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**What Does Acts Tell Us?**  
**Selected Scripture**

The book of Acts has been called "The fifth gospel" by some because it is the sequel to Luke's gospel.

But more than that, it is the only New Testament book which records Church history and therefore serves as a crucial document for understanding the link between the ministry of Jesus and His continuing ministry through the apostles, a treasure of vital supplementary information to fit and comprehend the epistles, even though it was written to one Theophilus.

Acts was not written to be a comprehensive account of all that occurred but a selective record of sermons, events and people impacted by the Gospel ,

Acts covers about 30 years of time from the ascension of Jesus to the imprisonment of Paul at Rome

So, we want to look at the book of Acts in a broad overview to understand it's priceless significance.

We want to look do this by looking at three things.

- I. The man who wrote Acts.
- II. The message of Acts.
- III. The meaning of Acts.

**I. The man who wrote Acts.**

- A. The prologue identifies Luke as the author of the book of Acts.
  - 1. The purpose of Luke the was to relate the connection between Acts to a former account, his Gospel, regarding all that Jesus began to do and teach in this earthly ministry, for both are written to the same man, Theophilus. Acts 1:1
    - a. Luke had written his Gospel to provide Theophilus with the accurate record of the ministry of Jesus, from the beginning. Lk. 1:1-2
    - b. Luke addresses Theophilus as most excellent "kratistos", a title, which refers to a high government official, used of Felix and Festus. Lk.1:3
  - 2. That Christ ministry on earth had ended as he was taken up but not until He through the Holy Spirit had given commandments to the apostles whom He had chosen. Acts 1:2
    - a. Luke connects his resurrected account of Jesus as they were frightened and Jesus showed them His hands and feet to prove He was not a spirit and then ate with them. Lk. 24:39-43

- b. Luke say that Jesus declared to them this was all in fulfillment of the Law and the Prophet and Jesus opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures. Lk. 24:44-45
- 3. The ending of the Gospel of Luke also bears witness of the same author, indicating a continuation of the same author but a second document.
  - a. Luke closes his Gospel and stats Act with the promise the Father and the ascension of Jesus to heaven.
    - 1) “Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high.” And He led them out as far as Bethany, and He lifted up His hands and blessed them. Now it came to pass, while He blessed them, that He was parted from them and carried up into heaven.” Lk. 24:50-51
    - 2) “And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, “which,” He said, “you have heard from Me; “for John truly baptized with water, but you

- shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.” Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, “Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” And He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority. “But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, who also said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven.” Acts 1:4-11
- b. Luke closes his Gospel and starts Acts with the apostles returning to Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives.

- 1) “And they worshiped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple praising and blessing God. Amen.” Lk. 24:52-53
- 2) Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day’s journey.” Acts 1:12

**B.** The possible relationship of Luke to Theophilus is opinion by some indications.

1. Luke is believed to of been a slave of Theophilus, whose name means “lover of God”, and personal physician.
  - a. David J. Williams points out in his commentary that name ending in “as” were common among slave.
  - b. Luke is “Loukas”, so the possibility exists, that he was a slave at one time.
2. Luke is believed to of been set free by Theophilus, with his Roman citizenship.
  - a. Weather Theophilus had become born again and set Luke free.
  - b. Or perhaps Luke had been the instrument to share Christ with Theophilus, we don’t know.
3. If so, then Luke therefore had written his Gospel and Acts to provide Theophilus with the accurate record of the ministry of Jesus, from the beginning and

continuing through His apostles. Lk. 1:1-4, Acts 1:1-3

- a. The title us by Luke for Theophilus , most excellent, “kratistos” refers to a high government official. Lk. 1:3
- b. The same word is used for Felix and Festus. Acts 23:26; 26:25
4. Luke is silent as well as the Scripture as to where he met Theophilus but three are offered.
  - a. Luke could have had contact with Theophilus in Antioch, which some believe Luke was from.
    - \* Eusebius and Jerome were familiar with this tradition.
  - b. Or at Philippi where Luke left Paul for a time.
  - c. Or Rome, where Luke was with Paul during his two imprisonment, which is probably the place Luke wrote Acts.

