

ACTS

God's Spirit, Moving In God's People, For God's Purposes

I. SESSION 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF ACTS (background)

A. Acts - second volume, of Luke's account of Jesus' life, death, & resurrection.

1. Luke-Acts originally circulated together
2. By the second century:
 - a) Volume 1 (Luke) was identified with the other 3 gospels (Matt., Mk., & Jn.)
 - b) Volume 2 was separated and then received its present title: Acts
3. "Acts" (Greek = praxeis). to act; a deed; a function
 - a) This title best describes the movement, of the early church, to advance the gospel throughout the known world. (cf. Matthew 28:16-20; Acts 1:8)
 - b) Often referred to "Acts of the Apostles" - but almost exclusively records the ministries of Peter and Paul.
4. Acts is the third longest of the New Testament (NT) writings
 - a) Combined, Luke-Acts is almost 30% of the entire NT

B. Authorship: Luke

1. Paul's travel companion & partner in ministry
 - a) "we" statements (cf. Acts 16:10-17; 20:5-15; 21:1-18; 27:1-28:16)
 - (1) Luke's firsthand account of events
 - b) Luke records these events after "careful investigation" (cf. Luke 1:1-4)
 - (1) possibly interviews and other sources (ie Mark & Matthew's gospel)
2. Luke was educated.
 - a) Paul calls him "the beloved physician" (Colossians 4:14)
 - b) Luke-Acts - an impressive literary work & most well written greek in NT
3. Luke was with Paul during his first Roman imprisonment (cf. 2 Timothy 4:11)

C. Central Theme of Luke-Acts

“Luke seeks to show that God’s great plan of salvation has come to fulfillment in the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus the Messiah, and continues to unfold as the Spirit-filled church takes the message of salvation from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth.”¹

1. Other key themes:

- a) Promise-fulfillment: the age of salvation has arrived in Jesus
- b) The age of the Spirit: the sign of the new age is the coming of the Holy Spirit in the ministry of Jesus and the early church (cf. Joel 2:28)
- c) Salvation is for all people regardless of race, gender, or social status.

2. Key term: Boldness

- a) The gospel boldly proclaimed, in the face of the world's system & its rulers (cf. Acts 28:31)

D. Written to Theophilus (Luke 1:1-4 & Acts 1:1)

1. A prominent and wealthy Roman man
2. He is aware of the global stir caused by Christianity & would like more details concerning the movement.
3. Possibly a new convert or someone involved in Paul's imprisonment

E. Date of Composition: 64 AD

1. Written after: the last event mentioned in Acts 28:31, Paul's first Roman imprisonment (60-63AD)
2. Written before:
 - a) 67AD - Martyrdom of Peter & Paul, by Nero in Rome (cf. 1 Clement 5) because Luke would have mentioned it in Acts.
 - b) 65AD - Nero begins Christian persecution. Acts expresses a hopeful outlook for Christians' acceptance in the gentile world & its recognition by Roman authorities (cf. 28:31), something not possible after 65AD.

F. Geography: See Map of “Eastern Mediterranean in the First Century AD”

G. General Outline of Acts: handout named “Acts Outline”

¹Acts. by Clinton E. Arnold. pg. 3