

Introduction to the Book of Acts



The Book of Acts

Do you know you have power, authority, and position in the Kingdom of God? Before Jesus ascended into heaven, he commissioned his church to be his ambassador and presence in this physical world. If you are a believer in Jesus Christ that includes you, you are a representative of the Kingdom of God in this world. But what are you called to represent? This is what the Book of Acts is about, we are called to be witnesses of the gospel in a fallen

world. Jesus has given us the Holy Spirit to empower us to accomplish this mission.

From the Feast of Pentecost in Acts Chapter 2 to today, the church has been commissioned by Jesus Christ to advance the gospel in a fallen world. In the Book of Acts, we have the model on how to accomplish the mission.

The Book of Acts deals with serious issues that still affect the church today. Here are some of the questions covered in the book of Acts:

- How is the Old Covenant handled in a Gentile world?
- How are we to deal with persecution and rejection?
- How do we advance the Gospel in a pagan world?
- What is the message we are called to deliver?
- How do we handle demonic opposition?

These are just some of the issues addressed and answered in these twenty-eight chapters written after Jesus had ascended into Heaven.

Author: The tradition is Luke or Lucius (Latin for Luke) is the author of Acts, this book is an anonymous book, meaning there is no direct claim of authorship in the book. Luke's name only appears three times in the New Testament (Colossians 4:14, 2 Timothy 4:11, Philemon 24), all prison epistles written by Paul.

Colossians 4:14 Luke the beloved physician greets you, as does Demas.

The earliest witness to Luke authorship is Irenaeus, bishop of Lyons, who wrote in the 2nd Century that Luke was the traveling companion for Paul, and is the “We” in the text of Acts 16:10, when Paul meets Luke in Troas, there is a shift in the writing style where, the “We” now accompanies Paul on his missions until his death in Rome.

Acts 16:10 And when Paul had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go on into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.

Beyond the three verses not much is known of Luke, his understanding of the Old Testament has caused some to speculate, he was either a Greek who converted to Judaism and then found Jesus as his savior, or a Jew who was cultured in Greek learning. Traditions have linked Luke to Antioch, Paul's early base before his missionary journey.

Date: An early date of AD 62 is based on the internal evidence of the text. Since Luke was with Paul when he was in Rome, the text cuts off with the coming trial against Paul. Paul's desire was to take the Gospel to Spain (Romans 15:24,28), which did not happen. Acts ends with Paul awaiting trial before Caesar (Acts 28:30-31), Paul lived in his own hired house for two years. Also, there is no mention of the destruction of the 2nd Temple in AD 70, which would have been a significant event.

Theme: Acts record the power of the Holy Spirit to transform the church as an instrument of Jesus Christ to reach the world with the **Good News** of the Gospel. It shows how the Jewish Covenants are handled with the promise of the New Covenant to Gentile "Believers".

Distinctive Features: Jesus told the apostles to stay in Jerusalem until they received promise of the Holy Spirit, who would give them "Power" to be his witnesses in "Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and to the end of the earth". The preaching of the Gospel would require unique demands on the group of Jews who were to introduce this new message of "Good News" to a pagan and gentile world.

1. The Role of the Holy Spirit: The Gospel of the Holy Spirit
 - a. Holy Spirit empowers the Believer
 - b. Holy Spirit directs us: Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8)
2. Geographic and Cultural Expansion
 - a. Gentile inclusion
 - b. Jerusalem Council (Acts 15)
3. The Shift of Peter to Paul
 - a. Peter (Chapters 1-12)
 - b. Paul (Chapters 13-28)

Outline

The Book of Acts (The Acts of the Apostles) is essentially the "sequel" to the Gospel of Luke. It bridges the gap between the life of Jesus and the established Church, charting the spread of Christianity from a small room in Jerusalem to the heart of the Roman Empire.

The book is famously structured around **Acts 1:8**: *"...and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."*

I. The Witness in Jerusalem (Chapters 1–7)

This section focuses on the birth of the Church and the leadership of Peter.

1:1–26: Jesus' Ascension and the choosing of Matthias to replace Judas.

2:1–47: Pentecost. The Holy Spirit descends, Peter preaches his first sermon, and 3,000 are baptized.

3:1–4:31: Healing of the lame man and the first wave of persecution by the Sanhedrin.

4:32–5:11: Life in the early community; the incident with Ananias and Sapphira.

6:1–7:60: The appointment of deacons and the martyrdom of **Stephen**, the first Christian martyr.