**C.** The partnership of Luke with Paul is evident.

1. Luke was addressed with affection by Paul "Luke, the beloved physician. Col. 4:14
2. Luke was referred to as an equal by Paul "Luke my fellow laborer". Phile..24
3. Luke was commended by Paul as being the only one who remained faithful to

Paul during his 1st and 2nd imprisonment, “Only Luke is with me.”  
2Tim. 4:11

4. Luke joined Paul, Silas and Timothy at Troas in the 2nd missionary journey by the personal pronoun “we”. Acts 16:10-18; 20:6-21:18; 27:1-28:16
5. Luke was with Paul when he returned to Jerusalem after his 3rd missionary journey, till he entered the temple. Acts 20:5-21:18
6. Luke was with Paul when he sailed to Rome. Acts 27:1-28:16  
\* These are the only three appearances of his name in the New Testament.
7. He was a man of science, observation and details being a physician, who wrote the two longest books of the New Testament, his gospel and Acts, comprising 28-30% of the New Testament.

### Illustration

Helen Keller gave some good advice, “Keep your face to the sunshine and you cannot see the shadows”, likewise, “Keep your eyes on Jesus and you won’t have your eyes on self”. Xavier

### Application

1. How we need men of the word to share with other faithfully as Luke did with Theophilus.

- a. Those we grew up with.
  - b. Those we work with.
  - c. Those who live close to us.
  - d. Those who we run into in different places.  
\* “Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying: “Whom shall I send, And who will go for Us?” Then I said, “Here am I! **Send me.!**” Is. 6:8
2. How important it is to be joined in consistent fellowship and service with other men or woman who are on fire for God, like Luke with Paul.
    - a. Those who are like-minded.
    - b. Those who are striving to grow in their faith.
    - c. Those who make themselves available to serve in the church body.  
\* “As **iron** sharpens **iron**, So a man sharpens the countenance of his friend.” Prov. 27:17
  3. How excellent it is when brothers and sisters in Christ just do what God has called them to be in the body, without attempting to be the center of attention, like Luke.
    - a. Perhaps you direct parking lot traffic and you are the first person people will encounter, what will be there impression?
    - b. Maybe you are an usher and you greet the people and help them in whatever way you can, Are you attentive, cheerful and friendly as they approach you, or are you taking to friends and just had them a bulletin without even paying greeting them?

- c. Perhaps you lead worship and you are more concerned what people think about your talent, than what God sees in your heart?

\* “For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith. For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, so we, *being* many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us.” Rom. 12:36a

4. How important it is that as believer we tell people two things about Jesus.

- a. He came the First time and ascended to the Father in heaven.
- b. He is coming again for His church and judgment.

\* “For from you the word of the Lord has sounded forth, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place. Your faith toward God has gone out, so that we do not need to say anything. For they themselves declare concerning us what manner of entry we had to you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His

Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.” 1Thess. 1:8-10

***The man who wrote Acts was Luke, a man in Christ!***

## II. The message of Acts.

A. The proclamation of Acts is that Jesus had resurrected from the dead and that for 40 days verified it with unmistakable proofs and spoke about things pertaining to the “Kingdom of God.” Acts 1:3

1. The proofs were too many.
  - a. Mary Magdalene at the tomb, the women. Matt. 28
  - b. He appeared to the two on the road to Emmaus. Lk. 24
  - c. He appeared to the ten, to the eleven again at Galilee, to the eleven and personally to Peter. Matt. 28:16-17, Jn. 20:19-29, 21:15-17
  - d. He appeared to 500 at one time, to James, all the apostles and last of all, to Paul. 1Cor. 15:5-8
2. The subject was the Kingdom of God.
  - a. The kingdom of God is related to Israel’s earthly reign, that is why they asked the question. Acts 1:6
  - b. The Church is not the Kingdom but part of the overall Kingdom of God.

- c. The church will not bring in the Kingdom but return with Jesus to set up the Kingdom.
  - d. The Kingdom of God will be proceeded by Israel's repentance and acknowledgment of Jesus as Messiah. Rom. 11:25-26, Matt. 23:39
- B.** The proclamation of Acts is that Jesus was going to continue the ministry by the Holy Spirit through His apostles.
- \* This would include apostles other than the twelve, Barnabas, Paul, etc.
1. Jesus taught them about the sending of the comforter. Jn. 14:15-18, 26, 15:26-27, 16:7-14
  2. Luke begins Acts with the same directive regarding the Holy Spirit which his gospel ends. Lk. 24:49, Acts 1:4-5
  3. The promise was of one of "power" to be the Lord's witnesses. Lk. 24:49, Acts 1:8
    - a. The Holy Spirit filled them and they spoke in tongues as the Spirit gave them the utterance. Acts 2:4
    - b. The filling of the Holy Spirit gave Peter and John boldness. Acts 4:8, 13
    - c. The sin of Ananias and Sapphira was lying to the Holy Spirit. Acts 5:3
    - d. The Holy Spirit was responsible for the miracle through the apostles. Act. 5:12, 32

