

4/15/07

Introduction to Acts

We want to begin our study of the book of Acts by way of an introduction, which will help us to better understand the book and its significance in relationship to the church.

- I. The book of Acts.
- II. The book of Acts author.
- III. The book of Acts particulars.

I. The Book of Acts.

A. The importance of the book of Acts.

1. The book of Act provides the important link between the ministry of Jesus and the life of the early church after His ascension.
 - a. The disciples saw Jesus after the resurrection. Acts 1:3a
 - b. The disciples met with Jesus for forty days and spoke to them about the Kingdom. Acts 1:3b
 - c. The disciples saw Jesus ascend up to heaven from the Mount of Olives. Acts 1:9
2. The book of Acts also provides the background, in order that we can better understand the New Testament epistles.

- a. The continuing animosity of the Pharisees towards the apostles for preaching Christ. Acts 3
 - b. The early problems of the church as they grew. Acts 6
 - c. The conversion of Paul the apostle, from persecutor of the church to protector of the church. Acts 9
 - d. The occasions that brought about the establishing of certain churches, such as those in Galatia, Philippi, Thessalonica, Corinth, Ephesus, etc.
 - e. The persecution Paul incurred at Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea and Ephesus.
3. The book of Acts is the history of the early church but it is not a comprehensive account of all that happened in the early church history.
 4. The beloved physician Luke by the direction and guidance of the Holy Spirit selected to record specific material, accounts, events, situations and places for the benefit of a man called Theophilus “lover of God”. Acts 1:1b
 5. The Holy Spirit in His wisdom used Luke indirectly to provide the essential history of the early church that is so necessary for the believer and the church of the future generations, in order that

they might know what God did, and wanted to continue to do till His return.

6. There are 80 geographical references made of provinces, cities and ports, etc, which many critics of the past declared to be inaccurate information, ridiculing those who trusted the reliability of Acts, but as time has run its course, all the facts and meticulous details have proven to be true, resulting in a most accurate historical document, verified by good investigation and archeology.
* Adolf Harnack 1851-1930, Ramsay 1851-1939, and others opposed the reliability of Acts.
7. The logue record of the Paul's voyage to Rome, is considered one of the most accurate and detailed recording of a voyage.
8. There are about 110 names that appear.
9. The sermons and speeches recorded are 24 in number, 9 of Peter, 9 of Paul, one of Gamaliel, Stephen, James, Demetrius, the Ephesian clerk and Festus.
9. The book of Acts cover about thirty years, from the ascension of Jesus to the imprisonment of Paul at Rome, A.D. 32-62

- B. The book of Acts is a continuation of the ministry of Jesus by the Holy Spirit through His apostles.
 1. The beginning of Luke's gospel and Acts show them as sequel.
 - a. The purpose of Luke writing His Gospel is declared, "Inasmuch as many have taken in hand to **set in order** a narrative of those things which have been fulfilled among us, just as those who **from the beginning were eyewitnesses** and ministers of the word delivered them to us, it seemed good to me also, **having had perfect understanding** of all things from the very first, to **write to you an orderly account**, most excellent Theophilus, that you may know the certainty of those things in which you were instructed." Lk.1:1-4
 - b. The purpose of Luke for writing the book of Acts is also declared, linking it to his Gospel, "The **former account I made**, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, until the day in which He was taken up, after He through the Holy Spirit had given commandments to the apostles whom He had chosen, to whom He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many

infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.” Act 1:1-3

- c. The book of Acts is a narrative story.
- 2. The end of Luke’s gospel is expanded in the beginning of Acts.
 - a. Jesus said, “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.” Lk.24:49
 - b. Luke tells us what Jesus said, “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.” Act.1:4-8

- 3. The Gospel of Luke and Acts were one volume at the beginning.
 - a. The one volume circulated in two parts as one complete writing.
 - b. During the late first or second century, the first volume, we are told become associated with Matthew, Mark and John, bringing about the four Gospels.
 - c. It was at that time that the book of Acts received it’s present title “Acts” “praxeis” suggesting movement of the gospel by the apostles.
 - d. Acts is the third longest of the New Testament books, one-tenth shorter than it’s companion the Gospel of Luke, the longest of the New Testament books.
 - e. The two volumes comprise 28-30% of the material of the New Testament and exceeding both Paul’s and John’s writings in size.
- 4. The Christian Church began from Judaism but was distinct from Judaism.
 - a. Judaism identified the nation of Israel, under the Law of Moses.
 - 1) The nation of Israel is the wife of God, who had been put away by divorce or her unfaithfulness.

