

Subject: Know Your Bible – Part 16

Scripture: Acts 1:1-11

The Book of Acts continues where the Gospels end. The Gospels tell us about the life and ministry of Christ when He was on earth. Acts tells us about the life and ministry of Christ as it continues through His spiritual body, the church.

Book of Acts: Writer and Date

1. This book was written by Luke who was Paul’s close friend, missionary partner, and personal physician. He is mentioned by name only three times in the New Testament (Col. 4:14; 2 Tim. 4:11; Philemon 24). In these references Luke is described as a beloved physician, faithful friend, and fellow laborer.

2. This book was obviously written as a sequel to the Gospel of Luke. Both Luke and Acts were addressed to a man named Theophilus (“lover of God,” Lk. 1:3; Acts 1:1), who was apparently of noble rank (most excellent Theophilus, Luke 1:3). Luke referred to his gospel as “the former treatise” (account).

3. Luke was a careful researcher, historian, and an eyewitness to part of what he recorded in Acts (Lk. 1:1-4; “we” passages, Acts 16:10-17; 20:5; 21:18; 27:1-28:16). Luke joined Paul’s mission team at Troas where Paul received the call to preach the Gospel in Macedonia. Luke devoted more than half of Acts to Paul’s ministry.

4. Luke wrote Acts shortly after his gospel around 60-62 AD, before the end of Paul’s first Roman imprisonment.

Classification and Title

1. Acts stands as the only New Testament book of church history. Acts is the historical account of how the gospel message first spread and how it was both received and rejected. It provides information about the first 30 years of the church’s existence. This is information that is not found anywhere else in the New Testament and it provides important background for studying and understanding the epistles and Revelation.

- *Gospels* (4 books) Matthew through John
- *Church history* (1 book) Acts
- *Epistles* (21) Romans through Jude
- *Prophecy* (1) Revelation

2. The title of this book is The Acts of the Apostles. The word “Acts” (Gk, *praxeis*) was often used to describe the achievements of great men. While Acts does feature the deeds of Peter (Acts 1-12) and Paul (Acts 13-28), this book highlights the work of the Holy Spirit in and through these men. A more accurate title therefore would be *The Acts of the Risen Christ* or *The Acts of the Holy Spirit*.

Contrasts between the Gospels and Book of Acts

In the four gospels Jesus is the model of the Christian faith, but in Acts believers serve as role models. These are a few other contrasts between the gospels and Acts:

IN THE GOSPELS

Christ offers His life physically
The seeds of the church are planted
Christ ministers, dies, and rises again
Events occur between 1-30 AD

IN THE BOOK OF ACTS

Christ offers His power spiritually
The church takes root, grows, and bears fruit
Christ ascends to the Father and is exalted
Events occur between 30-60 AD

Outline of Acts (based on Acts 1:8)

<i>Acts 1-7</i>	The witness of Christ in <u>Jerusalem</u>
<i>Acts 8-12</i>	The witness of Christ in <u>Judea and Samaria</u>
<i>Acts 13-28</i>	The witness of Christ to <u>the ends of the earth</u>

Important Events in Acts

1. Ascension of Christ (Acts 1:9-11)

The ascension was carefully described so the disciples would know this was unique and unlike other times when Christ appeared and then supernaturally left their presence.

2. Birth of the church on the Day of Pentecost (2:1-47)

3. Ananias and Sapphira lie to God and are suddenly judged (5:1-11)

4. First deacons are chosen to serve the church (6:1-8)

5. Stephen becomes the first martyr of the church (6:8-7:60)

6. Philip leads the Ethiopian man to salvation in Christ (8:26-40)

7. Paul is converted and begins his ministry (9:1-31)

8. Peter leads Cornelius and his family to salvation in Christ (10:1-11:18)

This is the first time the gospel is delivered specifically to Gentiles.

9. James is martyred and Peter is rescued from prison (12:1-19)

10. Barnabas and Paul are on the first missionary journey (13:1-14:28)

In Acts 1-12 the focus is on Peter, but in Acts 13-28 the focus shifts to Paul's ministry.

11. The church council meets in Jerusalem (15:1-35)

12. Paul and Silas are on the second missionary journey (15:36-18:22)

13. Paul's third missionary journey and ministry at Ephesus (18:23-19:41)

14. Paul's arrest, defense, and trip to Rome (21:27-28:31)

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4. Luke wrote Acts shortly after his gospel around _____, before the end of Paul's first Roman imprisonment.

Classification and Title

1. Acts stands as the only New Testament book of _____. Acts is the historical account of how the gospel message first spread and how it was both received and rejected. This is information that is not found anywhere else in the New Testament and it provides important background for studying the epistles and Revelation.

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- Acts 8-12* The witness of Christ in _____
- Acts 13-28* The witness of Christ to _____

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14. Paul's arrest, defense, and _____ (21:27-28:31)