

1. Book: Acts – The name should be thought of as the actions of the Jesus Followers/The Church. The History book of the New Testament.
2. Author: Luke, “the beloved physician” and traveling companion of Paul. (Col 4:14) Luke, who was a Gentile [non-Jewish] and also wrote the Gospel of Luke. [Neither Luke or Acts names the author. Some may challenge the authorship. Both books are written to “Theophilus” is a key sign that this is the same author. (Luke 1:3, Acts 1:1)]
3. Date written: 3 possibilities - “early (62–70 CE), intermediate (80–90 CE), and late (110–150 CE;”¹ The latest dates are a little over a century after the resurrection of Jesus, and a generation after the death of the last 12 disciples, John. The earlier dates place it 1 generation after the resurrection with many disciples still alive. For this reason, Acts is a trustworthy source of history of the early Church.
4. To whom written: Theophilus, which means “friend of God.”² Acts may have been written to a literal person named Theophilus, but it is possible that Luke wrote it for all who are a FRIEND OF GOD. Wouldn't it be cool if this book was written for you, because you are a friend of God?
5. Why was it written: The gospel of Luke was written to give an “orderly account” of the things fulfilled by Jesus. Acts is a continuation of that endeavor to give a trustworthy account, but now it is an account of the actions of the people of Jesus. The book covers approximately the first 30 years of the Church.³
6. Why it's important to be familiar with this Book:
 - What happened after the resurrection?
 - How did Christianity spread? (Bold sharing to different cultures and nations. Persecution did not stop the spread but increased it beginning in chapter 8)
 - What does it mean to be a Christian? (More than you might think! Notice the power and dedication of these Christians in this book)
 - Can the simple message of Jesus change the world? (Yes! It did and it still does!)

¹ Aymer, The New Testament (p. 310) Kindle Edition.

² <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lexicon/g2321/kjv/tr/0-1/>

³ <https://biblehub.com/sum/acts/>

- What does it look like to be a disciple? (it is powerful!)
- What does it look like to know the power of the Holy Spirit?
- Introduces you to important figures – Peter, John, James, Steven, Phillip, Paul, Barnabas, James the brother of Jesus, Aquilla, Priscilla, and more.

7. Famous passages and verses you'll find in this Book:

- Acts 1:8 (NIV) "But you will receive power when the **Holy Spirit** comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."
 - Jesus speaking after the resurrection and before the ascension.
 - The Holy Spirit gives YOU power to witness.
- Acts 2:1-4 (NIV) When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. 2 Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. 3 They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. 4 All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.
 - The Holy Spirit is SUPERNATURAL and gets everyone's attention.
 - This is the BIRTH of the Church. (John 3:5)
- Acts 2:16- 21 No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: 17 "In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. 18 Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy. 19 I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and billows of smoke. 20 The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord. 21 And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.'
 - Peter quotes the Old Testament prophet Joel 2:28-32 and says this outpouring of the Holy Spirit is the fulfillment of this Old Testament prophecy.
 - It is for men and women, young and old, ALL PEOPLE.
- Acts 2:36-39 "Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah." 37 When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?"

38 Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call."

- i. V36 The Church preached Jesus, v37 and people were convicted.
 - ii. V38 The response to the message of Jesus is to believe, repent, be baptized, and receive the Holy Spirit.
 - iii. V39 This promise is for everyone! 3000 souls received the message that day!
(v41)
- e. Acts 3:6-7 (NIV) 6 Then Peter said, "Silver or gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk." 7 Taking him by the right hand, he helped him up, and instantly the man's feet and ankles became strong.
- i. Peter prays for a disabled man in Jesus name – He is healed.
 - ii. Can you pray for someone in Jesus name? (You can!)
- f. Acts 4:12 Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved."
- i. Acts 4:36 introduces us to an important character - Barnabas.
- g. Acts 4:32-35 All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had. 33 With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And God's grace was so powerfully at work in them all 34 that there were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned land or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales 35 and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone who had need.
- i. The New Testament Church cared for one another.
 - ii. How can we live like this?
- h. Acts 9: 4 He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" 5 "Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked. "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," he replied.
- i. Red Letters! Jesus speaks here!
 1. Do you believe Jesus can speak to you?

ii. Saul's/Paul's Conversion

- i. Acts 10:44 "While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message. 45 The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on Gentiles. 46 For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God. Then Peter said, 47 "Surely no one can stand in the way of their being baptized with water. They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have." 48 So he ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked Peter to stay with them for a few days."

i. First Gentiles saved. How is reminiscent of the Acts 2 account.

