

ACTS 12-28

THE UNSTOPPABLE KING

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Big picture Acts 12-28

WHY 12-28?

- is a unified argument
- is the pivot from Jerusalem to the world
- it shows the gospel confronting the world
- it includes “Paul’s Passion Narrative” (20-26)
- and.....we’re picking up where we left Acts last time :)

THE THEOLOGICAL FLOW

Acts 12–28 is not simply “more stories about Paul.” It is Luke’s carefully shaped conclusion to the story of the risen Jesus continuing His work (Acts 1:1). The final chapters show the Kingdom of God advancing unhindered despite every obstacle. These chapters are meant to convince the church that Christ truly is the reigning King and that His mission cannot fail.

THE THRU-LINE

Acts 12–28 shows us that the risen Lord Jesus hasn’t slowed down, stepped back, or handed His mission off to others. He is still at work, powerfully and patiently, bringing His good news to the world. As we watch the gospel push into new cities, cross cultures, face hostility, and even move through storms and courtrooms, we see the same truth again and again: nothing can stop what Jesus has decided to do. His word keeps advancing. His Spirit keeps opening hearts. His people (ordinary, imperfect, often under pressure) keep speaking of Him because they are convinced He really is the living King. And Acts ends the way it does not because the story is unfinished, but because we are meant to step into it.

- The same Lord who stood by Paul stands by us today.
- The same unstoppable gospel is entrusted to our hands and prayers.
- The same kingdom that reached Rome continues to reach Canberra.

Acts invites us to trust Jesus deeply, to take heart, and to join Him again in His mission, confident that His kingdom cannot be hindered.

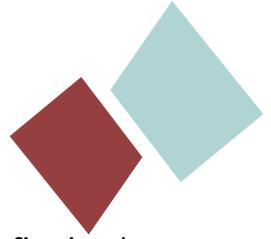
THE STRUCTURE

The Word of God Triumphs (Acts 12)
The Gospel Breaks into the Nations (Acts 13–19)
Witness Through Suffering (Acts 20–26)
The Unhindered Gospel (Acts 27–28)



MARCUS

Acts: An Overview



WHO

Written by Luke, author of the Gospel of Luke. Travelled with Paul.

Written to Theophilus (one who loves God), for assurance and evidence of the truth.

WHERE

Acts follows a geographical and spiritual trajectory; "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

WHY

Luke writes Acts as a continuation of the Gospel of Luke. A continued account that confirms that the events during Christ's earthly ministry, and after his ascension really are the work of God; fulfilling the saving promises given to Israel long ago.

Acts answers questions like:

- What is life like in the Kingdom of God now that his Son is reigning?
- How can the nations (the Gentiles) be included in God's kingdom?
- How does Christ rule and judge? Where does the law fit? What about the Spirit?

WHAT

Acts is a historical narrative. It fits in the same category as books like Exodus and 1&2 Samuel as it records the story of God's people and His actions towards and through them.

It is also a theological, missional and training book.

WHEN

Acts continues the narrative of the Gospel of Luke, from Christ's ascension to Paul's imprisonment in Rome.

It was probably written sometime before AD 70. Covering around 30-35 years of history.

A map of the time



Top Reading Tips

AN ENCOURAGEMENT

Acts contains “the word of his grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.” - Acts 20:32



A WARNING

“It would be a mistake to see the story of Acts, heroic and successful as it is, as one of unchallenged heroism and unbroken success. We should also be clear that the reason for the success lies not in the heroism but in the promises of God. He is the one who plans and guides the route the gospel takes from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth.” - Chris Green

1) STATED PURPOSE

Luke began writing to Theophilus in his Gospel, so that “you may know **the certainty** of the things you have been taught” (Luke 1:4). In Acts he continues from his “former book”, continuing to recount all that “Jesus began to do and teach” (1:1).

In Acts 1:8, we see how what Jesus began will continue, and how the book of Acts will unfold too. Geographically and theologically, from the remnant, to the divided nation of Israel, then to the nations.

In Acts we see the **witnesses** of the truth, of the Kingdom of God, and of the King Jesus (Acts 28:31), go out, preach the word, and see judgement and salvation go to all people.

