

# BIBLE MINOR - NEW TESTAMENT LITERATURE

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## Session 6: Acts (Part 1) (Video 10 - 53:32)

Learning Objective: To interpret Acts through Luke's outline as transitional in function. "A book of transitions"

### Act 5: Mission of the Church - Acts of the Apostles

#### I. Background Context:

##### A. Author: Luke the doctor (cf. Col 4:14)

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

1. Luke is the only Gentile author in the Bible.
2. Luke inserts himself in narrative in three places: Acts 16:10-17; 20:5-21; and 27:1-28. Observe the change in pronouns from "they" to "we."

*"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. So, setting sail from Troas, **we** made a direct voyage to Samothrace, ... As we were going to the place of prayer, **we** were met by a slave girl who had a spirit of divination and brought her owner much gain by fortune-telling. She followed Paul and us, crying out, "These men are servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to you the way of salvation." And this she kept doing for many days. Paul, having become greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her." And it came out that very hour. Acts 16:10-11, 16-18*

*These went on ahead and were waiting for us at Troas, but **we** sailed away from Philippi after the days of Unleavened Bread, and in five days **we** came to them at Troas, where we stayed for seven days. Acts 20:5*

*And when it was decided that **we** should sail for Italy, they delivered Paul and some other prisoners to a centurion of the Augustan Cohort named Julius. And embarking in a ship of Adramyttium, which was about to sail to the ports along the coast of Asia, **we** put to sea, accompanied by Aristarchus, a Macedonian from Thessalonica. Acts 27:1-2*

**B. Audience:** Specifically, Theophilus, but also intended for wide readership.

**C. Date:** Between A.D. 61-64. Before the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

**D. Purpose:**

1. Apologetic - to defend Christianity to the Romans.
2. Instruction - to provide connection between Jesus and the Apostles ministry, and Paul's ministry.

## E. Composition/Structure:

The Gospel in Jerusalem	The Gospel in Samaria and Judea	The Gospel to the "Ends of the Earth:
Acts 1-7	Acts 8-12	Acts 13-28

*But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in **Jerusalem** and in all **Judea and Samaria**, and **to the end of the earth**.* Acts 1:8

## II. Acts 1:1-7:60 The Gospel in Jerusalem

- A. The apostles are still waiting for the Old Testament expectations to be fulfilled.  
All four Gospels end with the resurrection. What happens next?

*So when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel? He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you. Acts 1:6-8a*

*When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. Acts 2:1*

- B. The Holy Spirit arrives in power and with signs to **indwell believers** in Jesus Messiah: Pentecost (Acts 2:1-41).

*And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues (languages) as the Spirit gave them utterance...*

*And all were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "What does this mean?" But others mocking said, "They are filled with new wine."*

*But Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed them: "Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give ears to my words. For these people are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day. (9 am)*

*And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh. (Joel 2)*

*"Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, (50 days post Passover) as you yourselves know - this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it. (Psalm 16)*

*For David says concerning him... Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne, he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ (Peter ties what they're seeing with the promised Holy Spirit, with Jesus's death, burial and resurrection and the Old Testament).*

*For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he himself says, "The Lord said to my Lord, "Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool." Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified." (Psalm 110 and Hebrews confirms Jesus is the King and the Priest in the order of Melchizedek).*

*Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Acts 2:1-41*

- C. Even though many Jews believe the apostles' testimony and the church grows by thousands, the leaders of Israel continue to reject the message of Jesus.
1. The intensity of their rejection grows: arrest, rebuke, beating, execution.
  2. The narrative of Acts 2:1-7:53 crescendos with Stephen's speech and execution.

#### Application:

These are the same Jewish leaders present in the Gospels. They've seen Jesus do miracles and raise the dead, they've put him on trial and interrogated him, and handed him over to the Romans to be killed. They've heard Jesus' claims firsthand - "I'm the Son of Man from the book of Daniel". Now they have His resurrection of the dead and the miracles that His followers are doing. The leaders are jealous of the influence the apostles have and are fearful of losing their power. Ultimately, they kill an innocent man - Steven.