- 2) The nation of Israel had rejected their Messiah, Jesus Christ and Jesus had pronounced judgment over her. Matt. 23:37-37, Lk. 19:41-44
- b. The church identified Jew and Gentile, one in Christ, the Bride of Christ, under Grace.
 - 1) The church of Christ is looking forwards to a wedding.
 - 2) The early church was made up of all Jews, who believed Jesus was the Messiah and accepted Him as Lord and Savior.
- c. The church did not replace Israel, what is called “Replacement Theology”, the First church council understood and pointed out the distinction between the two.
 - * “Then all the multitude kept silent and listened to Barnabas and Paul declaring how many miracles and wonders God had worked through them among the Gentiles. And after they had become silent, James answered, saying, “Men *and* brethren, listen to me: “Simon has declared how God at the first visited the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name. “And with this the words of the prophets

- agree, just as it is written: ‘After this I will return And will rebuild the tabernacle of David, which has fallen down; I will rebuild its ruins, And I will set it up; So that the rest of mankind may seek the LORD, Even all the Gentiles who are called by My name, Says the LORD who does all these things.’”
Acts 15:12-17
- 5. The book of Acts records the hostility and injustices toward Christians and Christianity by the Jewish leaders.
 - a. The Priest, the captain of the temple and the Sadducees put Peter and John in prison for healing the lame man and preaching in the temple, telling them they could not speak or teach in the name of Jesus and threatened them. Acts 3-4
 - b. Stephen preached to the Synagogue of the Freedmen and disputing with him, they ended up stoning Stephen to death. Acts 7
 - c. Saul consenting to Stephens death, marked the start of great persecution against the church, all scattering throughout Judea and Samaria as Saul made havoc of the church. Acts 8:1-3
 - d. Saul’s radical conversion on the Damascus Road placed him on the

side of the persecution he used to exact on believer by zealous Jews in Damascus, as he escaped with the help of some disciples, being lowered down in a large basket. He fled to Jerusalem and only Barnabas took a chance on him and introduced him to the apostles. Speaking bold to the Hellenist about Jesus, they attempted to kill him, so the brethren sent him up to Tarsus. Acts 9:24-29

- e. In every missionary journey, Paul went to the synagogue first but the Jews opposed and persecuted him due to the Gospel of Jesus. Acts 13-20
- f. The book of Acts closes with Paul explaining to the Jews at Rome that he was not teaching against the Law of Moses but they did not hear and Paul said, “Therefore let it be known to you that the salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will hear it!” Acts 28:28

C. The book of Acts recorded the work of the Holy Spirit in and through the apostles and the Church regarding the proclamation of Jesus Christ crucified, buried and resurrected for the purpose of salvation.

1. The presence of the church at Pentecost gave birth to thousands in Jerusalem. Acts 1-7
 - a. Jesus told His disciple they would received power and be witnesses to Him in Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria and the end of the earth. Acts 1:8
 - b. The 120 were praying “the prayer” and were baptized in the Holy Spirit, spoke in tongues. Acts 2:1-4
 - c. Peter told them they were not drunk and preached Christ and repentance from sin, 3,000 were saved and baptized. Acts 2:14-41
2. The expansion of the church moved out to Judea and Samaria. Acts 8-12
 - a. God used persecution to increase the church as Philip went down to Samaria and the church sent down Peter and John to verify the work and the Holy Spirit fell upon them, confirming the Gentiles as part of the church. Acts 8
 - b. God sent Peter to the house of Cornelius, at Caesarea, through a vision of unclean animals to verify that the Gentiles were officially accepted by the decree of God. Acts 10-11
3. The extension of the church went out to the world from Antioch. Acts 13-28

