

## **The Book of Acts**

### **I. Introduction**

#### **A. The Authorship of Acts**

##### **1. The External Evidence**

- a. Early Patristics attested to the Lukan authorship.<sup>1</sup>
- b. The Muritorian Canon attests for the same.

##### **2. The Internal Evidence**

- a. The author was a companion of Paul because of the use of “we” and “us” (Acts 16:10-17; 20:5 ff.).
- b. Of all of Paul’s companions, Luke is the only one not eliminated because of contexts.
- c. As in the Gospel of Luke, the author used medical terms supporting the Lukan authorship (cf. Col. 4:14).

#### **B. The Date of Acts**

1. The Book ends with Paul’s first Roman imprisonment (Acts 28).
2. Luke stayed with Paul during his trip which ended around AD 60.

#### **C. The Origin and Destination of Acts**

1. Luke wrote from Rome while with Paul.
2. He wrote to the Gentile Roman Theophilus (Acts 1:1).

#### **D. The Purpose of Acts**

1. He wanted to continue recording what Jesus began to do and teach, now through the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:1 ff.).
2. He wanted to reveal that the Apostles and disciples’ interpretation of the Great Commission was that of starting Baptist churches (Acts 18:8 ff.).

#### **E. The Characteristics of Acts**

1. The Outline of Acts (1:8) focuses on the following:

---

<sup>1</sup>It is biblically evident that Luke was a Gentile (Col. 4:9-13), but this does not contradict Rom. 3:2 since Paul was referring to the Old Testament scriptures.

- a. The Events of Pentecost (1-2)
- b. The Ministry of the Apostles (3-12)
- c. The Church Planting of Paul (13-21)
  - 1) First Missionary Journey (13-14)
  - 2) Second Missionary Journey (15-18)
  - 3) Third Missionary Journey (12-21)
- d. The Prosperous Journey to Rome (21-28)

2. The Book covers the first thirty years of Apostolic activity (c. AD 30-60), and refers to several historical markers to establish a timeline, such as Claudius' Jewish expulsion about AD 49 and Gallio's verdict about AD 51 (Acts 18:2 and 12, respectively).

3. Luke emphasized ecclesiology in Acts, dealing with the nature, administration, financing, and mission of the NT ἐκκλησία.

4. Acts emphasized the role of prayer and the person of the Holy Spirit in church work.

5. Acts is the first book of Baptist history, giving the biblical pattern of the expectation of Christianity until Christ comes back (i.e., planting immersionist assemblies):

- a. Churches are comprised of saved sinners who pray often.
- b. Churches will receive persecution from without and heresy from within.
- c. The Lord oversees the progress of immersionist church establishment and preservation.
- d. The Baptist assembly is the authorized institution to reach the world with the Gospel.

6. Acts is a transitional book, filling the gap between the Lord Jesus' messianic work and the disciples work. Tongues ceased, liars are not immediately struck dead, soul winners are not supernaturally transported, and Christians do not expect to be taught by the resurrected Christ.<sup>2</sup>

7. The Holy Spirit is mentioned 54x Who can be lied against (5:3), tempted (5:9), and resisted (7:51). He comforts (9:31), commissions (13:2), directs (16:6-7), and appoints pastors (20:28).

---

<sup>2</sup>Not all of the NT is applicable to Christians (i.e., Rev. 4-16). Scripture must be rightly divided (II Tim. 2:15).

8. Believers were baptized into Him by Christ for indwelling (Jn. 14:17), filling (Acts 2:4), accrediting (2:4 with Mk. 16:17-20; Heb. 2:3-4). Spirit baptism occurred four times in history, accrediting the new institution of the assembly (with new day [Sunday] and new message [finished sacrifice]) to the Jews (2), which new institution would include Samaritans (8) and Gentiles (10-11 and 19).

## II. Exposition

### A. The Events of Pentecost (Acts 1-2)

1. *Chapter One:* Continuing from the Gospel of Luke, the Scripture revealed the Lord's 40 day ministry, His ascension,<sup>3</sup> and the early church's waiting and ministry until Pentecost.<sup>4</sup>

2. *Chapter Two:* The fulfillment of John the Baptist's prediction of Spirit Baptism occurred (Mt. 3:11; Mk. 1:8; Lk. 3:16; Jn. 1:33; Acts 1:5; and 11:16), authenticating publicly to the Jews the Lord's new agency, day of worship, and message of sacrifice. The Baptist assembly at Jerusalem grew from about 120 to over 3000 with saved and baptized converts.<sup>5</sup>

### B. The Ministry of the Apostles (Acts 3-12)

1. *Chapter Three:* Peter again preached to the Jews about repentance<sup>6</sup> and faith in Jesus through the healing of the lame man.