- e. The men in the Synagogue could not resist the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spoke. Acts 6:10
  - f. The Samaritans received the Holy Spirit. Acts 8:15-17
  - g. Saul was filled with the Holy Spirit. Acts 9:17
  - h. The Spirit spoke to Peter at Joppa. Acts 10:19
  - i. The Spirit fell on all the house of Cornelius. Acts 10:44
  - j. The Spirit separated Paul and Barnabas for the mission field. Acts 13:2
  - k. The Holy Spirit was the leading advisor at the first church council at Jerusalem. Acts 15:28
  - l. The Holy Spirit forbade Paul to preach at Asia and Bithynia. Acts 16:6-7
  - m. The Holy Spirit testified to Paul of suffering that awaited him in every city and he went bound in the Spirit to Jerusalem. Acts 20:22-23
  - n. The Holy Spirit spoke through Agabus about Paul's imprisonment. Acts 21:11
- C.** The proclamation of Acts is that Jesus was and is the Lord and Savior of mankind who

requires repentance for the forgiveness of sins based on His death and resurrection.

1. Peter's message at Pentecost is about repentance from their sins in the name Jesus Christ. Acts 2:22-24, 33, 36-39
2. Peter and John at the Temple pointed to Jesus for the miracle through the faith and name of Jesus Christ. Acts 3:12-15, 4:8-12
3. Stephens sermon took the Jews through their rebellious history, culminating in the rejection and death of Jesus Christ, their Messiah. Acts 7:51-53
4. Philip preach Christ Jesus to the Ethiopian eunuch for the forgiveness of sins through the prophet Isaiah. Acts 8:34-35
5. Peter at Cornelius house preached Christ Jesus for the forgiveness of their sins. Acts 10:36-43
6. Paul at Antioch in Pisidia preached repentance in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins. Acts 13:29-32, 38-39
7. Paul at Philippi exercised the demon possessed girl in the name of Jesus Christ and salvation to the jailor in the name of Jesus. Acts 16:31
8. Paul at Athens preached Christ resurrected, Creator and Savior. Acts 17:30-32

9. Paul did the same at the steps of the Antonia Fortress, to Felix, to Festus, to Agrippa, and at Rome, his message never changed!

- D.** The proclamation of Acts is that Jesus and the gospel are not received by the world.
1. Mocking and false accusation will come. Acts 2:13
  2. Men will be drawn by the personal benefit. Acts 3:12
  3. Religious people will be disturbed. Acts 4:1-2
  4. Imprisonment occurred at times. Acts 5:17-18
  5. The were brought before courts. Acts 5:27
  6. Some were killed for their faith and witness. Acts 7:59-60
- E.** The proclamation of Acts is that Jesus is interested in the world not on a elite group or race, He is mission minded.
1. The table of contents for Acts is given. Acts 1:8
    - a. Jerusalem. Acts 1-7
    - b. Judea and Samaria. Acts 8-12
    - c. The ends of the earth. Acts 13-28
  2. The Lord Jesus adds to His Church such as are saved. Acts 2:47

- a. Not by the study of “church growth” taught by Donald McGavern or Peter Wagner at Fuller Seminary.
  - b. Not by “power evangelism” taught by the late John Wimber.
  - c. Not by “the Purpose Driven Church” of Rick Warren, of the Seeker Friendly Movement.
3. Jerusalem is the center of Christianity in the first 12 chapter with Peter as the central figure but Antioch and Paul in the last fifteen.
- a. The Gospel is rejected by the Jews at Jerusalem.
  - b. The Gospel is rejected by the Jews in the dispersion.
4. In the first 12 chapters the Gospel went from Jerusalem to Antioch but the last fifteen the gospel reached Asia, Greece and Europe to Rome.
- a. The Jews were always preached to first but rejected the word.
  - b. Therefore Acts closes with the gospel going to the Gentiles. Acts 28:28

### **Illustration**

Thousand upon thousands who have followed Christ through all the pilgrimage of life are on record as saying what John Bunyan said in those beautiful and incomparable words: “I have loved to hear my Lord spoken of, and wherever I

have seen the print of his shoe in the earth, there I have coveted to set my foot too. His name has been to me as a civet-box; yea, sweeter than all perfumes... And his countenance I have more desired than they that have most desired the light of the sun.” #2711 Vol. 1

### **Application**

1. Jesus accomplished what no other man has, He was victorious through His death and resurrection.
- a. “Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the **power** of death, that is, the devil.” Heb. 2:14
  - b. He wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.” Col. 2:14-15
  - c. “Then, behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth quaked, and the rocks were split, and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; and coming out of the graves after His resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many.” Matt. 27:51-53



