

THE BOOK OF ACTS

Introduction

The Book of Acts is a unique book in the New Testament. It serves as a transition between the Gospels and the Epistles. It provides an inspired snapshot of the post-Ascension believers and the progress of the gospel from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth. Acts shows that the Church of Jesus Christ is divinely established and spiritually empowered to proclaim the gospel and plant believing communities locally, regionally, and globally.

Message

The message of Acts is “The Church of Jesus Christ is divinely established and spiritually empowered to proclaim the gospel and plant believing communities locally, regionally, and globally.”

Authorship

It is generally held that Luke, the physician and traveling companion of Paul wrote both the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts. The early church consistently identified Luke as the author. Lukan authorship of Acts is affirmed by the Muratorian Canon (A.D. 170), the anti-Marcionite Prologue to the Gospel of Luke (c. A.D. 160–180), Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Tertullian, Eusebius, and Jerome. The early church never seems to have questioned Lukan authorship.

The external affirmation of the Lukan authorship of Acts is corroborated by internal evidence as well. For example, the “we” passages (16:10–17; 20:5–15; 21:1–18; 27:1–28:16) seem to point to Luke as the author.¹ Some have also pointed to possible medical terminology in Acts as befitting of Luke the physician (Col 4:14).² But Caird among others have called this into question.³ Another piece of internal evidence that would seem to favor Lukan authorship is the close relationship between the Gospel of Luke and Acts. Guthrie has noted five links between the two books. “(1) Both books are dedicated to the same man, Theophilus; (2) Acts refers to the first treatise, which is most naturally understood as the gospel; (3) the books contain strong similarities of language and style; (4) both contain common interests; (5) Acts naturally follows

¹ Although it is true that the use of “we” could merely be a stylistic/literary device common in ancient literature, the apparent randomness of the occurrences do not seem to suggest it.

² Most notably by William Kirk Hobart, *The Medical Language of St. Luke; a Proof from Internal Evidence That "The Gospel According to St. Luke" And "The Acts of the Apostles" Were Written by the Same Person, and That the Writer Was a Medical Man* (Dublin: Hodges Figgis & Co., 1882).

³ G. B. Caird, *Saint Luke* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1977), 17.

on from Luke's gospel, although many scholars have found difficulties over the connecting links. It may safely be concluded that the evidence is very strong for linking the two books as the work of one man, a conclusion which few modern scholars would dispute."⁴ Taken as a whole, both external and internal evidence points to Luke as the author of Acts.

Date

Three main proposals have been proposed regarding the date of composition: before A.D. 64, 70–85, and early second-century.⁵ Several factors must be taken into consideration. For example dating is tied to authorship, and authorship is tied to the relationship between Luke and Acts.

Several pieces of internal evidence would appear to favor an early date for Acts. One notable piece is lack of reference to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. Similarly, the ongoing disputes between Jewish and Gentile believers would seem to suggest a date prior to A.D. 70. Another clue is that ambivalent attitude of the Roman government towards Christians that one finds in Acts. Such ambivalence was not the case after the Neronian persecution which began in A.D. 64. Finally, the lack of any reference to the death of Paul would argue for composition before his death in the mid-to-late sixties. Taken together, the lines of evidence seem to point to a date of composition around A.D. 62.

If an early date is held then the place of writing is probably Rome or Caesarea (or both) since Luke appears to be traveling with Paul and Paul was held for significant periods of time at these two locations.

Original Recipients

Acts was written to a certain Theophilus (Acts 1:1; Luke 1:1-4). Little is actually known about Theophilus. Although Theophilus literally means "lover of God" or "dear to God"⁶ commentators disagree whether he was a believer or not.⁷ The fact that Luke identifies him as

⁴ Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, 4th ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1990), 115-16.

⁵ Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, rev. ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 363. "Earlier critics of the Tübingen school popularized a second-century dating for Acts because their reconstruction of the history demanded it. The reconciliation tendency of the author to patch up the Petrine Pauline clash required a considerable time interval to develop."

⁶ The literal meaning of Theophilus has led some to suggest that Theophilus is not to be understood as a proper name, but should be taken symbolically for Christians. That is, Luke was addressing believers in general and not a particular person. While it seems clear that Acts was written with an ultimately broader audience in mind, there is no reason why Theophilus should not be understood as a real person. Furthermore, as Longenecker suggests, "It is precarious to suppose (cf. Origen and others after him) that "Theophilus" (etymologically, "Friend of God" or "Loved by God") is a symbolic name for either an anonymous person or a class of people" (Richard N. Longenecker, "Acts," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* vol. 9, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981], 253).

⁷ Some commentators who suggest that Theophilus was an unbeliever include G.B. Caird, *The Gospel of St. Luke* (Baltimore: Penguin, 1963), 44. Some commentators who suggest that Theophilus was a believer include D. Bock, Fitzmeyer, Marshall, Polhill, etc.

“most excellent” (*kratiste*, *kratiste*; Luke 1:3) may suggest that he was a Roman official (cf. 23:26; 24:3; 26:25)⁸ although some contend that it was merely a form of polite address.⁹ It is also possible that Theophilus was Luke’s patron, that is, the one who financed the writing of Luke-Acts. Theophilus’ identity aside, it seems likely that Luke had intended a broader readership than just one man. The specific identity of this broader readership is uncertain.