2. *Chapter Four:* Reaction to Peter's message was mixed, with some 5000 turning to the Lord while the religious leaders opposed and warned the apostles. The Jerusalem assembly united around revelatory truth ("*one accord*").<sup>7</sup>

3. *Chapter Five:* The Lord purified the assembly through the deaths of two liars, and allowed pressure to intensify on the apostles through imprisonment and beatings,<sup>8</sup> about which they rejoiced.

---

<sup>3</sup>The Lord Jesus will return to the Mount of Olives to deliver Jerusalem from the nations (vv. 10-12; Zech. 14:4 ff.).

<sup>4</sup>The "*promise of the Father*" was Spirit Baptism (vv. 4-5; Lk. 24:49).

<sup>5</sup>The Lord added to the 120 church members another 3000 through profession of faith and believer's baptism (Acts 1:15; 2:41, 47).

<sup>6</sup>The message of repentance is essential to salvation. The Lord emphasized repentance with faith, saying, "*repent ye, and believe the gospel*" (Mk. 1:15; 2:17; cf. also Mt. 4:17; Lk. 13:3, 5; 15:7, 10; 17:3-4; II Pet. 3:9; Rev. 9:20-21).

<sup>7</sup>Luke favored this adverb ὁμοθυμαδόν, using it 11x out of 12x in the NT (Acts 1:14; 2:1, 46; 4:24; 5:12; 7:57; 8:6; 12:20; 15:25; 18:12; and 19:29 [Rom. 15:6]).

4. *Chapter Six:* With the large growth of the Jerusalem assembly to at least 20,000 members, the widow population grew and needed oversight.<sup>9</sup> The church appointed seven deacons to care for the widows. One deacon, Stephen preached and brought the wrath of the Sanhedrin upon him.

5. *Chapter Seven:* Stephen reviewed the history of Israel and showed how it all pointed to the Lord Jesus as Messiah.<sup>10</sup> This strong message cost him his life and introduced Saul of Tarsus.

6. *Chapter Eight:* Saul was instrumental in great persecution at Jerusalem which scattered the assembly into various regions of Judea and Samaria.<sup>11</sup> One such example was Philip's ministry with the Ethiopian eunuch.

7. *Chapter Nine:* Saul was converted, called, and baptized at Damascus<sup>12</sup> while Peter ministered in Lydda and Joppa.

8. *Chapter Ten:* Peter became the instrument to evangelize the Gentiles, starting with the unsaved "God-seeker" Cornelius.

9. *Chapter Eleven:* The church at Antioch began to reach Gentiles and brought Barnabas and Saul for the work. They joined the membership of the assembly in ("with" = ἐν) Antioch.

10. *Chapter Twelve:* Persecution increased on the apostles, including the death of James and imprisonment of Peter. Peter was released by the Lord and Herod was slain by the sovereign Lord.

C. The Church Planting by Paul (Acts 13-21): First Journey (13-14); Second Journey (15-18); Third Journey (18-21).

1. *Chapter Thirteen:* Paul and Barnabas were sent from the church at Antioch to begin their foreign missions, going first to the synagogues<sup>13</sup> and then to the Gentiles.

---

<sup>8</sup>The Lord used Gamaliel's advice to spare the apostles (vv. 33-40).

<sup>9</sup>The teaching of I Tim. 5:3-16 gives additional teaching about the widow's roll and need for ministry by the deacons (cf. also Phil. 1:1).

<sup>10</sup>Stephen emulated the Lord by praying for his enemies (v. 60; Lk. 23:34).

<sup>11</sup>No doubt many scattered families started churches in their homes (Acts 18:1-2; Rom. 16:3-5).

<sup>12</sup>Paul learned of the Lord's will through the instrumentality of the assembly as Damascus (vv. 15-16).

2. *Chapter Fourteen:* Having gone through Lystra, Iconium and Antioch establishing churches, the team re-visited them and ordained elders. During this time Paul was stoned (cf. II Cor. 12:1-4), and he won Timothy to the Lord.

3. *Chapter Fifteen:* With Gentile conversions occurring, the Antioch church consulted with the Jerusalem assembly for advice.<sup>14</sup> Having confirmed God's will, Paul took Silas with him on his Second Journey, leaving Barnabas to exhort Mark.