2) REPEATED THEMES

Be on the look out for the following themes:

- Resurrection
- The word of God
- Adding, multiplying
- Saved, belief, faith, repent
- Witness
- Kingdom of God
- Holy Spirit
- Preach/Teach
- Prayer
- Sign
- Promise
- Inheritance
- Suffering



Top Reading Tips

3) LOOK FOR UNIQUE EVENTS

Some events stand out in Acts. Often these events happen 'once and for all' and are descriptive, not prescriptive or normative.

- They might show the fulfilment of an Old Testament promise or event.
- They mark a turning point, rather than the beginning of a repeated pattern.

4) LOOK FOR THE PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS

While Acts doesn't follow a particular person, there are principle characters along the way.

Peter dominating in the first half, answering the question: "Who may become a Christian?"

Paul dominates the second half, answering the question "How may we reach the world for Christ?"

5) LOOK FOR GOD'S ACTIVITIES

- The Bible does not revolve around us.
- The Bible is about God.

Therefore we should always ask what does this passage say about God and his character, activity, promise and warnings?

The book of Acts, is the same. And at the same time different. The Holy Spirit alone is mentioned 52 times. So be on the lookout for groupings of this (notice how the Holy Spirit equips people to keep going into the world, and to speak about Jesus).

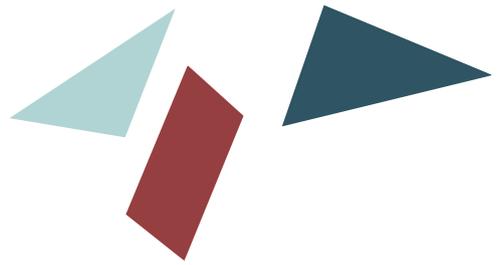
6) LOOK FOR STRESSED TEACHING

For a book named after actions, it revolves heavily on recorded teaching.

Often we will see a full blown sermon, followed by one sentence summaries, showing the same message was preached elsewhere.

As Luke summarises take note of what the essentials are, what is repeated, and when things are different have a think about why?

Also take note of what OT scripture is quoted, sometimes the same Psalm is used by Peter, James and Paul. What might this tell us?



Top Reading Tips

7) LOOK FOR THE BIBLICAL SETTING

Acts is situated within Israel's history, what happens here often echoes what happened in the past, so be on the lookout for how God is continuing, fulfilling, expanding his plans through Christ and his people.

For example the language and appearance of 'signs and wonders' should have reminded Jewish Christians of books like Joel or Exodus; when God performed signs and wonders to attest to his saving work. As people break new ground, God affirms this through signs and wonders (which is perhaps why we see less of this today.)

Or, think about 1 Samuel 8, Israel wanted a "king to judge them", kings are not only figures of sovereignty but also justice. So we should look to see how Christ judges his people as well as how he saves them. A rich OT understanding adds a beautiful depth to reading Acts. So when in doubt, look back, what has God already done, how is this 'new' thing a continuation?

Top Leading Tips

HOW THIS SHAPES LEADERSHIP & DISCIPLESHIP

Confidence - Christ is advancing His kingdom — not us. Acts is meant to steady us, especially when ministry feels fragile.

Clarity - Acts shows what non-negotiable gospel essentials are, and what things are cultural, flexible, or secondary.

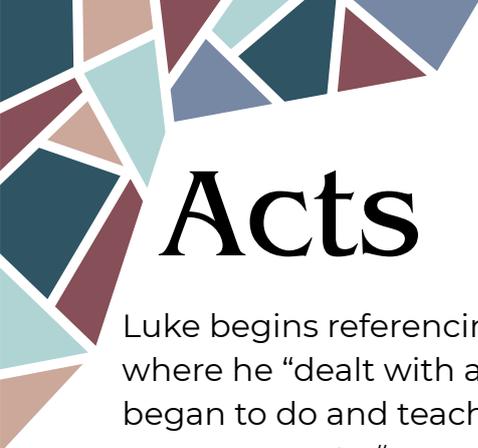
Conviction - Hardship is normal in mission. But God's purposes are never at risk.

Courage - Every chapter is a reminder that ordinary Christians, full of the Spirit and the Scriptures, are how Christ reaches the world.