2. The Spirit of Christ alone can convict a person of sin.
  - a. Jesus said, “And when He has come, He will **convict** the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.” Jn. 16:8
  - b. The Holy Spirit is the representative of Jesus and does not speak of Himself but Jesus. Jn. 16:13
3. For faith to be honored by God the Father, it must be Biblical and no one is excluded.
  - a. Believing the revelation of God for salvation in the person of Jesus Christ and His atonement.
  - b. Acting on it in order to be forgiven and transformed.
    - \* “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” Jn. 1:12-13

*The message of Acts is, man is in need of salvation through Christ!*

### III. The meaning of Acts.

- A. Jesus uses ordinary and common people like the twelve apostles, to do His work and reach out to others by His Holy Spirit. Acts 1:13, 26

1. Peter and Andrew along with James and John two sets of brothers and fisher,
  2. Philip, Thomas, Bartholomew, James son of Alphaeus.
  3. Matthew the tax collector and Simon the Zealot, enemies to death.
  4. Judas the son of James.
  5. Matthias, who they cast lots to take Judas place, asking the Lord to decide.
- B. Jesus has not changed the message for salvation, faith in His death and resurrection for repentance for the forgiveness of sins. Acts 2:38-39
1. The individual response in faith to repent from one’s sins, “Then Peter said to them, “Repent,.” vs. 38a
  2. The public witness is by water, “And let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins.” vs. 38b
  3. The promise is, “And you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” vs. 38c
  4. The duration of this salvation is, “For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.” vs. 39
- C. Jesus promises the gospel will offend man experiencing persecutions and tribulations. Acts 14:21-22

1. It may not always happen, “And when they had preached the gospel to that city and made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch.” vs. 21
2. It is always to be prepared for, “Strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, “We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God.” vs. 22

**E.** Jesus desires to reveal Himself to sinners and turn them from darkness to the light.

Acts 26:16-20

1. Paul was recounting to Herod his conversion story and commission, “But rise and stand on your feet; for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to make you a minister and a witness both of the things which you have seen and of the things which I will yet reveal to you. I will deliver you from the Jewish people, as well as from the Gentiles, to whom I now send you.” vs. 16-17
2. Paul described the spiritual blindness man is under and the goal that only the Gospel can accomplish, “To open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness

of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.’

3. Paul had not been disobedient, “Therefore, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, “but declared first to those in Damascus and in Jerusalem, and throughout all the region of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent, turn to God, and do works befitting repentance. For these reasons the Jews seized me in the temple and tried to kill me.” vs. 19-21

### **Illustration**

To you and I, little difference would be where we hang a strip of fly-paper but for the fly, what side it chooses, makes all the difference in the world. So those in their decision about Christ!

### **Application**

1. You may think that God can not use you but the Bible say He not only can but has planned on it.

Eph. 2:10

1. Each of us are a message to the lost world, “For we are His workmanship.” vs. 10a
2. Each of us have been prepared for certain works, “Created in Christ Jesus for good works.” vs. 10b
3. Each of us can only decide if we will walk in them, “Which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.” vs. 10c

2. Jesus is still revealing Himself as having resurrected from the dead to those who will hear. Rom. 10:14-17

- a. The question is, “How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?” vs. 14
- b. The answer is “And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, Who bring glad tidings of good things!” vs. 15
- c. The problem is one of man’s free will, “But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, “Lord, who has believed our report?” vs. 16
- d. The steps to salvation are, “So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” vs. 17

3. The Gospel is becoming more offensive to the world and it’s becoming less tolerant of it’s specific claims.

- a. Jesus said, “If the world hates you, you know that it **hated** Me before it **hated** you.” Jn. 15:18
- b. Jesus prayed, “I have given them Your word; and the world has **hated** them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.” Jn. 17:14

- c. Jesus promised, “These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.” Jn. 16:33
- 4. Jesus desires the Church to be mission minded beginning in Jerusalem and extending out to the world, turning people from darkness and Satan to the light of Jesus Christ. Matt. 28:19-20
  - a. There was never a question about it, “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you.” vs. 19-20a
  - b. There will never be a time or place Jesus is not present in His work of the gospel, “And lo, I am with you always, *even* to the end of the age.” Amen.” vs. 20b-e

*The meaning of Acts is, all must choose or reject Christ!*

### Conclusion

The book of Acts in a broad overview allows us to understand it’s priceless significance.

- I. The man who wrote Acts was Luke a man in Christ!
- II. The message of Acts is, man is in need of salvation through Christ!

**III.** The meaning of Acts is, all must choose or reject Christ!