Salvation is apart from any works (Acts 15).
- Why real joy comes from faith and salvation.

E. About the church

- It was formed through the baptizing work of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:5; 1 Cor. 12:13).
- The unique work of the Holy Spirit included not only the Jews but also Samaritans (Acts 8:14-17; 10:44-48; 19:6).
- The functions of the church included instruction (Acts 2:42; 4:2; 11:26), fellowship (4:32-35; 6:1-3; 16:15, 34) and worship (2:46-47; 4:23-31; 5:11; 9:31).
- The importance of forgiveness and prayer in the Christian life.