There's a heart issue here where people respond to the truth favorably and move in the right direction or... they reject the truth and move in the direction of hardening their heart. Every day you have to make a choice whether you're going to submit to the authority of Scripture... or not.

*"You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Spirit. As your fathers did, so do you... Now when they heard these things they were enraged, and they (gnashed) ground their teeth at him. (Then they killed him) Acts 7:51, 54*

*Then they secretly instigated men who said, "We have heard him (Steven) speak blasphemous words against Moses and God." And they stirred up the people and the elders and the scribes, and they came upon him and seized him and brought him before the council, and they set up false witnesses who said, "This man never ceases to speak words against this holy place and the law, Acts 6:11-13*

### III. Acts 8:1-12:25 The Gospel in Judea and Samaria

- A. Persecution causes the Gospel to transition from Judea to Samaria with apostolic confirmation. Jewish Christians and Samaritan Christians both receive the Holy Spirit... a sign of the age to come.
- B. The Gospel believed by the Gentiles with apostolic confirmation.
  - 1. The Ethiopian eunuch - believes and is baptized, but no apostolic confirmation.
  - 2. Saul is introduced into the narrative and he believes in Jesus. Paul becomes the apostle to the Gentiles.
  - 3. Peter is summoned... Cornelius and his household - believes, baptized, and apostolically confirmed.
  - 4. Luke's arrangement of these narratives (chapters 8-12) and repetition of this theme is intended to show the spread of the Gospel to Gentiles, God's authority for this spread, and God's man (Paul) called to this ministry.

Glossolalia: also called speaking in tongues, (from Greek glōssa, "tongue," and lalia, "talking"), utterances approximating words and speech, usually produced during states of intense religious experience.

*"If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, (but have not clarity)" KJV) I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal." 1 Cor 1:13*

### IV. Acts 13:1 - 28:31 The Gospel to the "end of the earth."

- A. Luke records three lengthy missionary trips through Asia and ultimately to the capital of the Roman Empire, Rome.





B. Paul's method is consistent: to the Jewish synagogue first, and then to the Gentiles.

1. Some of Paul's speeches are to a Jewish audience (e.g., Acts 13:13-52). Includes Scripture.
2. Some of Paul's speeches are to a Gentile audience (e.g., Acts 17:22-34). Paul doesn't assume the Gentiles know Scripture.

Now Paul and his companions set sail from Paphos and came to Perga in Pamphylia. And John left them and returned to Jerusalem, but they went on from Perga and came to Antioch in Pisidia. And on the Sabbath day they went into the synagogue and sat down. **After the reading from the Law and the Prophets**, the rulers of the synagogue sent a message to the, saying "Brothers, if you have any word of encouragement for the people, say it." So Paul stood up, and motioning with his hand said: "Men of Israel and you who fear God, listen." Acts 13:13-16

This he has fulfilled to us their children by raising Jesus, as also it is written in the second **Psalms** "You are my Son, today I have begotten you." Acts 13:33 (Heb 1)

The next Sabbath almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord. But when the Jews saw the crowds, (Gentiles) they were filled with **jealousy** and began to contradict what was spoken by Paul, reviling him. Acts 13:44-45

And when the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord, and as many were appointed to eternal life believed. Acts 13:48

So Paul, standing in the midst of the Areopagus, said: "Men of Athens, (Gentile Philosophers) I perceive that in every way you are very religious. For as I passed along and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription: 'To the unknown god.' What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything. And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us, for

"In him we live and move and have our being"; as even some of your own poets have said, "For we are indeed his offspring."

Being then God's offspring, we ought not to think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of man. The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead."

Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked. But others said, "We will hear you again about this." So Paul went out from their midst. But some men joined him and believed, among whom also were Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris and others with them. Acts 17:22-34

C. Paul's message is consistent:

1. To the Jews: Jesus is the fulfillment of Israel's spiritual expectation. Change your thinking about Jesus (i.e., repent) and put your trust in him. Jesus is the Messiah. Jesus is God in the flesh.
  2. To the Gentiles: God provided Jesus; turn from idols and worship Israel's God - worship Jesus.
- D. Paul's arrest and court scenes: Paul and Christianity regularly pronounced "innocent" by the Romans throughout the book of Acts.