Historical Setting

The historical period covered by the Book of Acts is approximately from the thirties to the sixties A.D., or from the ascension of Christ to the incarceration of Paul in Rome. While this much appears certain, there is more uncertainty regarding the setting for the writing of the book. “Fortunately the intelligibility and value of the book are largely independent of a knowledge of the precise situation in which it was written. While the finer points of the interpretation of Acts can still cause intense discussion among scholars, the essential themes of the book are basically clear and simple.”¹⁰

Canonicity

The evidence for the canonicity of Acts is debated. Some have seen quotations or allusions to Acts near the end of the first century, but others see the earliest references in the middle of the second century.¹¹ In any case, Irenaeus (*Against Heresies* 3.14.1) makes reference to both the Gospel of Luke and Acts. Likewise the Muratorian canon (ca. 170) points to the common authorship of Luke and Acts. Eusebius also identifies Acts with the Gospel of Luke and with Luke and Paul (*Eccl. Hist.* 3.4.6). There is little reason to suggest that Acts was ever viewed as non-canonical.

Purpose

The purpose Acts appears to be mainly historical. As Guthrie states, “Luke’s primary purpose was historical and this must be considered as the major aim of Acts, whatever subsidiary motives may have contributed towards its production.”¹² Furthermore, Witherington notes, “Luke’s claims about investigation in Luke 1:1–4 suggest a historical narrative is to follow, and by describing and explaining a sequential development in Luke and Acts, not merely reporting it, he met the most essential requirement of Greek historiography already set forth in Herodotus’

⁸ “The adj. *kratistos* was the Greek equivalent of Latin *egregious*, a title often used for the *ordo equester*, the ‘knights’ of Roman Society” (Joseph A. Fitzmeyer, *The Acts of the Apostles*, The Anchor Bible [New York: Doubleday, 1998], 195).

⁹ Longenecker, “Acts,” 253.

¹⁰ I. Howard Marshall, *The Acts of the Apostles: An Introduction and Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 49.

¹¹ For the latter see Ernst Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles*, trans. R. McL. Wilson (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1971), 9.

¹² Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, 365.

seminal work.”¹³ David A. deSilva concurs noting that, “The ancient reader of Acts would probably have understood this work as a piece of historiography.”¹⁴

Other suggested purposes include a presentation of the Gospel of the Spirit; An apology for Christianity; a defense brief for Paul’s trial,¹⁵ and a theological treatise.

Contribution

The Book of Acts makes at least four important contributions. First, Acts makes a historical contribution. Much of our knowledge about the early church is dependant upon Acts. Furthermore, “Historically, Acts mentions over thirty countries, more than fifty towns or cities, numerous islands, and nearly one hundred persons, about sixty of whom are not mentioned elsewhere in the New Testament.”¹⁶

A second contribution is canonical. Acts provides not only a necessary logical link between the Gospels and the Epistles, but it also provides a basic chronological framework in order to place the rest of the New Testament. As Guthrie states, “It serves admirably as a link between the records of Jesus and the apostolic correspondence. In many ways the epistles are not fully intelligible until they are read against the background of the book of Acts.”¹⁷

A third contribution of Acts is theological. This theological contribution can be seen most readily in a variety of prominent themes (e.g., the growth and witness of the Church, the emphasis on the Holy Spirit, the emphasis on the sovereignty of God, the theme of opposition to the spread of the gospel, the portrayal of the exalted Christ, evangelism, and prayer.

Finally, Acts makes a pastoral contribution. Marshall suggests that there are five reasons why Acts is still valuable for the church today:¹⁸

1. Luke is a writer with a pastoral concern.
2. Luke makes it clear that the essential task of the church is mission.
3. Luke demonstrates that in the purpose of God there can be no racial discrimination within the church.
4. Luke stresses the place of the Spirit in guiding and empowering the church.
5. Luke reminds us that the church was raised up and directed by God and thus, will achieve God’s intended purpose.

¹³ Ben Witherington III, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 13.

¹⁴ David A. deSilva, *An Introduction to the New Testament: Contexts, Methods, and Ministry Transformation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 348.

¹⁵ John H. Mauck, *Paul On Trial* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2001). Mauck, a trial lawyer provides one of the most comprehensive presentations of this view.

¹⁶ Walter A Elwell and Robert W. Yarbrough, *Encountering The New Testament: A Historical and Theological Survey* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1998), 211.

¹⁷ Guthrie, *Introduction*, 351.

¹⁸ Marshall, *Acts*, 49-50.

Literary Features and Structure

A major question concerning Acts studies is the question of genre. Suggestions include ancient biography, ancient novel, or ancient historiography. The latter option best fits the contents of the book. As Luke Timothy Johnson notes,

(1) His prologue tells us that he is writing an “orderly account.” Historians of his age used such language to describe their work. He refers as well to oral and written sources; he knew others had written narratives before him. He had sources; therefore, he regarded them as such, and he used them critically. (2) He tries to relate his story to the broader historical context. He does this first by providing chronological references for pivotal events (see Luke 1:5; 2:1-2; 3:1-2; Acts 18:12). In addition, he identifies power blocs and governing agents, not only in Palestine (Acts 18:12-17). (3) Above all, Luke has the historian’s instinct for chronology and causality; he makes connections between events, so that a thread of purpose runs through his narrative.¹⁹

Although Acts appears to be patterned after ancient historiographical works, we assume the book’s inspiration and as such to provide a historically accurate portrayal of the early church.

Concerning the structure of the book, several approaches have been used. Some approaches use literary markers (e.g., the progress reports). Other approaches are more thematic (e.g., Peter and Paul). And some approaches are chronological and geographical (e.g., Acts 1:8) as providing the basic outline for the rest of the book. There appears to be merit in all of the approaches and perhaps a sensitivity to all of these concerns is warranted. However, we will follow a basic chronological and geographical approach. In any case, the basic approaches are illustrated below.