- j. Acts 16:29-33 The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. 30 He then brought them out and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" 31 They replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household." 32 Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house. 33 At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his household were baptized.

i. The Philippian jailor's conversion.

ii. Believing and baptizing is a constant in the New Testament Church.

- k. Acts 17:30-31: "In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to everyone by raising him from the dead."

i. Paul's proclamation in Athens about the necessity of repentance and the coming judgment by Jesus Christ, substantiated by his resurrection.

1. God still calls us to repentance. Like this chapter some receive that call and some reject it.

- l. Acts 20:35: "In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"

i. Paul recalls Jesus' teaching on generosity and selflessness, emphasizing the importance of helping others.

m. Acts 22:16 And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on his name.'

i. Have you been baptized? If not, what are you waiting for?

8. Chapter Synopsis (Major Events in Bold)

a. **Acts 1 - Jesus ascends into heaven after instructing his disciples to wait in Jerusalem for the Holy Spirit to come. Matthias is chosen to replace Judas Iscariot as one of the twelve apostles.**

i. Jesus ascends, and an angel says that He is coming back in like manner.

1. Do you expect Jesus to return?

b. **Acts 2 - On the day of Pentecost (An Old Testament feast day remembering the 10 commandments coming down from the mountain – Exodus 34), the Holy Spirit descends upon the disciples, enabling them to speak in different tongues/languages. Peter delivers a powerful sermon about Jesus, leading to the conversion of about 3,000 people.**

i. This is the beginning/new birth of the Church. (Peter refers back to this day as "the beginning." (Acts 11:15)

c. Acts 3 - Peter and John heal a lame beggar at the temple gate, leading to another opportunity for Peter to preach about Jesus. Many people believe as a result.

d. Acts 4 - Peter and John are arrested for preaching about Jesus but boldly proclaim the gospel before the religious leaders. The believers pray for boldness, and the Holy Spirit fills them.

i. Persecution comes but notice the boldness of Peter & John.

e. Acts 5 - Ananias(husband) & Saphira(wife) gave an offering but lied about the amount they gave. They died instantly.

i. Why do you think this story is in here?

ii. We need to do the right things for the right reasons and never lie to God.

iii. What was the outcome? V10 - People took things seriously.

f. Acts 6 - For racial/cultural reasons, some people were being overlooked in food distribution. There was a divide between the Hellenistic/Greek Jews and the Hebraic (pure blood) Jews.

- i. There are sometimes problems in the Church. We need to fix these problems in love.
 - ii. No one should be overlooked in the Kingdom for any reason.
 - iii. The leaders of the Church looked for people to serve everyone. They had a requirement for the people they chose to serve... They were FULL OF THE SPIRIT & WISDOM. This position is called deacon – Greek diakoneō.⁴
 - 1. Can you serve someone? Are you full of Spirit & Wisdom?
- g. Acts 6:8 - 7 Steven, one of the deacons is taken by religious leaders (Sanhedrin). Stephen preaches Christ to them and they kill him, making Stephen the first Christian Martyr.
- i. Why is this story in here? Living for Christ is not easy and will cost you.
 - ii. Even in facing death, Stephen preached Jesus and modeled the love of Jesus. Acts 7:59-60 sounds a lot like what Jesus said on the Cross. (Luke 23:34)
 - iii. V58 introduces us to an important character who was holding the coats of people who killed Stephen – Saul (Jewish name) later known as Paul (Greek name).
- h. Acts 8 – Persecution spreads the Gospel, and we see Phillip (a chapter 6 deacon) run from Jerusalem to Samaria (think Luke 10:25 good Samaritan parable and John 4 Samaritan woman at the well). Phillip preaches Jesus and converts an entire city.
- i. The Gospel reaches beyond Jerusalem and into Samaria. Just like Jesus said in Acts 1:8.
 - ii. Simon the sorcerer story v9-25
 - 1. The Holy Spirit can't be bought. It is a free gift.
 - iii. Philip and the Ethiopian story v26-40
 - 1. A great example of striking up a conversation and sharing Jesus. Can you do this?
- i. **Acts 9 - Saul, who held the coats as they stoned Steven (Acts 7:58), encounters Jesus on the road to Damascus and is converted. He becomes a fervent preacher of the Gospel, eventually known as Paul.**