- a. The First Missionary journey was launched from Antioch, Gentile base, not Jerusalem. Acts 13:2-14:35
- b. The Second Missionary journey was to return to those in the First Missionary journey, to see how they were doing. Acts 14:36-18:22
- c. The Third Missionary journey was to the region of Galatia and Phrygia in order to strengthened all the disciples, with a three year ministry at Ephesus. Acts 18:23-21:17
 - 1) Paul arriving at Jerusalem was compromised by the elder, having to defend himself against allegations of teaching Jews to forsake Moses, costing him two years in prison. Acts 21:18-26:32
 - 2) Paul is compromised by the elders at Jerusalem, accused by the Jews of bringing Gentiles into the Temple and nearly killed by the mob. He was delivered by a centurion, allowed to speak to the crowd and when he mentioned he was sent to the Gentiles, they attempted to kill him again. Acts 21:18-22:22
 - 3) Paul then was arrested and when a plot to kill him was discovered by his nephew, he was taken to

- Caesarea to Felix, then under Festus and left in prison for two years before appealing to Caesar. Acts 22:23-26:32
- d. The Fourth Missionary journey, though not recognized as such, in which Paul journeyed to Rome, where he spent two years in his own rented house, receiving all who came to him, preaching the Kingdom and teaching things of Jesus with all confidence, no one forbidding him. Acts 27:1-28:31
 - 1) The Fourth Missionary journey was by the prophetic commission given to Paul on the Damascus Road. Acts 9:1-16
 - * “But the Lord said to him, “Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name’s sake.”
 - 2) Paul preached to Caesar and believed to have been released and taken a Mission journey to Spain. Rom. 15:24, 28
 - 3) Paul was once again arrested, at which time he was executed.
 - * “For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the

time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.” 2Tim. 4:7-8

4. The book of Acts has no real end, because the history of the church is ongoing, through the Church age, until Jesus removes His church at the Rapture.
 - a. The history of the church teaches us what God wants to do through the Holy Spirit, not through the energies of the flesh. Acts 1:8
 - b. The history of the church teaches us that God adds to the church those who are saved, not man’s methodologies of church growth, marketing, giving away cars, houses, etc. Acts 2:47
 - c. The history of the church teaches us that the source of the Gospel is the “Grace of God” not “Law” and that there is no difference between Jew or Gentile, Scythian or Barbarian, Male or female, bond or free, all are one in Christ. Acts 15, Col. 3:11
 - d. Luke records the effective fulfillment of preaching the Gospel from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth, Rome. From the capital of the city of God Jerusalem to the capital of Rome.

II. The book of Acts Author.

- A. The author of Acts is attested to be Luke by internal evidence.
 1. Luke’s prologue in Acts and the Gospel are written to the same man Theophilus. Lk.1:1; Act.1:1
 - a. Luke could have had contact with Theophilus in Antioch, which some believe he was from, Eusebius and Jerome were aware of this tradition.
 - b. Or at Philippi where Luke left Paul for a time.
 - c. Or Rome, where Luke was with Paul.
 - * But the Scriptures are silent in this matter!
 2. Luke’s recorded command to tarry in Jerusalem is found in both of his books. Lk.24:29; Act.1:4-8
 3. Similar language style and arrangement are found in both.
 - a. Luke uses 732 words found nowhere else in New Testament except in the Gospel and Acts.
 - b. Luke used medical terms, affirming his title of physician.
 4. The Gospel and Acts were written to be one document not two, later they were circulated as two.
 - * Written either Rome, some think Antioch?

This is the book of Acts!

5. The “we” section of Acts shows Luke as present with Paul.
 - a. Troas to Philippi, Act.16:10-17
 - b. The sea voyage to Jerusalem. Acts 20:5-15, 21:1-8
 - c. The voyage from Caesarea to Rome. Acts 27:1-8, 28:16
 - 1) No one could write with such detail without being present.
 - 2) No one could write, so accurate geographical places with such ease lest they were so familiar with them.
 - 3) No one could comment on the customs and cultures of the various areas, without being present.
 - 4) No one could write with such emotion at times of compassion, empathy and hope in the various situations, unless they were present.

B. The author of Acts is attested to be Luke from external evidence.

1. The Anti-Marcionite Prologue to Luke declares he wrote Acts after his gospel, A.D. 150-180.
2. Fragments of the Muratorian Canon attests to Luke as the authorship, A.D.160-200.