Biographic Emphasis (Warren Wiersbe’s approach)²⁰

- Chapters 1–12 – Peter is the major character
- Chapters 13–28 – Paul is the major character

Summary/Progress Reports

- Acts 2:41
- Acts 2:47
- Acts 4:4
- Acts 5:14
- Acts 6:7
- Acts 9:31
- Acts 11:21
- Acts 12:24

¹⁹ Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Writings of the New Testament: An Interpretation* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 200.

²⁰ Warren W. Wiersbe, “Acts” in *The Bible Exposition Commentary* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1989), 401.

- Acts 13:48
- Acts 16:5
- Acts 19:20
- Acts 28:31

Geographic Progression (based on Acts 1:8)

- Acts 1:1–8:3 – Focus is Jerusalem
- Acts 8:4–12:25 – Focus is Judea and Samaria
- Acts 13:1–28:31 – Focus is the ends of the earth

Another literary issue is the unity of Luke-Acts. Although separated by the Gospel of John in most English Bibles, it is best to consider the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts as parts one and two of the same work.²¹ The reference in Acts 1:1 to a “former book,” the reoccurrence of the name “Theophilus” (cf. Luke 1:3), and the statement “all that Jesus *began* to do and to teach” (emphasis mine), suggest that these works should be read and considered together.

Analytical Outline

- I. The church of Jesus Christ is divinely established and spiritually empowered to proclaim the gospel and plant believing communities locally: Jerusalem (1:1–6:7).
 - A. Luke introduces Acts through a prologue that links Acts to the Gospel of Luke (1:1–2).
 - B. The church is divinely established in Jerusalem through the Spirit (1:3–2:47).
 1. Luke recounts the post-resurrection message and ministry of Jesus (1:3–8).
 2. Luke recounts the ascension of Jesus (1:9–11).
 3. Luke recounts the post-ascension but pre-Pentecost activities of the Christians in Jerusalem (1:12–26)
 - a. The church prays in the upper room (1:12–14).
 - b. The church selects a replacement for Judas Iscariot (1:15–26).
 4. Luke recounts the establishment of the church on the Day of Pentecost through the Holy Spirit (2:1–46).
 - a. Luke recounts the reception of the promised Spirit by the believers (2:1–4).
 - b. Luke recounts the reaction of the bystanders (2:5–13).

²¹ Luke-Acts may have been separated for several reasons. The separation may be due to the differences in content. Or, Luke-Acts may have been separated because they were written at different times (Luke “The content of the Acts of the Apostles is about the maximum one could include on one normal papyrus roll [sic] writing in medium-sized Greek script, following the normal procedure of leaving no gaps between words and sentences. Papyrus rolls came in stock sizes with a normal maximum length of about forty feet. A thirty-foot roll could contain about one hundred columns of writing with thirty to forty lines per column and twenty characters per line. Luke’s Gospel (19,404 words) would have fit on a thirty-five foot roll and Acts (18,374 words) on a thirty-two foot roll if he wrote in a normal hand and with normal spacing” (Ben Witherington III, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* [Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998], 6).

- c. Luke recounts the response of Peter to the people and his sermon defending and explaining the work of the Spirit as a fulfillment of Scripture and a manifestation of the person and work of Jesus Christ (2:14–41).
 - 1) Peter calls the bystanders to consider the events that they have just witnessed in light of the fulfillment of the prophetic Scriptures (2:14–21).
 - 2) Peter calls the bystanders to consider the events that they have just witnessed in light of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection (2:22–28).
 - 3) Peter calls the bystanders to consider the events that they have just witnessed in light of the resurrected Jesus who has now been exalted (2:29–36).
 - 4) Peter calls the bystanders to repentance (2:37–41).
5. Luke summarizes the progress of the infant church (2:42–47).
- C. The church expands its message and ministry in Jerusalem (3:1–6:7).
 1. Luke recounts Peter healing a lame man and the resulting opposition of the Jewish leaders (3:1–4:31).
 - a. The healing is recounted (3:1–8).
 - b. The response of the crowd is recounted (3:9–10).
 - c. Peter preaches to the crowd (3:11–26).
 - d. Peter and John are arrested by the religious authorities (4:1–4).
 - e. Peter and John are brought before the Sanhedrin (4:5–22).
 - f. Peter and John are released and the church is encouraged through their release and report (4:23–31).
 2. Luke recounts the communal sharing of the early church and the unfortunate response of Ananias and Sapphira (4:32–5:11).
 - a. The early church shared communally (4:32–37).
 - b. Ananias and Sapphira fail to act communally and attempt to deceive church and are thus judged by Peter (5:1–11).
 3. Luke recounts apostolic healings and its resulting opposition by the Jewish leaders (5:12–42).
 - a. The apostles heal and the people respond positively (5:12–16).
 - b. The apostles are arrested and jailed but are supernaturally freed (5:17–24).
 - c. The apostles are brought before the Sanhedrin (5:25–40).
 - d. The apostles rejoice and continue to proclaim the gospel (5:41–42).
 4. Luke recounts another problem with communal sharing (6:1–6).
 5. Luke summarizes the progress of the infant church (6:7).
- II. The church of Jesus Christ is divinely established and spiritually empowered to proclaim the gospel and plant believing communities regionally: Judea and Samaria (6:8–9:31).
 - A. The precursor to the church's expansion is Stephen's martyrdom (6:8–8:3).
 1. Stephen who is serving God is attacked, placed on trial, and falsely accused (6:8–15).
 2. Stephen responds to the charges against him with an extended speech (7:1–53).