4. *Chapter Sixteen:* The team retraced Paul's path and took Timothy with them throughout Asia until the Apostle submitted to the Macedonian call westward. Through spiritual battles and evangelism Paul established the church at Philippi and left Luke to pastor it.<sup>15</sup>

5. *Chapter Seventeen:* Paul established the Thessalonian and Berean churches and then confronted the Athenians with biblical revelation.<sup>16</sup>

6. *Chapter Eighteen:* The Apostle Paul established the Corinthian and Ephesian churches, and allowed Aquila and Priscilla to train Apollos in "Pauline theology." He began his Third Journey.

7. *Chapter Nineteen:* Paul moved the Ephesian assembly to a suitable location to reach Asia, and received opposition from the Diana devotees at Ephesus.<sup>17</sup>

8. *Chapter Twenty:* Paul ministered in other regions (Troas) and came back to the coast (Miletus) to exhort the Ephesian elders about coming apostasy from within their church.

9. *Chapter Twenty-One:* Paul headed to Jerusalem for Pentecost, being warned of imprisonment. When in Jerusalem, he was falsely accused and delivered to the Romans for his eventual trip to see Caesar.

---

<sup>13</sup>Paul preached his "word of exhortation" (v. 15) which was essentially "Christ is the better fulfillment of all OT teaching" (i.e., the message of the Book of Hebrews [Heb. 13:22]).

<sup>14</sup>James was the "senior pastor" (cf. Rev. 1:20; 2:1 ff.) and gave his authoritative advice which the assembly affirmed (vv. 13, 19).

<sup>15</sup>Philippi was a great medical center and Luke may have come from there.

<sup>16</sup>The Greeks' reaction to the Gospel was mockery, procrastination, or belief (vv. 32-34).

<sup>17</sup>The great Temple of Diana (*Artemision*) was located near Ephesus.

D. The Prosperous Journey to Rome (Acts 22-28)

1. *Chapter Twenty-Two:* The Apostle gave his testimony of conversion by the resurrected Lord Jesus and caused a riot. Paul was protected as a Roman and commanded to appear before the Sanhedrin which no doubt still had some of his former colleagues.
2. *Chapter Twenty-Three:* He testified to the resurrection of Jesus and again caused a stir among the Sadducees and was placed back in the castle. The plot to kill him was exposed by his nephew and Paul was taken to Caesarea.
3. *Chapter Twenty-Four:* Paul appeared before the Roman procurator Felix (AD 52-58) and defended his case; Felix left him in prison for two years until Festus replaced the governor (c. AD 58).
4. *Chapter Twenty-Five:* Paul then appealed to Festus and Herod Agrippa II (his father was slain by the Lord [Acts 12:1, 20-21]) but to no avail.
5. *Chapter Twenty-Six:* Luke recorded Paul's conversion experience for the third time, revealing that Agrippa heard it but rejected the "Christian" (cf. Acts 11:26; I Pet. 4:16) message.
6. *Chapter Twenty-Seven:* Paul was sent to Italy and endured storms and shipwreck, as Luke logged the events. Luke used many rare nautical terms in this account.<sup>18</sup>
7. *Chapter Twenty-Eight:* Eventually, the apostle arrived at Rome and was placed under house arrest for two years, but allowed to preach to all visitors. He was chained to a Roman soldier (vv. 16, 30; cf. Eph. 6:11-20).

### **III. Bibliography**

Blaiklock, E. M. *The Acts of the Apostles*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publ. Co., 1963.

Bruce, F. F. *Commentary on Acts*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publ. Co., 1954.

Custer, Stewart. *Witness to Christ: A Commentary on Acts*. Greenville, SC: BJU Press, 2000.

---

<sup>18</sup>His reference to "*Euroclydon*" was a technical term for a typhoon, coming from the Greek word for "southerly wind" and Latin word for "wave."

Harrison, E. F. *Acts: The Expanding Church*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1975.

Ironside, H. A. *Lectures on the Book of Acts*. Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Bros., 1943.

Kent, Homer. *Jerusalem to Rome*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1972.

Morgan, G. Campbell. *The Acts of the Apostles*. Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1924.

Ryrie, Charles C. *The Acts of the Apostles*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1961.

Stagg, Frank. *The Book of Acts*. Nashville: Broadman Press, 1955.

Thomas, W. H. Griffith. *Outline Studies in Acts*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publ. Co., 1956.