

The Acts of the Holy Spirit

Gloria Dei Lutheran Church

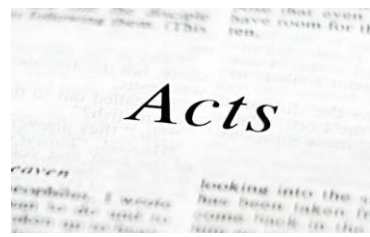
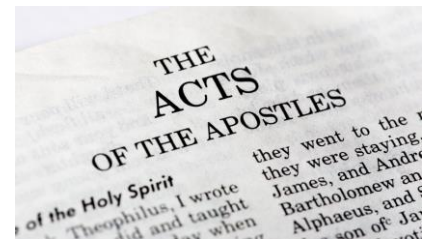
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Introduction

"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." (Acts 1:8)

About the Book

Commonly entitled "**The Acts of the Apostles**", this book is simply titled "**Acts**" in some of the oldest manuscripts. It might appropriately be called "**Some of the Acts of Some of the Apostles**" since it does not try to describe all of the acts of all the apostles. Rather, the focus is clearly on some of the activities and deeds of Peter (the key figure in the first half) and Paul (the key figure in the second), primarily.



Regardless of the focus on a subset of Jesus' apostles, we could also title this book to be "**The Acts of The Holy Spirit**", as the so-called "Third Person of the Godhead" is given First place in this book! In terms of the evidence – signs of His presence, activity in and through His church – the Holy Spirit holds the starring role in this particular recounting of the spread of the Gospel.

About the Author

Though he does not mention himself by name, the author is undoubtedly **Luke**, physician and frequent traveling companion of the apostle Paul. From [Acts 1:1-3](#), we learn that Acts is the second historical account he wrote for Theophilus, the first being the gospel that is universally attributed to Luke (cf. [Luke 1:1-4](#)).



Luke is described as "**the beloved Physician**" ([Colossians 4:14](#)), and the vocabulary of both the gospel and Acts shows evidence of a medical mind.

Mentioned as a "fellow laborer" ([Philemon 24](#)) who was with Paul in his last days ([2 Timothy 4:11](#)), Luke often accompanied Paul on his travels beginning with his second journey. By carefully noting the use of "we" and "they" in the book of Acts, we glean that Luke joined Paul at Troas ([Acts 16:10-11](#)), and remained at Philippi ([Acts 17:1](#)) until Paul later picked him up on his way to Troas ([Acts 20:1-6](#)). The book ends with Luke accompanying Paul to his imprisonment in Rome ([Acts 28:16](#)).

Luke was careful to provide an accurate account in the both Luke and Acts ([Luke 1:1-4,5](#); [2:1-3](#); [3:1-2](#)). [Sir William Ramsay](#), a Scottish chemist and archaeologist who started his career an avowed atheist set out to prove Luke to be in error in terms of its historical accounts, offered this testimony as a result of his research:

"Luke is a historian of the first rank; not merely are his statements of trustworthy, he is possessed of the true historic sense... in short, this author should be placed along with the greatest of historians."

https://www.conservapedia.com/William_Mitchell_Ramsay

Perhaps most importantly for our purposes, Luke provides the only record of the first thirty years of the early church!

About the Recipient

Both the gospel and Acts were written to one man: **Theophilus** ([Luke 1:3](#); [Acts 1:1](#)), whose name means "God lover". The use of "most excellent" ([Luke 1:3](#)), a title similar to "Your Excellency" ([Acts 23:26](#); [26:25](#)) likely tells us that Theophilus was a high-ranking government official. Luke does not use that title in Acts, which *might* indicate that Theophilus became a believer in between reading the Gospel of Luke and Acts. Some have suggested that Theophilus was a Roman official in charge of administering Paul's case before Caesar, and that Luke's Gospel and Acts were written to help him understand the facts of Jesus Christ and Paul's role in the history of the church.

Time and Place

The book ends abruptly with Paul under house arrest awaiting trial in Rome ([Acts 28:16](#), [30-31](#)). It's possible that the book was written before Paul's trial and eventual release. The dates for Paul's first imprisonment in Rome are thought to

be 60-62 A.D., so if Luke wrote Acts around the time of Paul's release, then it was likely written in **62 or 63 A.D.** from **Rome**.

The Purpose of the Book

While the “original” purpose of both the Gospel of Luke and Acts may have been to assist Theophilus’ learning about Jesus and His apostles as he served in an official capacity, the inspiration and preservation of the book indicates an important future role, conceived wholly in the providence of God. Based on its content, I offer the following two-fold purpose statement for Acts:

To record the establishment and early growth of the church, and provide testimony to the love and power of the Holy Spirit as a witness to the church throughout all succeeding generations

Yeah, it’s long. But I think it reflects what we will read in this study.