- a. The high priest asks Stephen about the charges against him (7:1).
 - b. Stephen responds with an extensive speech surveying Israel's history (7:2–53).
 - 1) Stephen surveys the Patriarchal period (7:2–8).
 - 2) Stephen surveys Israel's sojourn in Egypt (7:9–19).
 - 3) Stephen surveys the rise of Moses, the Exodus, and the ultimate rejection of Moses by the people (7:20–41).
 - 4) Stephen surveys the rejection of Israel by God (7:42–43).
 - 5) Stephen surveys the tabernacle and the temple (7:44–50).
 - 6) Stephen applies his speech to those who are accusing him (7:51–53).
 3. Stephen is martyred (7:54–8:1a).
 4. Stephen's martyrdom sparks an outbreak of persecution led by Saul against the church (8:1b–3).
 - B. Luke recounts the regional expansion through Philip's ministry (8:4–40).
 1. Philip ministers in Samaria (8:4–25).
 2. Philip ministers to the Ethiopian eunuch on the road to Gaza (8:26–39).
 3. Philip ministers along the coast (8:40).
 - C. Luke recounts Saul's conversion on the Damascus road (9:1–30).
 1. Saul sets off for Damascus to persecute Christians (9:1–2).
 2. Saul encounters Christ on the Road and is converted (9:3–9).
 3. Saul is healed and confirmed by Ananias in Damascus (9:10–19).
 4. Saul begins his ministry as a Christian (9:20–30).
 - D. Luke summarizes the regional progress of the infant church (9:31).
- III. The Church of Jesus Christ is divinely established and spiritually empowered to proclaim the gospel and establish believing communities globally: the ends of the earth (9:32–28:31).
- A. Luke recounts the ministry of Peter along the coast and up into Syrian Antioch (9:32—11:18).
 1. Luke recounts Peter's ministry in Lydda and Joppa (9:32–43).
 2. Luke recounts Peter's ministry with Cornelius (10:1–11:18).
 - a. Cornelius receives a vision from God and sends for Peter (10:1–7).
 - b. Meanwhile, Peter receives a vision from God in preparation for Cornelius (10:8–23a).
 - c. Peter travels to Cornelius' house and Cornelius and his household are converted (10:23b–48).
 - d. Peter is confronted by the Jewish Christians about his ministry with Cornelius (11:1–3).
 - e. Peter explains and defends his ministry with Cornelius (11:4–17).
 - f. Peter's explanation is accepted by the Jewish Christians (11:18).
 - B. Luke recounts the expansion of the church into Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch as a result of persecution (11:19–12:25).
 1. The church in Antioch is established (11:19–30).
 2. Herod persecutes the church in Jerusalem (12:1–19).
 3. Herod is judged by God (12:20–23).

4. Luke summarizes the initial global progress of the infant church (12:24)
5. Barnabas and Saul return to Antioch (12:25).
- C. Luke recounts the extension of the church to Cyprus and Asia Minor and Paul's first missionary journey (13:1–15:35).
 1. Barnabas and Saul are commissioned by the church in Antioch to serve as missionaries to Cyprus and Asia Minor: Paul's first missionary journey (13:1–14:28).
 - a. Luke recounts the call of Barnabas and Saul (13:1–3).
 - b. Luke recounts the mission to Cyprus (13:4–12).
 - c. Luke recounts the mission to Asia Minor (13:13–14:25).
 - 1) Paul and Barnabas travel from Paphos to Perga in Pamphylia: John Mark's departure (13:13).
 - 2) Paul and Barnabas travel from Perga to Pisidian Antioch (13:14a).
 - 3) Paul and Barnabas Minister in Pisidian Antioch (13:14b–50).
 - 4) Paul and Barnabas travel to Iconium in South Galatia (13:51–52).
 - 5) Paul and Barnabas Minister in Iconium (14:1–14:4).
 - 6) Paul and Barnabas travel to Lystra and Derbe (14:5–7).
 - 7) Paul and Barnabas ministry in Lystra (14:8–18).
 - 8) Paul is stoned and travels to Derbe (14:19–20).
 - 9) Paul and Barnabas retrace their journey (14:21–25).
 - d. Paul and Barnabas conclude their first missionary journey and return to Syrian Antioch (14:26–28).
 2. The Jerusalem Council rules that Gentile Christians are not required to keep the Mosaic Law but rather decree that Gentiles should avoid certain prohibitions to avoid causing unnecessary offense (15:1–35).
 - a. Controversy leads to the Jerusalem Council (15:1–5).
 - b. The Jerusalem Council is convened (15:6–21).
 - c. The Jerusalem Council issues their decision (15:22–29).
 - d. The decision of the Council is taken to Antioch (15:30–35).
- D. Luke recounts the extension of the church to Western Asia Minor, Macedonia, and Greece: Paul's second missionary journey (15:36–18:22).
 1. Paul and Barnabas split their missionary team over John Mark (15:36–41).
 2. Paul travels to Lystra and Derbe and adding Timothy to the team (16:1–4).
 3. Luke recounts the progress of the church in Asia Minor (16:5).
 4. Luke recounts the extension of the church to the Aegean shores (16:6–18:22).
 - a. Luke recounts the "Macedonian call" (16:6–10).
 - b. Luke recounts the ministry in Macedonia (16:11–17:14).
 - 1) Paul travels to Philippi (16:11–12).
 - 2) Paul ministers in Philippi (16:13–40).
 - a) Lydia is converted in Philippi (16:12–15).
 - b) A slave girl is exorcised in Philippi (16:16–18).
 - c) A jailer is converted in Philippi (16:19–34).