Acts 12-28 Break-up

Week	Sermons	GG Studies	Kids@Church: Kingdom Questions
4 Jan	Recap Acts 1-12 (esp. Acts 1-2:11)		
5-11 Jan	Acts 13-14		
12-18 Jan	Acts 15:1-35		
19-25 Jan	Acts 15:36-16:40		
26-1 Feb	Acts 17		Acts Recap: What's next in the Kingdom?
2-8 Feb	Acts 18-19		Pisidia: Who's in the Kingdom?
9-15 Feb	Acts 20	Acts 18-19	Jerusalem: What rules in the Kingdom? Acts 15:1-35
16-22 Feb	Acts 21:1-23:11	Acts 20	Philippian Prison: Can the Kingdom be locked up? Acts 16:16-40
23-1 Mar	Acts 23:12-26:32	Acts 21:1-23:11	Macedonia: What if the Kingdom seems silly? - Resurrection Acts 17, 20:1-15
2-8 Mar	Acts 27-28	Acts 23:12-26:32	Ephesus: What if the Kingdom clashes with culture? Acts 19, 20:17-38
9-15 Mar	Crossroads 30th	Acts 27-28	Jerusalem again: Can the Kingdom survive suffering? Acts 21:1-23:11
16-22 Mar	Reach		Court: Can the Kingdom stand up in court? 23:12-26
23-29 Mar	Reach		Rome: Can the Kingdom promises keep going? Acts 27-28

*See an expanded version below



Acts 1-12 Recap

Luke begins referencing his first book where he “dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach”. That book’s purpose was to “compile a narrative of the things accomplished amongst us... *that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught.*”

Acts continues the narrative of what Jesus will do through his people, how he will restore the kingdom.

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

1-2

The apostles assemble, the Holy Spirit arrives, and Christ is witnessed to, as people proclaim the word in Jerusalem, and people from across the world put their faith in him.

3-5

Peter heals a lame man*. He preaches and the number of believers grows by 5,000. Jewish Sanhedrin starts ordering Peter and John to stop. They don’t, they’re imprisoned and an angel frees them. *The gospel continues unstopped.*

*Signs and wonders are an historical way God confirms his messengers are legit.

6-7

7 Deacons appointed to care for the needy. One of them, Stephen, performs miracles and preaches the Gospel. The Jewish council condemns him based on false witness. He is stoned. The Gospel continues, now spreading outside of Jerusalem, unstopped.

THE GOSPEL IS PREACHED IN JUDEA & SAMARIA

8-9

Saul persecutes the believers. A magician tries to buy the apostles’ power. Phillip baptises the Ethiopian. Saul goes to Damascus and is converted. He begins preaching the Gospel and is chased out.

When he returns to Jerusalem his faith is confirmed, before he is drive out to Tarsus.

Peter preaches in Lydda, and a paralysed man is healed. Many believe. A believer is resurrected in Joppa, and many more believe

10-12

God reveals to Peter that the Gospel is for both Jews and Gentiles. Peter shares the Gospel with a Roman soldier's household, they receive the HS. The church embraces Gentiles, while the scattered church in Antioch supports Jerusalem. Following James’ death by Herod, Peter is imprisoned but freed by an angel. Herod receives praise meant for God and is struck down. Ultimately, "the word of God increased and multiplied" (12:24).

Breakup - flow

ACTS 1–12 RECAP

Theme: The risen Christ continues His work by His Spirit through His witnesses.

- Purpose: Re-establish:
- Christ's ascension and reign
- The gospel's movement from Jerusalem → Judea → Samaria
- The incorporation of Samaritans, Gentiles (Cornelius), and the formation of a missionary church in Antioch
- The unambiguous victory of God's word over opposition (Acts 12)

This sets up why Acts 13–28 is inevitable. The mission to the nations is already in motion.

ACTS 13–14

Theme: The gospel breaks open the Gentile world.

- First missionary journey; deliberate push into unreached regions
- Pattern: preach → divided response → persecution → perseverance → strengthening disciples
- God-centred mission: the Spirit sends, the word spreads, the church multiplies
- Paul's preaching establishes the resurrection as the core of the gospel

This is the first major enactment of Acts 1:8's "ends of the earth."

ACTS 15:1–35

Theme: The gospel is defended and clarified — salvation by grace alone.

- The Jerusalem Council functions as the doctrinal centre of Acts
- Peter, Paul, Barnabas, James all affirm Gentiles are saved without the law
- Grace protects unity and unlocks mission
- The verdict secures the theological foundation for all future gospel advance

From here on, Gentile mission continues with a clear gospel and a unified church.