Narrower reasons could rightly be offered for why this book was written. The details regarding specific conversions and the involvement of the Holy Spirit would certainly suggest the book is designed to reveal:

- **Testimony regarding the variety of conversions to the Gospel of Christ**
- **The ministry of the Holy Spirit in specific apostles, and the early church in general**

The value of Acts is also seen in that it provides the historical framework for the epistles found in the New Testament. Acts sheds light upon numerous references in New Testament books from Romans to Revelation. Names, places, and events are mentioned throughout the NT that would otherwise be obscure or devoid of context, but are instead clear because we have historical record of Acts.

Plus, without Acts, the gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John would leave us without a solid, edifying answer to the question, "What happened next?"

The Theme of the book

The book begins in Jerusalem and ends at Rome. It describes the establishment and growth of the Lord's church throughout the world (meaning the Mediterranean world, primarily) through the work of the apostles and other Christians under the direction of the Holy Spirit. We are privileged to read their

sermons, and to read about some of the conversions which resulted as they carried out Jesus' Great Commission ([Matthew 28:18-20](#); [Mark 16:15-16](#)).

We learn how local churches were established, and about much of their work, worship and organization. Perhaps most importantly of all, we see the faith and resulting efforts of those charged to be witnesses to the life, resurrection from the dead, and resulting good news of Jesus Christ. An appropriate theme of this book might therefore be:

The Holy Spirit Reveals the Gospel of Jesus Christ through His Church

Outline of the Book

The Acts of the Holy Spirit...

- I. **In Jerusalem, He:**
 - A. **Prepares the Apostles to build His Church**
 1. Introduction to the book ([1:1-3](#))
 2. The promise of the Spirit ([1:4-8](#))
 3. The ascension of Jesus ([1:9-11](#))
 4. The waiting for the Spirit ([1:12-14](#))
 5. The selection of Matthias ([1:16-26](#))
 - B. **Establishes His Church**
 1. The outpouring of the Spirit ([2:1-4](#))
 2. The reaction of the crowd ([2:5-13](#))
 3. The explanation by Peter ([2:14-21](#))
 4. The first gospel sermon by Peter ([2:22-36](#))
 5. The conversion of 3000 souls ([2:37-41](#))
 6. The beginning of the church ([2:42-47](#))
 - C. **Asserts His presence in Jerusalem**
 1. The healing of the lame man; Peter's second sermon ([3:1-26](#))
 - D. **Preserves the church despite persecution within and without**
 1. The first persecution against the church; the liberality of the church ([4:1-37](#))
 2. The first trouble within; increasing persecution without ([5:1-42](#))
 3. The disturbance within resolved; intensifying persecution without ([6:1-15](#))
 4. The address and martyrdom of Stephen ([7:1-60](#))
 5. The persecution involving Saul against the church ([8:1-3](#))

II. **In Judea and Samaria, He:**

A. **Uses Philip to convert people (8:4-40)**

1. The conversion of the Samaritans ([8:4-25](#))
2. The conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch ([8:26-40](#))

B. **Converts Saul**

1. The appearance of the Lord on the road to Damascus ([9:1-8](#))
2. The baptism of Saul by Ananias ([9:9-19](#))
3. The initial ministry and persecution of Saul ([9:20-31](#))

C. **Bears Witness to Himself through Miracles (9:32-43)**

1. The healing of Aeneas ([9:32-35](#))
2. The raising of Dorcas from the dead ([9:36-43](#))

D. **Converts Cornelius**

1. The account recorded by Luke ([10:1-48](#))
2. The account retold by Peter ([11:1-18](#))

E. **Uses Barnabas, Saul/Paul, and Peter**

1. The work of Barnabas and Saul in Antioch ([11:19-26](#))
2. The work of Barnabas and Saul in Judea ([11:27-30](#); [12:25](#))
3. The persecution by Herod; James beheaded, Peter arrested ([12:1-4](#))
4. The release of Peter from prison by an angel; Herod's death ([12:5-24](#))

III. **Spreading the Gospel to the ends of the Earth, He:**

A. **Sends Paul on his first missionary journey**

1. The departure from Antioch of Syria ([13:1-3](#))
2. The ministry on the island of Cyprus ([13:4-12](#))
3. The preaching in Antioch of Pisidia ([13:13-52](#))
4. The work and persecution in Iconium, Lystra and Derbe ([14:1-20](#))
5. The confirmation of churches and appointment of elders ([14:21-23](#))
6. The return trip to Antioch ([14:24-28](#))