- d) Paul and Silas are released from prison in Philippi (16:35–40).
 - 3) Paul travels to Thessalonica (17:1).
 - 4) Paul ministers in Thessalonica (17:2–9).
 - 5) Paul travels to Berea (17:10a).
 - 6) Paul ministers in Berea (17:10b–14).
 - c. Luke recounts the ministry in Achaia (17:15–18:17).
 - 1) Luke recounts the ministry in Athens (17:16–34).
 - 2) Luke recounts the ministry in Corinth (18:1–17).
 - d. Luke recounts Paul’s return to Syrian Antioch (18:18–22).
- E. Luke recounts Paul’s travels in the Galatian-Phrygian region and Ephesus: Paul’s third missionary journey (18:23–19:20).
 - 1. Luke recounts Paul’s return to the Galatian-Phrygian Region (18:23).
 - 2. Luke recounts Apollos’ ministry in Ephesus (18:24–28).
 - 3. Luke recounts Paul’s ministry in Ephesus (19:1–19).
 - a. Luke recounts Paul’s ministry with Twelve Disciples of John (19:1–7).
 - b. Luke recounts Paul’s ministry in the Synagogue of the Jews (19:8–9a).
 - c. Luke recounts Paul’s ministry in the lecture hall of Tyrannus (19:9b–10).
 - d. Luke recounts Paul’s confrontation with magicians and the occult (19:11–19).
 - 4. Luke summarizes the continuing global progress of the church (19:20).
- F. Luke recounts Paul’s trip to Jerusalem and the extension of the church to Rome (19:21–28:31).
 - 1. Luke recounts the ministry on the way to Jerusalem (19:21–21:16).
 - a. Paul announces his intention to return to Jerusalem (19:21–22).
 - b. A disturbance breaks out over Paul’s ministry (19:23–41).
 - 1) The silversmiths charge Paul with defaming Artemis (19:23–27).
 - 2) A disturbance breaks out in the theater (19:28–34).
 - 3) The town clerk quells the disturbance (19:35–41).
 - c. Paul travels to Jerusalem (20:1–21:16).
 - 1) Paul travels through Macedonia and Greece (20:1–6).
 - 2) Paul ministers in Troas and raises Eutychus (20:7–12).
 - 3) Paul travels from Troas to Miletus (20:13–16).
 - 4) Paul gives a farewell speech to the Ephesian elders in Miletus (20:17–38).
 - 5) Paul travels from Miletus to Tyre (21:1–6).
 - 6) Paul travels from Tyre to Caesarea (21:7–14).
 - 7) Paul arrives in Jerusalem (21:15–16).
 - 2. Luke recounts the ministry in Jerusalem (21:17–23:32).
 - a. Luke recounts the meeting with James and the elders (21:17–26).
 - b. Paul is arrested in the Temple (21:27–36).
 - c. Paul addresses the Jewish crowd (21:37–22:21).

- d. Paul avoids flogging by disclosing his Roman citizenship (22:22–29).
 - e. Paul appears before the Sanhedrin (22:30–23:10).
 - f. Paul is encouraged through a night vision (23:11).
 - g. The Jewish plot to kill Paul is planned and uncovered (23:12–22).
 - h. The Romans respond to the plot by taking Paul to Caesarea Maritima (23:23–35).
3. Luke recounts the ministry in Caesarea (24:1–26:32).
 - a. Paul appears before Felix (24:1–26).
 - b. Paul appears before Festus (24:27–25:12).
 - c. Festus discusses what to do with Paul with Agrippa II (25:13–22).
 - d. Paul appears before Agrippa (25:23–26:32).
 4. Luke recounts the ministry on the way to Rome (27:1–28:15).
 - a. Luke recounts the journey to Fair Havens (27:1–8).
 - b. Paul's ship sails despite his warning and encounters a storm (27:9–38).
 - c. Paul's ship wrecks on Malta (27:39–44).
 - d. Paul is delivered from danger and ministers on Malta (28:1–10).
 - e. Paul completes the last leg of his trip to Rome (28:11–15).
 5. Luke recounts the ministry in Rome (28:16–31).
 - a. Paul ministers in Rome (28:17–29).
 - b. Luke recounts the progress of the church through Paul in Rome (28:30–31).

Exposition

I. The church of Jesus Christ is divinely established and spiritually empowered to proclaim the gospel and plant believing communities locally: Jerusalem (1:1–6:7).

A. Prologue (1:1–2)

B. The church in Jerusalem is established (1:3–2:47)

1. Jesus' post-resurrection message and ministry (1:3–8)

2. The ascension of Jesus (1:9–11)

Four Results of the Ascension	
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	

3. The pre-Pentecost activities of believers in Jerusalem (1:12–26)

a. Prayer in the upper room (1:12–14)

b. A replacement for Judas Iscariot (1:15–26)

LESSONS ON CHOOSING SPIRITUAL LEADERS	
✓	Prayer should always be a part of choosing spiritual leaders
✓	True spiritual leaders are chosen by the Lord
✓	External qualifications can be determined by men, but internal qualifications are determined by God.

