

Outline of Acts

We hope this outline of Acts will help you as you seek to find God's truth in the pages of His letter to you.

When we come to the book of Acts, the first question we may ask is "Why was it written?" If the purpose of the book is to show the spread of Christianity, it fails in a great part. Christianity spread not only with the preaching of Peter and Paul, but also with the other apostles. Thomas took the gospel to Parthia and then India, Andrew went to Scythia, John was in Asia, Matthew in Ethiopia, and the others in various places. We have no account of these. The book looks principally at two apostles, Peter and Paul.

It appears more likely that the book has a narrow focus of providing an historical account of the spread of the gospel into Rome itself. It may also have an apologetic bent. But even more than this, I believe that God gave it to us to provide a background for the epistles that formed Scripture.

As I said, the book revolves around the apostles, Peter and Paul. One may divide the book as Acts 1-12 (Peter) and Acts 13-28 (Paul). It also may be divided around the expansion of the gospel in Acts 1:8. Thus, Acts 1-6:7 involves the witness at Jerusalem. Acts 6:8-9:31 involves all Judea and Samaria. Acts 9:32 to the end involves spreading the gospel to the extremity of the earth. Nevertheless, if it truly is to show the extremity, it makes no mention of Paul going to Spain, although Romans 15:24, 28 mentions his desire and Clement, the 3'd bishop of Rome, appears to confirm such.

The book has some interesting parallelisms:

Peter

- Acts 2:1-14 Began with the Power of God
- 2:14-39 And then preaching
- 3:1-11 Healed a man lame from birth
- 5:15-16 Peter's shadow healed people
- 5:17 Success caused Jewish jealousy
- 5:19 released from prison supernaturally
- 8:9-24 Dealt with Simon, a sorcerer
- 8:17 Imparting Holy Spirit by laying on hands
- 9:34 Healed a paralyzed man
- 9:36-41 Raised Dorcas to life
- 10:9-16 Saw a vision directing him to go to the Gentiles
- 11:1-18 Defends God's grace
- 12:5-19 Again cast into prison and then freed

Paul

- Acts 9:1-19 Began with the Power of God
- 9:20 And then preaching

- 14:8-10 Healed a man lame from birth
- 19:11-12 Handkerchiefs and aprons from Paul healed people
- 13:45 Success caused Jewish jealousy
- 16:25-26 Released from prison supernaturally
- 13:6-11 Dealt with Bar-Jesus, a sorcerer
- 19:6 Imparting the Holy Spirit by laying on hands
- 20:9-12 Raised Eutychus to life
- 16:6-10 Saw a vision directing him to go to Europe
- 15:2 Defends God's grace
- 22:24 Again cast into prison and then freed (28:30)

What are the major themes of the book of Acts? The first that comes to mind is the work of the Holy Spirit. Some 56 times out of a total of 259 times you find the Holy Spirit in the New Testament, you find Him in this book. There are more references to the Holy Spirit in this one book than in all four of the gospels put together (54 times). Romans, with the next most references, has only 28. We can develop a good view of the role of the Holy Spirit in our lives when reading this book. Acts tells us that the filling of the Holy Spirit is not a one-time occurrence. Rather, it has to do with power for living (Acts 2:4; 4:31).

There are the sovereign acts of God in protecting His church. The miraculous deliverance of the apostles from prison, from the mobs, from everything that beset them, as well as God's work in opening the hearts of people to the gospel.

There is the witness of the church, beginning in Jerusalem, then everywhere the people went (8:4), then Samaria (8:5-25), to Ethiopia (8:26-39), to Caesarea (8:40), to Damascus (9:10), to Tarsus (9:30), to the Gentile Cornelius (10), to Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch (11:19), to Galatia (13:13-14:25), to Macedonia and Greece (16:6-18:17), then to Rome (27-28). The church expands and expands.

Another theme that runs throughout the book is the apparent transition from a Jewish church to a Gentile church. Except for two occasions the antagonists always appear to be Jewish (4:1-2; 5:17-18, 33, 40; 6:9-15; 7:59; 8:3; 9:1-2, 23-24, 29; 12:1-3; 13:6 [the Jewish sorcerer did not convert] 13:45; 14:2, 19 [but see 16:19]; 17:5, 13; 18:6, 12; 19:8-9 [but see Demetrius 19:24-41; 21:27-28; 23:12-15; 28:25-28]). At the end, Paul turns to the Gentiles. But over and over, there was an attempt to reach out to the Jews first (See Romans 1:16).