II. The Witness in Judea and Samaria (Chapters 8–12)

Persecution scatters the believers, which—ironically—causes the message to spread.

8:1–40: Philip takes the gospel to Samaria and baptizes an Ethiopian eunuch.

9:1–31: The Conversion of Saul. The Church's greatest persecutor becomes its greatest missionary.

9:32–11:18: Peter's vision and the conversion of Cornelius (opening the door to Gentiles).

11:19–12:25: The church in Antioch is established (where followers are first called "Christians"); Peter's miraculous escape from prison.

III. The Witness to the Ends of the Earth (Chapters 13–28)

The focus shifts almost entirely to **Paul** and his three missionary journeys.

The Missionary Journeys

13:1–14:28: First Journey: Paul and Barnabas travel to Cyprus and Galatia.

15:1–35: The Jerusalem Council: A pivotal debate where the leaders decide that Gentile converts do not need to follow Jewish circumcision laws.

15:36–18:22: Second Journey: Paul travels to Greece (Philippi, Thessalonica, Athens, and Corinth).

18:23–21:16: Third Journey: Paul strengthens the churches and spends significant time in Ephesus.

Paul's Trials and the Road to Rome

21:17–23:35: Paul is arrested in Jerusalem and stands trial before the Sanhedrin.

24:1–26:32: Paul is imprisoned in Caesarea and defends his faith before governors Felix, Festus, and King Agrippa.

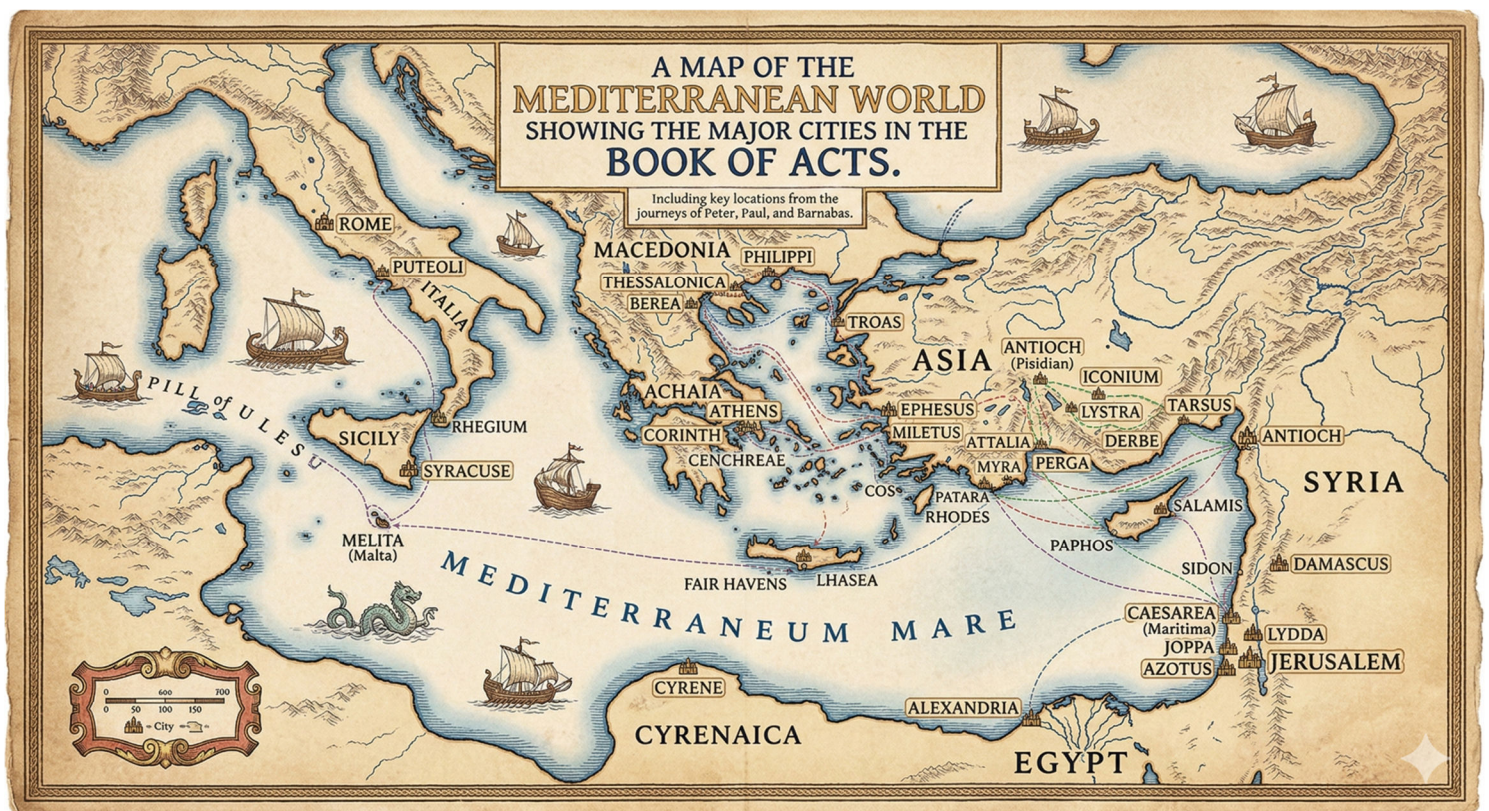
27:1–28:31: Journey to Rome. Paul survives a shipwreck on Malta and eventually arrives in Rome.