4. The church is established on the Day of Pentecost (2:1–46)

Jewish Feasts				
Feasts	Jewish Month	Day	Gregorian Month	Texts
Passover (Unleavened Bread)	Nisan	14–21	Mar-Apr	Exod 12:43–13:10; Matt 26:17–20
Pentecost (First Fruits, Weeks)	Sivah	6 (50 days after Passover)		Deut 16:9–12; Acts 2:1
Trumpets (<i>Rosh Hashanah</i>)	Tishri	1, 2	Sept-Oct	Num 29:1–6
Day of Atonement (<i>Yom Kippur</i>)	Tishri	10	Sept-Oct	Lev 23:26–32; Heb 9:7
Tabernacles (<i>Sukkot</i> , Booths, Ingathering)	Tishri	15–22	Sept-Oct	Neh 8:13–18; John 7:2
Dedication (Lights, <i>Hannukah</i>)	Chislev	25 (8 days)	Nov-Dec	John 10:22
Purim (Lots)	Adar	14, 15	Feb-Mar	Esth 9:18–32
<input type="checkbox"/> Required Participation by Israelite Males				

a. The reception of the promised Spirit by the believers (2:1–4)

SOME EXAMPLES OF GOD AS FIRE IN THE OLD TESTAMENT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * The burning bush (Exod 3:2-5) * The pillar of fire in the wilderness (Exod 13:21-22; 14:24; Num 14:14; Deut 1:33) * The consuming fire on Mount Sinai (Exodus 19:18; 24:17; Deut 4:24, 33, 36; 5:4-5, 22-26) * The fire that over the tabernacle (Exod 40:38; Num 9:15-16)

b. The reaction of the bystanders to the believers (2:5–13)

c. Peter responds with a sermon (2:14–41)

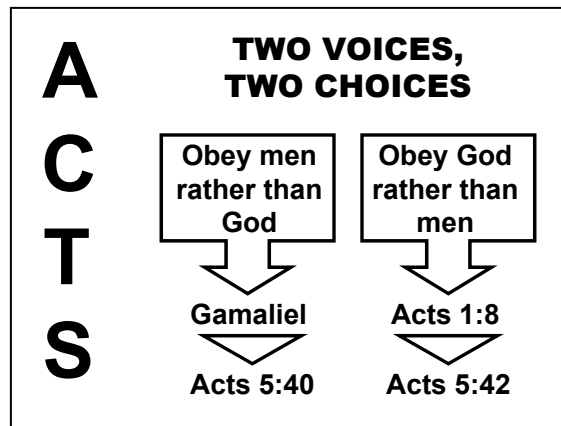
- 1) Peter calls the bystanders to consider what they have seen in light of the of the prophetic Scriptures (2:14–21)
- 2) Peter calls the bystanders to consider what they have seen in light of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection (2:22–28)

- 3) Peter calls the bystanders to consider what they have seen in light of the resurrected and exalted Jesus (2:29–36)
 - 4) Peter calls the bystanders to repentance (2:37–41)
 5. Progress report (2:42–47)
- C. The church in Jerusalem expands (3:1–6:7)
1. Peter's healing of a lame man is opposed by Jewish leaders (3:1–4:31)
 - a. The healing (3:1–8)
 - b. The response of the crowd (3:9–10)
 - c. Peter preaches to the crowd (3:11–26)

Three Titles for Christ in 3:17–26
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Christ [Messiah] (3:20)• The Prophet like Moses (3:22)• His [God's] Servant

 - d. Peter and John are arrested (4:1–4)
 - e. Peter and John are brought before the Sanhedrin (4:5–22)
 - f. Peter and John are released and the church is encouraged (4:23–31).
 2. The communal sharing of the early church and the sin of Ananias and Sapphira (4:32–5:11)
 - a. Communal sharing (4:32–37)
 - b. Ananias and Sapphira are judged (5:1–11)
 3. Apostolic healings and its resulting opposition by the Jewish leaders (5:12–42)
 - a. The apostles heal and people respond positively (5:12–16)

- b. The apostles are arrested, jailed, but miraculously freed (5:17–24)
- c. The apostles are brought before the Sanhedrin (5:25–40)
- d. The apostles rejoice and continue to proclaim the gospel (5:41–42)



4. Another problem with communal sharing (6:1–6)
 5. Progress report (6:7)
- II. The church of Jesus Christ is divinely established and spiritually empowered to proclaim the gospel and plant believing communities regionally: Judea and Samaria (6:8–9:31).
- A. The precursor to the church's expansion is Stephen's martyrdom (6:8–8:3)
 1. Stephen is attacked, tried, and falsely accused (6:8–15)
 2. Stephen responds with an extended defense/speech (7:1–53)
 - a. The high priest confronts Stephen (7:1)
 - b. Stephen defense/speech (7:2–53)

Three Main Ideas in Stephen's Speech
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is progress and change in God's program. • The blessings of God are not limited to Israel or the temple. • Israel has often opposed God's plans and His men.

