



Overview for The Acts of the Apostles

Purpose: To provide a sequel to the Gospel of Luke and an authoritative account of the origin and early expansion of the Christian church.

Author: Authorship is ascribed to Luke, traditionally thought to be a Gentile native of Antioch in Syria. Luke was well educated in Greek literary and scientific culture, and was a physician by profession. He became a close friend and traveling companion of Paul, and would have also had access to the other Apostles and Jesus' family, as his book provides details that could have been known only to Jesus' closest associates. Tradition says Luke was martyred near the end of Nero's persecution of Christians in Rome. He is considered by some to be the second most significant writer of the New Testament, preceded only by Paul.

To Whom Written: The book is addressed to Theophilus, as was the Gospel of Luke. In the former book, this man was referred to as "most excellent Theophilus," so possibly he was a Roman noble of high rank, perhaps of the ruling class. In Greek, *Theophilus* means "friend of God," so this may have been a nickname indicating his strong interest in the Christian religion.

Date Written: Likely around A.D. 62 while Paul was imprisoned in Rome, since the narrative ends at that point.

Key Verse: "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

Significant Features: The Acts of the Apostles is the first written history of Christianity. It provides a vital link between Jesus Christ's life on earth and the emergence of His Church, and between the Gospels and the Epistles, being the primary source of information about the expansion of Christ's message in the first century.

The main theological emphasis of the Book of Acts is the activity of the Holy Spirit. The Apostles were to begin their ministry only after they had been "endued with power from on high" (Luke 24:49). The

single most important event in the Acts of the Apostles is the outpouring of the Holy Spirit which occurred at Pentecost, empowering the followers of Christ to carry out the Great Commission.

Setting: The events described in Acts occurred over an approximate thirty-year period as the Church grew and expanded into areas of the world ruled by Rome. Acts concludes about A.D. 62 with an account of Paul's preaching at Rome while under house arrest.

Key People: The Apostle Peter is the key figure of chapters 1-12. From chapter 13 to the end of the book, the emphasis is on the conversion and missionary efforts of the Apostle Paul. Other notable figures include Stephen, the first Christian martyr; Philip the evangelist; and Paul's missionary companions, Barnabas and Silas.

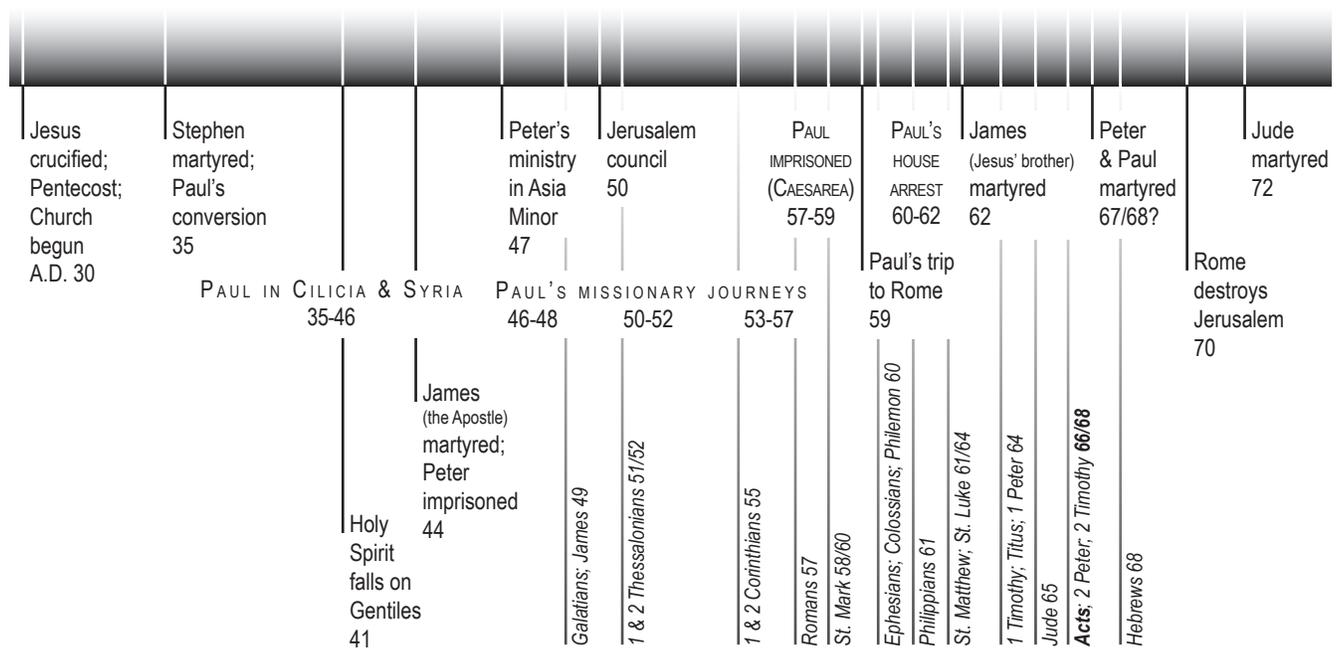
Historical Accuracy: Luke's care as a historian is revealed by his proper use of titles for the many and varied Roman officials—details that would have been difficult for someone without firsthand knowledge to have accurately provided, since provincial boundaries and terms changed frequently in that era. The accuracy of his record has been confirmed by inscriptions on archaeological discoveries.

Summary: Luke opens with a statement of the theme of the book, followed by a brief summary of the events that occurred between Christ's resurrection and ascension. Three categories of activities are described as having taken place during those forty days: Christ's living presence was witnessed (by sight, touch, and hearing), commandments were given to His followers, and instructions were received regarding how to implement those.

The subsequent content of the book can be divided into three parts. Chapters 1-12 describe the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and the emergence of the Christian church among the Jews, primarily through the ministry of Peter. Chapters 13-21, which record Paul's missionary journeys, give the history of the expansion of the faith among the Gentiles, a fulfillment of Jesus' commission to His disciples. Chapters 21-28 detail Paul's time in Rome, and the events that took him there.

Timeline

Many of these dates are approximate, as reference materials differ slightly.



Outline

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A complete amplified outline of this book is available on our website at www.apostolicfaith.org.

- I. Introduction (1:1-26)
 - A. Prologue: Luke's and Christ's previous and present ministries (1:1-5)
 - B. The ascension (1:6-11)
 - C. The preparation for preaching (1:12-26)
- II. The witness in Jerusalem (2:1—8:3)
 - A. The witness at Pentecost (2:1-47)
 - B. The witness by Peter and John (3:1—4:31)
 - C. The witness of the Apostles (4:32—5:42)
 - D. The witness of Stephen (6:1—8:3)
- III. The witness in Judea and Samaria (8:4—12:25)
 - A. The witness of Philip (8:4-40)
 - B. The witness to Saul (9:1-31)
 - C. The witness of Peter (9:32—11:18)
 - D. The witness of the persecuted church (11:19—12:25)
- IV. The witness "unto the uttermost part of the earth" (13:1—28:31)
 - A. The first missionary journey of Paul (13:1—14:28)
 - B. The Jerusalem Council (15:1-35)
 - C. The second missionary journey of Paul (15:36—18:22)
 - D. The third missionary journey of Paul (18:23—21:17)
 - E. The journey of Paul to Rome (21:18—28:31)