It is interesting that Paul, the most Jewish of the Jews (Philippians 3:3-6) becomes the apostle to the Gentiles (Galatians 2:8).

Additionally, I believe that the book of Acts is given to provide for us examples of how Scripture is to be lived out in our lives. The direction the Spirit of God provided to God's people was an active and vibrant process, not some dead theology. The Spirit gave boldness and the words to speak, provided warnings and comfort, and demonstrated the reality of salvation and brought about healing.

But the main thrust of the book is salvation. The description of salvation is varied and often (2:28-repent and be baptized, 41-receive, 43-fear, 44-believe, 3:19-repent and turn; 4:4-believe, 32-believe; 5:14-believe, 31-repent, 32-obey, 8:6-turned their minds to, 12-believe, 14-received; 9:8 (22:16)-obey, 42-believe; 10:43-believe; 11:21-believe, turned to; 13:12-believe, 39-believe, 48-believe; 14:1-believe, 22-to remain, 23-believe; 15:7-believe; 16:14-to turn one's mind, 31-believe; 17:12-believe, 34-believe; 18:8-believe; 19:4-believe; 20,21-repentance & faith; 21:25-believe; 22:16-arise, be baptized, calling on His name; 26:19-obey; 28:24-be persuaded). It is a book about the nature of God's great salvation.

Date:

62 A.D.? This book was written apparently at the end of the two year imprisonment of Paul and before Nero's persecution and Paul's death.

I. Introduction 1:1-14

- A. The Promise of Power 1:1-8
- B. The Ascension 1:9-11
- C. The Prayer 1:12-14

II. The Peter Account 1:15-12:24

- A. The Substitution 1:15-26
- B. The Pentecost Sermon and Result 2:1-47
- C. The Solomon's Porch Sermon and Result 3:1-4:31
- D. The Seriousness of Spiritual Power 4:32-16
- E. In And Out of Prison 1 5:17-42
- F. Stephen's Great Defense 6:1-8:3
- G. The Gospel Expands to Samaria and Judea 8:4-40
- H. God captures Paul's Heart 9:1-31
- I. Supernatural Miracles 9:32-43
- J. Cornelius 10-11
- K. In and Out of Prison 2 12:5-19
- L. The Protagonist Herod dies 12:20-24

III. The Paul Account 12:25-28:31

- A. First Missionary Journey 12:25-14:28
 - 1. To Cyprus 13:4-12 (12 astonished)
 - 2. To Antioch in Pisidia 13:13-52
 - 3. To Iconium 14:1-7
 - 4. To Lystra 14:8-20
 - 5. To Derbe 14:21a
 - 6. Back to Antioch 14:21b-28
- B. Jerusalem Counsel 15:1-35
- C. Second Missionary Journey 15:36-18:22
 - 1. Choosing companions 15:36-16:5
 - 2. To Philippi 16:6-40
 - 3. To Thessalonica 17:1-9
 - 4. To Berea 17:10-14

5. To Athens 17:15-34
 6. To Corinth 18:1-17
 7. Back to Antioch 18:18-22
- D. Third Missionary Journey 18:23-21:16
1. To Ephesus 18:23-19:41
 2. To Europe 20:1-3
 3. To Troas 20:4-12
 4. To Miletus 20:13-38
 5. To Jerusalem 21:1-16
- E. Activities in Jerusalem and Judea 21:17-26:32
1. The vow 21:17-25
 2. The arrest 21:26-36
 3. The defense before the crowd 21:37-22:29 (his conversion)
 4. The defense before the Sanhedren 22:30-23:10 (his beliefs)
 5. The defense before Felix 23:11-24:27 (his beliefs)
 6. The defense before Festus 25:1-12 (I am innocent)
 7. The defense before King Agrippa 25:13-26:32 (the appeal to the prophets)
- F. Journey to Rome 27:1-28:31
1. To Crete 27:1-8
 2. To Malta 27:9-28:10
 3. To Rome 28:11-31
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Key Idea: You are My witnesses

Key Passage: 1:8

Key Lesson: God oversees the Spirit-filled witness of His believers.