- 1) Stephen surveys the Patriarchal period (7:2–8)
 - 2) Stephen surveys Israel’s sojourn in Egypt (7:9–19)
 - 3) Stephen surveys the rise of Moses, the Exodus, and the ultimate rejection of Moses by the people (7:20–41)
 - 4) Stephen surveys God’s rejection of Israel (7:42–43)
 - 5) Stephen surveys the tabernacle and the temple (7:44–50)
 - 6) Stephen applies his speech to his accusers (7:51–53)
3. Stephen is martyred (7:54–8:1a)
 4. Stephen’s martyrdom begins an outbreak of persecution led by Saul against the church (8:1b–3)
- B. The regional expansion through Philip’s ministry (8:4–40)
1. Philip ministers in Samaria (8:4–25)
 2. Philip ministers to the Ethiopian Eunuch (8:26–39)
 3. Philip ministers along the coast (8:40)
- C. Saul’s conversion on the Damascus road (9:1–30)

VARIOUS DESIGNATIONS FOR CHRISTIANS IN ACTS 9:1–19
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “disciples” [of the Lord] (vv. 1, 10, 19) • “the Way” (v. 2) • “saints” (v. 13) • “all who call on Thy [Jesus’] name” (v. 14) • “brother” (v. 17)

1. Saul sets off for Damascus to persecute Christians (9:1–2)
2. Saul encounters Christ on the Road and is converted (9:3–9)
3. Saul is healed and confirmed by Ananias (9:10–19)
4. Saul begins his ministry as a Christian (9:20–30)

D. Progress Report (9:31)

III. The Church of Jesus Christ is divinely established and spiritually empowered to proclaim the gospel and establish believing communities globally: the ends of the earth (9:32–28:31).

A. Peter ministers along the coast and into Syrian Antioch (9:32–11:18)

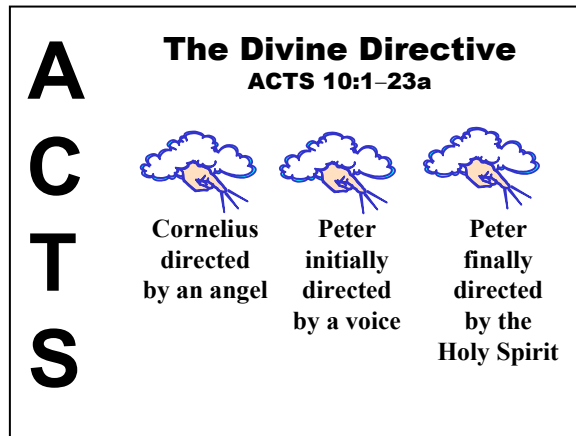
1. Peter's ministry in Lydda and Joppa (9:32–43)

A COMPARISON OF HEALING STORIES IN ACTS 9:32–43	
SOME DIFFERENCES	
ACTS 9:32–35	ACTS 9:36–43
Peter comes to Lydda on his own	Peter asked to come to Joppa
Miracle occurs in Lydda	Miracle occurs in Joppa
A certain man	A certain female disciple
Nature of the problem: paralysis	Nature of the problem: death
No prayer mentioned	Prayer mentioned
SOME SIMILARITIES	
Both miracles involve Peter	
Peter addresses both people by name	
Peter tells both people to arise	
Both are restored immediately	
Both miracles result in people being converted	

2. Peter's ministry with Cornelius (10:1–11:18)

- a. Cornelius receives a vision from God and sends for Peter (10:1–8)

- b. Meanwhile, Peter receives a vision from God in preparation for Cornelius (10:9–23a)



- c. Peter travels to Cornelius' house and Cornelius and his household are converted (10:23b–48)
- d. Peter is confronted by the Jewish Christians about his ministry with Cornelius (11:1–3)
- e. Peter explains and defends his ministry with Cornelius (11:4–17)
- f. Peter's explanation is accepted by the Jewish Christians (11:18)
- B. The expansion of the church into Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch as a result of persecution (11:19–12:25)

ANTIOCH: A KEY CITY IN CHRISTIAN HISTORY

- One of the first seven “deacons,” was a “proselyte from Antioch” (Nicolas, Acts 6:5).
- Antioch was the place of successful evangelism among Jews and Gentiles (Acts 8:1; 11:19-21).
- Antioch was the “home base” for Paul and Barnabas' missionary journeys into Asia Minor (Acts 13:1-3; 15:36-41; 18:22-23).
- Antioch was the place of the dispute that ultimately gave rise to the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:1-29).

1. The church in Antioch is established (11:19–30)
 2. Herod persecutes the church in Jerusalem (12:1–19)
 3. Herod is judged by God (12:20–23)
 4. Progress Report (12:24)
 5. Barnabas and Saul return to Antioch (12:25)
- C. The extension of the church to Cyprus and Asia Minor and Paul's first missionary journey (13:1–15:35)
1. Paul's first missionary journey (13:1–14:28)
 - a. The call of Barnabas and Saul (13:1–3)
 - b. The mission to Cyprus (13:4–12)
 - c. The mission to Asia Minor (13:13–14:25)
 - 1) Travel from Paphos to Perga in Pamphylia: John Mark's departure (13:13)
 - 2) Travel from from Perga to Pisidian Antioch (13:14a)
 - 3) Ministry in Pisidian Antioch (13:14b–50)
 - 4) Travel to Iconium in South Galatia (13:51–52)
 - 5) Ministry in Iconium (14:1–14:4)
 - 6) Travel to Lystra and Derbe (14:5–7)
 - 7) Ministry in Lystra (14:8–18)
 - 8) Paul is stoned and travels to Derbe (14:19–20)

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- 9) Paul and Barnabas retrace their journey (14:21–25)
 - d. The conclusion to the first missionary journey (14:26–28)
 2. The Jerusalem Council (15:1–35)
 - a. Controversy leads to the Jerusalem Council (15:1–5)
 - b. The Jerusalem Council is convened (15:6–21)
 - c. The Jerusalem Council issues their decision (15:22–29)
 - d. The decision of the Council is taken to Antioch (15:30–35)
 - D. The extension of the church to Western Asia Minor, Macedonia, and Greece: Paul's second missionary journey (15:36–18:22)
 1. Paul and Barnabas split their missionary team over John Mark (15:36–41)
 2. Paul travels to Lystra and Derbe and adding Timothy to the team (16:1–4)
 3. Progress report (16:5)
 4. The extension of the church to the Aegean shores (16:6–18:22)
 - a. The "Macedonian call" (16:6–10)
 - b. The ministry in Macedonia (16:11–17:14)
 - 1) Paul travels to Philippi (16:11–12)
 - 2) Paul ministers in Philippi (16:13–40)