B. **Settles the pervasive and divisive issue of circumcision**

1. The problem surfaces in Antioch ([15:1-3](#))
2. The problem resolved in Jerusalem ([15:4-29](#))
3. The letter delivered to Antioch ([15:30-35](#))

C. **Sends Paul on his second missionary journey**

1. The separation of Paul and Barnabas ([15:36-41](#))
2. The addition of Timothy to Paul and Silas ([16:1-5](#))
3. The call to come to Macedonia ([16:6-10](#))

4. The conversion of Lydia in Philippi ([16:11-15](#))
 5. The conversion of the Philippian jailor ([16:16-40](#))
 6. The proclamation of Christ in Thessalonica, Berea, and Athens ([17:1-34](#))
 7. A year and a half at Corinth ([18:1-17](#))
 8. The quick trip back to Antioch ([18:18-22](#))
- D. **Sends Paul on his third missionary journey**
1. Strengthening of the disciples in Galatia and Phrygia ([18:23](#))
 2. The conversion of Apollos by Aquila and Priscilla ([18:24-28](#))
 3. Spending three years at Ephesus, ending with a riot ([19:1-41](#))
 4. The trip through Macedonia, three months in Greece, and return through Macedonia ([20:1-5](#))
 5. Breaking of bread and miracle at Troas; heading toward Jerusalem ([20:7-16](#))
 6. Meeting with the Ephesian elders at Miletus ([20:17-38](#))
 7. Warnings on the way to Jerusalem; brief stays in Tyre and Caesarea ([21:1-14](#))
 8. Arrival in Jerusalem ([21:15-17](#))
- E. **Arranges for Paul to go to Rome**
1. The counsel of James and elders of the church in Jerusalem ([21:18-25](#))
 2. The arrest of Paul in the temple ([21:26-40](#))
 3. The defense by Paul to the Jewish mob ([22:1-30](#))
 4. The defense by Paul before the Sanhedrin council ([23:1-10](#))
 5. The plot against Paul and deliverance to Felix ([23:11-35](#))
 6. The trial before Felix; procrastination by Felix ([24:1-27](#))
 7. The appearance before Festus and appeal to Caesar ([25:1-12](#))
 8. The defense before Festus and King Agrippa ([25:13-26:32](#))
 9. The journey to Rome; shipwreck along the way ([27:1-28:16](#))
 10. The explanation of Paul to the leaders of the Jews in Rome ([28:17-29](#))
 11. Waiting in Rome for two years, all the while preaching and teaching ([28:30-31](#))

Review Questions

- 1. Who is the author of the book of Acts?**
- 2. What was his profession?**
- 3. To whom was this book written?**
- 4. What other book is addressed to this person?**
- 5. What might indicate that this person was an official of high rank?**
- 6. When was this book likely written? From where?**
- 7. What is proposed as the primary purpose of the book of Acts?**
- 8. Based on content, what else does the book appear designed to reveal?**
- 9. What is offered as the theme of the book of Acts?**
- 10. What are the main divisions of the book as suggested by the key verse and the outline in the introduction?**

Answers to Review Questions

1. **Who is the author of the book of Acts? What was his profession?**
 - Luke
 - Physician
2. **To whom was this book written?**
3. **What other book is addressed to this person?**
 - Theophilus ([Acts 1:1](#))
 - The gospel of Luke ([Lk 1:3](#))
4. **What might indicate that this person was an official of high rank?**
 - Being addressed as "most excellent" ([Lk 1:3](#))
5. **When was this book likely written? From where? What may be indicative of this?**
 - 63 A.D.; Rome
 - It is when and where the book abruptly ends ([Acts 28:30-31](#))
6. **What is proposed as the primary purpose of the book of Acts?**
 - To record the establishment and early growth of the church
7. **Based on content, what else does the book appear designed to reveal?**
 - Examples of conversions to the gospel of Christ
 - The ministry of the Holy Spirit in the apostles and the early church
8. **What is offered as the theme of the book of Acts?**
 - Witnesses for the Lord Jesus Christ
9. **What is the key verse?**
 - "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." - [Acts 1:8](#)
10. **What are the main divisions of the book as suggested by the key verse and the outline in the introduction?**
 - Their witness in Jerusalem ([1:1-8:3](#))
 - Their witness in Judea and Samaria ([8:4-12:25](#))
 - Their witness to the end of the earth ([13:1-28:31](#))