The book ends with Paul under house arrest, boldly preaching to all who visit him.

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Key Theme: The unstoppable nature of the "Word." Despite prison, shipwrecks, and riots, the book ends with the Greek word *akōlytōs*, meaning "unhindered."

Would you like me to dive deeper into one of Paul's specific missionary journeys or provide a summary of a particular chapter?



GRAPHICAL TIMELINE OF THE BOOK OF ACTS: FROM JERUSALEM TO ROME

APPROXIMATE DATES & KEY EVENTS

BEGINNINGS IN JERUSALEM (Acts 1-7)



30 AD | ASCENSION & PENTECOST
(Acts 1-2)



30 AD | EARLY CHURCH GROWTH, HEALING, PREACHING, COMMUNAL LIFE.
(Acts 3-5)

JUDEA, SAMARIA, TARSUS, & ANTIOCH (Acts 8-12)

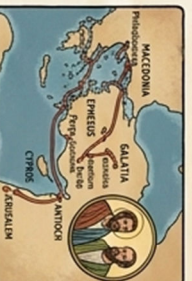


33 AD | PERSECUTION & DISPERSION
GOSPEL SPREADS
(Acts 8)



40 AD | PETER & CORNELIUS
GOSPEL TO THE
(Acts 10-11)

PAUL'S MISSIONARY JOURNEYS (Acts 13-21)



48 AD | FIRST JOURNEY
(Acts 13-14)
ESTABLISHING CHURCHES
IN ASIA MINOR.



50 AD | JERUSALEM COUNCIL
DECIDING GENTILE
BELIEVERS & JEWISH LAW.
(Acts 15)

PAUL'S TRIALS & TRIP TO ROME (Acts 21-28)



57 AD | ARREST IN
JERUSALEM
ACCUSATIONS AT
THE TEMPLE.
(Acts 21-23)



60 AD | SHIPWRECK
ON MALTA
PERILOUS VOYAGE
TO ROME.
(Acts 27-28)

30 AD 33 AD 35 AD 44 AD 48 AD 50 AD 52 AD 57 AD 60 AD 62 AD



30 AD | EARLY CHURCH GROWTH, HEALING, PREACHING, COMMUNAL LIFE.
(Acts 3-5)



33 AD | STEPHEN MARTYRED
FIRST CHRISTIAN MARTYR.
(Acts 6-7)



35 AD | SAUL'S CONVERSION
ENCOUNTER WITH CHRIST,
ROAD TO DAMASCUS.
(Acts 9)



44 AD | JAMES KILLED,
PETER FREED
HEROD'S PERSECUTION,
DIVINE DELIVERANCE.
(Acts 12)



50 AD | JERUSALEM COUNCIL
DECIDING GENTILE
BELIEVERS & JEWISH LAW.
(Acts 15)



50 AD | SECOND JOURNEY
GOSPEL REACHES EUROPE,
FOUNDING KEY CHURCHES.
(Acts 15-18)



52 AD | THIRD JOURNEY
(Acts 18-21)
FOCUS ON EPHESUS,
STRENGTHENING CHURCHES.



60 AD | SHIPWRECK
ON MALTA
PERILOUS VOYAGE TO ROME.
(Acts 27-28)



62 AD | HOUSE ARREST
IN ROME
PREACHING THE KINGDOM
"UNHINDERED".
(Acts 28)