

The Book of Acts

The Title, Author, and Date of Acts

1. Title: “Acts of the Apostles”
 - a. Greek: *praxeiv apostolwn*
 - b. Actually, it is more: “The Continuation of All that Jesus began to Do and Teach, through the Holy Spirit, in establishing the Church.”
2. Author: Luke
 - a. The author of the book is unnamed. But, it is easy to deduce that Luke is the author.
 - b. Comparison of *Acts 1.1* with *Luke 1.1-4*
 - 1) “Theophilus” – same recipient
 - 2) “The first account . . .” – Acts is the sequel.
 - c. The “we” passages throughout the book.
 - 1) Luke was with Paul. Firsthand knowledge
 - 2) *Ac 16.10-17; 20:6-21.17; 27.1-28.15*
 - d. Note *1.1-2*: “*all that Jesus began to do and teach, until . . .*”
 - 1) This is clearly the sequel to the gospel of Luke.
 - 2) It is a record of the *continuing* ministry of Jesus: He *continues* to do what He began, only now through the Holy Spirit.
2. Date: c. A.D. 60-62
 - a. There is no mention of the martyrdom of James (brother of Jesus and leader of the church in Jerusalem, martyred in A.D. 62), nor of Nero’s persecution (AD 64), nor of the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70.
 - b. But it does mention Paul’s house arrest in Rome (early 60s)

The Background and Setting of Acts.

1. The church is established and growing for going on 30 years. The book of Acts covers that 30 year period.
2. The Church is also suffering mounting persecution/opposition to the Gospel *by the Jews, not Rome!*
3. The book is a continuation of the gospel of Luke, recording the establishment and growth of the Church. cp. *1.15; 2.14; 2.47; 4.4; 5.14; 6.7; 9.21; 12.24; 13.49; 16.5; 19.20*
4. OT references: *2.17-21 (Joel 2.28-32); 2.25-28 (Ps 16.8-11); 2.35 (Ps 110.1); 4.11(Ps 118.22); 4.25-26 (Ps 2.1-2); 7.49-50 (Is 66.1-2); 8.32-33 (Is 53.7-8); 28.26-27 (Is 6.8-10)*

The Purpose and Message of Acts

1. The **purpose** of the book seems to be two-fold:
 - a. The history of Jesus’ fulfillment of His statement in *Mt 16.18* - “*I will build My church*”
 - 1) The book is the *beginning of Church History* - Note the abrupt ending. The book is unfinished.
 - 2) His purpose. *Lu 1.1; 24.46-53; Ac 1.1; Ti 2.14*
 - b. An apologetic for Christianity

- 1) Rome says: “No new religions”
 - 2) Christianity says: “We are an outgrowth of Judaism.”
2. The **message** of the book: ***“I will build my Church; and the gates of Hades shall not overpower it.”***

Themes/Emphases/Key words in Acts

1. The Holy Spirit and His work – 55x
2. The resurrection of Jesus – 30x
3. The ministry of the Word – 30x – 4.29, **31**; 6.2, **4, 7**; 8.4, 14, 25; 11.1, 19; **12.24**; 13.5, 7, 26, 44, 46, **48, 49**; 14.3, 25; 15.3, 35, 36; 16.6, 32; **17.11, 13**; 18.5, 11; 19.10, **20**; 20.32
4. Testimony/witness (*martureo*) - 30x
5. The Church - 17x - n.b. 17.6
6. Prayer - 30x
7. Kingdom - 1.3; 1.6; 8.12; 14.22; 19.8; 20.25; 28.23; 28.31
8. Unity of the church - “one mind” . . . “devoted” (see “progress reports”)
9. Some key verses: **1.1-2; 1.8; 17.6, 11**

Interpretive Issues in Acts

1. The book is a transitional book.
 - a. It records the transition from the OT dispensation (God’s dealings with Israel) to the NT dispensation (God’s dealings with the Church).
 - b. We see the transition in how the Gospel and Holy Spirit come to: the Jews (ch. 2), the Samaritans (ch. 8), and finally, to the Gentiles (ch. 10).
2. Spiritual miracle gifts (tongues, healing, prophecy)
 - a. The purpose of these is to validate the church as being God’s work. *1 Co 14.20-22*
 - b. Once the church is validated as being of God, and the NT is written, there is no more need of the miracle gifts.
 - c. Note the appearance of miracle gifts in the early chapters (note ch. 2!), then they subside in favor of the power of *the Word* to build the church.

Structure of Acts

1. Spirit-given outline: *Ac 1.8* - “*You shall be My witnesses . . .*”
 - a. “. . . *in Jerusalem and in all Judea*” - chapters 1-7 AD 30-36
 - b. “. . . *in Samaria*” - chapters 8-12 AD 36-46
 - c. “. . . *uttermost part of the earth*” - chapters 13-38 AD 46-63 . . . and 63-2017!
2. Outline according to Apostles
 - a. Peter - to the Jews – chapters 1-12
 - b. Paul - to the Gentiles - chapters 13-28
3. “Progress Reports”
 - a. 2.46-47 . . . 6.7 . . . 9.31 . . . 12.24 . . . 16.5 . . . 19.20 . . . 28.20-31
 - b. Q: Progress of *what?* *Mt 16.18*