ACTS 15:36–16:40

Theme: The gospel crosses new boundaries by God's sovereign direction.

- Ministry disagreement leads to multiplication of mission teams
- Timothy circumcised for missionary diplomacy, not salvation
- The Spirit redirects — “prevented,” “forbidden,” “called” — emphasising divine strategy
- The Philippian church born through suffering, joy, and supernatural intervention

Kingdom advance is God-led, not human-planned.



ACTS 17

Theme: The gospel engages the world's cultures and idols.

- Paul models contextual evangelism
- Athens reveals humanity's hunger for transcendence and resistance to repentance
- The resurrection is again the stumbling block and centrepiece
- The word judges idols and invites all nations to repent

Acts shows how to speak Christ in a pluralistic, intellectual, secular environment — perfect for Canberra.

ACTS 18–19

Theme: The gospel confronts spiritual and material powers.

- Ephesus becomes a microcosm of kingdom conflict
- Disciples strengthened, Apollos corrected, the Spirit rightly understood
- Demonism exposed; magic renounced; economic idols threatened
- “The word of the Lord grew and prevailed mightily” (19:20)

The kingdom expands not by accommodation but by confrontation with darkness.



ACTS 20

Theme: The shape of gospel ministry: costly, courageous, and tender.

Paul's farewell speech is the pastoral heart of Acts

Elders are charged to guard doctrine and people

Ministry is tears + truth + toil

The word of grace builds the church

This chapter anchors your leadership culture: shepherding, watchfulness, sacrificial love.

ACTS 21–23:11

Theme: Witness through suffering: God rules in the shadows.

- Paul returns to Jerusalem knowing hardship awaits
- Misunderstanding, riot, arrest
- Yet God repeatedly preserves him
- Climactic assurance in 23:11 — “You must testify also in Rome.”

This turning point sets the trajectory for the rest of Acts: Paul's path is Christ-shaped and Spirit-directed.



ACTS 23:12–26:32

Theme: The gospel is defended before rulers and powers.

- Paul faces Sanhedrin, governors, kings
- Innocence repeatedly acknowledged (key Luke-Acts theme)
- Paul uses every trial not for self-defence but for testimony
- Fulfilment of Acts 9:15 — witness before kings

The gospel proves itself unstoppable across political, judicial, and cultural barriers.

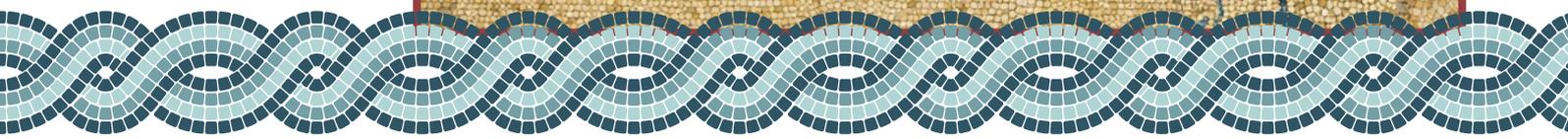
ACTS 27–28

Theme: The unstoppable gospel arrives at the centre of the world.

- God protects Paul through storm, shipwreck, and danger.
*See map below.
- Paul reaches Rome — the symbolic ends of the earth.
- Book ends with the gospel proclaimed “with all boldness and without hindrance”.

Luke finishes with an open ending because the mission continues through the church.

- 1 Jerusalem
- 2 Caesarea
- 3 Sidon (27:3)
- 4 Myra (27:5)
- 5 Cnidus (27:7)
- 6 Fair Havens (27:8)
- 7 Malta (28:1)
- 8 Syracuse (28:12)
- 9 Rhegium (28:13)
- 10 Puteoli (28:13)
- 11 Forum of Appius (28:15)
- 12 Three Taverns (28:15)
- 13 Rome (28:16)



Recommended Resources

READ

- The Acts to the Risen Lord Jesus - Alan J Thompson
- The Word of his Grace - Chris Green
- Acts for You - Good Book Company
- The message of Acts - John Stott

LISTEN

- Previous Crossroads sermons on Acts
- Help me teach the bible: Michael Lawrence on Acts
 - Nancy Guthrie's Podcast



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