- a) Lydia is converted in Philippi (16:12–15)
- b) A slave girl is exorcised in Philippi (16:16–18)

A COMPARISON OF THE TWO WOMEN IN ACTS 16	
ACTS 16:11–15	ACTS 16:16–24
BOTH WOMEN ARE IN PHILIPPI	
BOTH WOMEN ARE ASSOCIATED WITH A PLACE OF PRAYER	
Named (Lydia)	Unnamed
Free (wealthy?)	Slave
Seller of Purple	Diviner
A worshipper of God	A pagan
Clearly converted	Possibly converted
Encounter with Paul results in hospitality	Encounter with Paul results in imprisonment

- c) A jailer is converted in Philippi (16:19–34)
 - d) Paul and Silas are released from prison in Philippi (16:35–40)
- 3) Paul travels to Thessalonica (17:1)
 - 4) Paul ministers in Thessalonica (17:2–9)
 - 5) Paul travels to Berea (17:10a)
 - 6) Paul ministers in Berea (17:10b–14)
- c. The ministry in Achaia (17:15–18:17)
- 1) The ministry in Athens (17:15–34)
 - 2) The ministry in Corinth (18:1–17)

- d. Paul concludes the second journey and returns to Syrian Antioch (18:18–22)
- E. Paul's travels in the Galatian-Phrygian region and Ephesus: Paul's third missionary journey (18:23–19:20)
1. Paul returns to the Galatian-Phrygian Region (18:23)
 2. Apollos' ministry in Ephesus (18:24–28)
 3. Paul's ministry in Ephesus (19:1–19)
 - a. Paul's encounter with Twelve Disciples of John (19:1–7)
 - b. Paul's ministry in the Synagogue of the Jews (19:8–9a)
 - c. Paul's ministry in the lecture hall of Tyrannus (19:9b–10)
 - d. Paul's confrontation with magicians and the occult (19:11–19)

COMPARISONS BETWEEN PETER AND PAUL IN ACTS	
PETER	PAUL
Most prominent in Acts 1–12	Most prominent in Acts 13–28
Ministered primarily to Jews but included Gentiles	Ministered primarily to Gentiles but included Jews
Luke records major speeches by both Peter and Paul	
Luke records similar miracles by both Peter and Paul <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both healed a lame man (3:2; 14:8) • Both exorcised demons (5:16; 16:18) • Both defeated sorcerers (8:18; 13:6) • Both raised people from the dead (9:36; 20:9) • Both had miraculous escapes from prison (12:7; 16:25) 	

4. Progress report (19:20)
- F. Paul's trip to Jerusalem and the extension of the church to Rome (19:21–28:31)
1. The ministry on the way to Jerusalem (19:21–21:16)
 - a. Paul announces his intention to return to Jerusalem (19:21–22)
 - b. A disturbance breaks out over Paul's ministry (19:23–41)
 - 1) The silversmiths charge Paul with defaming Artemis (19:23–27)
 - 2) A disturbance breaks out in the theater (19:28–34)
 - 3) The town clerk quells the disturbance (19:35–41)
 - c. Paul travels to Jerusalem (20:1–21:16)
 - 1) Paul travels through Macedonia and Greece (20:1–6)
 - 2) Paul ministers in Troas and raises Eutychus (20:7–12)
 - 3) Paul travels from Troas to Miletus (20:13–16)
 - 4) Paul gives a farewell speech to the Ephesian elders in Miletus (20:17–38)
 - 5) Paul travels from Miletus to Tyre (21:1–6)
 - 6) Paul travels from Tyre to Caesarea (21:7–14)

- 7) Paul arrives in Jerusalem (21:15–16)
2. The ministry in Jerusalem (21:17–23:32)
 - a. The meeting with James and the elders (21:17–26)
 - b. Paul is arrested in the Temple (21:27–26)
 - c. Paul addresses the Jewish crowd (21:37–22:21)
 - d. Paul avoids flogging (22:22–29)
 - e. Paul appears before the Sanhedrin (22:30–23:10)
 - f. Paul is encouraged through a night vision (23:11)
 - g. A Jewish plot to kill Paul is uncovered (23:12–22)
 - h. The Romans respond to the plot by taking Paul to Caesarea Maritima (23:23–35)
 3. The ministry in Caesarea (24:1–26:32)
 - a. Paul appears before Felix (24:1–26)
 - b. Paul appears before Festus (24:27–25:12)
 - c. Festus discusses Paul's case with Agrippa II (25:13–22)
 - d. Paul appears before Agrippa (25:23–26:32)

4. The ministry on the way to Rome (27:1–28:15)
 - a. The journey to Fair Havens (27:1–8)
 - b. Paul's ship encounters a storm (27:9–38)
 - c. Paul's ship wrecks on Malta (27:39–44)
 - d. Paul is delivered from danger and ministers on Malta (28:1–10)
 - e. Paul completes the last leg of his trip to Rome (28:11–15)

5. Paul's ministry in Rome (28:16–31)
 - a. Paul ministers in Rome (28:17–29)
 - b. Luke recounts the progress of the church through Paul in Rome (28:30–31)