3. Irenaeus in his Against Heresies, excepted Luke as the author.
 4. Clament of Alexandria frequently quoted Acts crediting Luke as the author, A.D. 155-220.
 5. Tertullian likewise, A.D. 150-220.
 6. Eusebuis in his Ecclesiastical History asserts Like wrote Acts, A.D. 324-325.
- C.** The author of Acts is attested of having a close relation to Paul.
1. Luke is called "Luke the beloved physician". Col.4:14
 - a. We know Luke travels with Paul on his missionary journeys.
 - b. We know Paul had an eye disease.
 2. Luke is called "Fellow laborer". Phil.24
 - a. Luke was a servant of Christ.
 - b. Luke served in the ministry with Paul faithfully.
 3. Luke was a faithful companion “Only Luke is with me”. 2Tim. 4:11
 - a. Luke was with Paul in the good times and despite being a medical doctor, he recorded faithfully the all miracles.
 - b. Luke was with Paul in the bad times, up to his imprisonment at Rome.
 4. Luke was with Paul from Troas to Rome. Act.16:10-28:16
 - a. Through very exciting ministry.
 - b. Through very dangerous times.

- c. Through very fruitful time, seeing many come to Christ.
- 5. Luke was a Gentile, not a Jew.
 - a. The only Gentile author of the New Testament.
 - b. The author of the two longest books comprising 28-30% of the New Testament.
- D. The author of Acts, Luke, had many sources for his two books.
 - 1. His personal inquiry of interviews.
Lk.1:1-3
 - 2. His personal presence with Paul for about 12 years.
 - 3. His personal knowledge of Silas, Timothy and Aristarchus.
 - 4. His personal assistance to Paul at Rome for 2 years.
 - 5. His contact with the Church of Jerusalem and others.
 - 6. Some believe Luke was from Antioch, even if he was not, he certainly knew the church at Antioch, which was rich with information regarding Paul, as he taught there for one year with Barnabas and from which the three missionary journeys were launched.

- E. The author of the book of Acts, Luke, was rejected as being the author strongly, in the past century.
 - 1. The 19th century was dominated by the Tubingen school of German critics.
 - 2. In 1831 F.C. Bar proposed that there was a conflict with Peter and Paul, Peter expressing faith of early Christianity continuing with Jesus and Paul who epitomized a later Christian viewpoint with Acts being a 2nd century endeavor to work out a synthesis between the two.
 - 3. Baur also said that Acts abounded with historical errors.
 - 4. By 1914, the 19th century world of thought came to an end, the greater majority of scholars had rejected his views.
 - 5. Ramsay also opposed Acts, saying it was of little value historically because, like John's Gospel, saying it had been written with ulterior purpose but his investigation of historical and geographical details in the book of Acts made him a believer, proving the reliability of Acts, in his book, Saint Paul the Traveler And Roman Citizen, 1895.
 - 6. Then you had the Bultmann, Bruner, Schmidt, Dibelius and other from the school of Neo-Orthodox "form and redaction criticism", which showed

repeatedly that Acts was historically very inaccurate.

7. Neo-Orthodox is an oxymoron, it is neither new nor orthodox, they used biblical words but they redefine them different from the biblical meaning.

This is the Author of the book of Acts!

III. The book of Acts particulars.

A. The date of the book of Acts.

1. The later date of A.D. 115-130 is too late.
 - a. John the beloved was the last apostle to survive, not Luke.
 - b. The “we” passages refute such a late date.
 - c. The church would have been without the necessary document for over 50-80 years.
 - d. The acceptance of the late date was necessary to make Luke dependent on Josephus for the reference of Theudas and the 40 men that rebelled with him. Acts 5:36
2. The medium date of A.D. 70-80 is given by some.
 - a. The problem is that the destruction of Jerusalem is not mentioned anywhere in the book of Acts.

- 1) In fact Paul is arrested while in the temple.
 - 2) The book closes with Paul in prison without being hindered in visitations and ministering, not with his martyrdom.
 - 3) If it was after A.D. 70, such a monumental event of the destruction of the Temple would have been noted.
- b. The Jewish wars either are mentioned.
- 1) The term Jewish-Roman wars is used to refer to the revolts by the [Jews of Iudaea Province](#) against the [Roman Empire](#).
 - 2) Some sources will use the term to refer only to the [First Jewish-Roman War](#) A.D. 66-73.
3. The most common date is A.D. 62-63.
 - a. About the end of Paul's two year imprisonment at Rome.
 - b. The persecution of Nero against Christians had not begun, otherwise Luke would not have ended Acts with Paul in custody but without hindrance.
 - c. Jerome expressly said Acts was written immediately after Paul's two year imprisonment.

B. The Title of the book of Acts.

1. There are various titles are found in manuscripts.
 - a. "The Acts of the Apostles" is the earliest found in the anti-Marcionite prologue to Luke's Gospel, A.D. 180.
 - b. The Acts of all the Apostles", is found in the Moratorium Canon.
 - c. The Acts of the Holy Apostles.
 - d. The Acts.
 - e. Acts.
 2. Some have objected seeing it doesn't give an account of all the apostles.
 1. Yet all 12 are mentioned in chapter one. Acts 1:13
 2. Yet all 12 are referred to no less than 23 times between chapters 2-15.
 3. It has been suggested that perhaps a more correct title would be.
 - a. "The Acts of the Apostle through the Holy Spirit".
 - b. I like, "The Acts of the Holy Spirit through the apostles" is better, emphasizing the key for effectiveness in the Christian life and ministry.
- C. The key verse is the explanation and commentary for all that if found in the book of Acts.
- * "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." Act 1:8

1. The prophetic promise of empowerment, "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you". vs. 8a
 2. The prophetic proclamation of commission, "And you shall be witnesses to Me". vs. 8b
 3. The prophetic plan, "In Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth". vs. 8b-d
 - a. Jerusalem. Acts 1-7
 - b. Judea and Samaria. Acts 8-12
 - c. End of the earth. Acts 13-28

* This is the table of contents and natural division for Acts.
- D. Key word and phrases.
1. "The way", the name for Christians. Acts 9:2, 16:17, 18:25, 26, 19:9, 19:23, 22:4, 24:22
 2. Christian, Christians. Acts 11:46; 26:28
 3. Resurrection.
 - a. Raised, 14 times.
 - b. Rise. 2 times.
 - c. Resurrection 10 times.
 4. Jesus 68 times.
 5. Turn 4 times.
 6. Repent. 5 times
 7. Forgiveness, 3 times.
 8. Forgiven, one time.

9. Gospel, 6 times.

E. The Central Figures.

1. Jesus who resurrected from the dead who is Lord and Christ Acts 1:3; 2:36
2. The Holy Spirit who was sent by Jesus to empower man to be a witness. Acts 1:8; 4:8; 6:10; 13:2; 15:28; 21:11.
3. The Apostles of God used in the early church. Acts 1:12-13.
4. The leading Apostles Peter and Paul
 - a. Peter at Jerusalem, who ends up in prison at Jerusalem. Acts 1-12
 - b. Paul at Antioch, who ends us in prison at Rome. Acts 13-28
 - c. There are many other parallels between Peter and Paul in Acts.

E. The outline of the book of Acts.

I. Introduction. Acts 1:1-26

- A. The Forty Days. Acts 1:1-11
- B. The Ten Days. Acts 1:12-26

II. Witnessing in Jerusalem. Acts 2:1-7:60

- A. Witnesses Preaching. Acts 2:1-47
- B. Witnesses Performing a Miracle. Acts 3:1-26
- C. Witnesses Persecuted. Acts 4:1-22
- D. Witnesses Praying. Acts 4:23-37
- E. Witnesses Persecuted. Acts 5:1-42
- F. Witnesses Progressing. Acts 6:1-7

G. Witnesses Put to Death. Acts 6:8-7:60

III. Witnessing in Judea and Samaria.

Acts 8:1-12:25

- A. Witnessing in Samaria. 8:1-25
- B. Witnessing to the Ethiopian Eunuch. 8:26-40
- C. Witness Converted. 9:1-31
- D. Witnessing in Judea. 9:32-43
- E. Witnessing to Gentiles. 10:1-11:30
- F. Witnesses Persecuted. 12:1-25

IV. Witnessing in the Gentile World.

13:1-28:31

- A. Cyprus. Acts 13:1-12
- B. Asia Minor. Acts 13:13-14:28
- C. Jerusalem Council. Acts 15:1-35
- D. Asia Minor Again. Acts 15:36-16:10
- E. Macedonia. Acts 16:11-17:15
- F. Greece. Acts 17:16-18:17
- G. Asia. Acts 18:18-20:38
- H. Trip to Jerusalem. Acts 21:1-16
- I. Jerusalem. Acts 21:17-23:35
- J. Caesarea. Acts 24:1-26:32
- K. Voyage to Rome. Acts 27:1-28:16
- L. Rome. Acts 28:17-31
(Beacons Commentary)