⁴ <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lexicon/g1247/kjv/tr/0-1/>

Paul preaches to others and the Jews try to kill him, but he is lowered through a window in a basket to safety. (v25)

- i. Acts 9:4-6, 10-16 Jesus still speaks!
- ii. Jesus uses a man named Ananias to pray for Paul (Not the Acts 5 Ananias)
- iii. Jesus calls Paul to minister to the Gentiles (non-Jewish people)
 1. Gentiles had never received the Gospel before. Paul is called in Acts 9 and THE FIRST Gentiles come to faith in Acts 10.
 2. No matter your past, Jesus can call you to change the world!

j. Acts 10 – God talks to a Gentile named Cornelius and tells him to send for Peter. Meanwhile, God sends Peter a vision instructing him to share the gospel with Gentiles. As the vision ends a knock comes on the door from the men Cornelius had sent. Peter visits Cornelius, a Roman centurion, and his household believes the Gospel, receives the Holy Spirit, and are baptized.

- i. Notice how God talks to those who need saving (Cornelius) and also those who will bring the message of salvation (Peter).
 1. When God talks to you about sharing the message with someone you must have faith that God is also talking to them about receiving the message.
 - ii. Do you notice similarities between this story and the Acts 2 encounter with the Holy Spirit? The Gentiles have received the exact same gift.

k. Acts 11 - Peter defends his actions in sharing the gospel with Gentiles before the Jerusalem church. The believers rejoice at the inclusion of Gentiles in God's plan of salvation.

The Gospel has reached a far away village called Antioch. The Church in Jerusalem sends Barnabas, and Barnabas takes Saul/Paul with him. V26 – “The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch.” We are called Christians because we are “like Jesus.”

- i. It was a shock to many that non-Jews, Gentiles, had also received the Holy Spirit. As we read through Acts, we see that the “promise” was for everyone. (Acts 2:39 for example)
- ii. Antioch is a Church you should know about.

1. They are 2nd generation believers. What started in Jerusalem has come to Antioch.
 2. Their 2nd generation status does not lessen their boldness. We are known as Christians today because of their zeal.
- I. Acts 12 - King Herod Agrippa I persecutes the church, executing James (brother of John) the apostle and imprisoning Peter. However, Peter miraculously escapes from prison with the help of an angel as the Church prays.
- King Herod Agrippa I dies at the end of this chapter. IT IS SHOCKING.
- i. Persecution shows up, but so does God!
 1. There is active prayer in this chapter. Notice how they gathered in a house and prayed.
 - ii. What do you think about King Herod Agrippa's death?
 1. What is the reason for his death according to scripture? (V23)
- m. Acts 13 - The church in Antioch sends out Paul and Barnabas as missionaries. They travel to Cyprus and Pamphylia preaching in synagogues, encountering both acceptance and opposition.
- i. Christians have good and bad days. This is clearly seen in the life of Paul throughout the rest of the book of Acts.
 1. God is still with us in the bad days. Keep trying! Keep believing!
- n. Acts 14 - Paul and Barnabas preach in Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe, performing miracles and facing persecution. They encourage the believers and appoint elders in the churches they establish.
- i. Paul was dragged out of the city and stoned in Lystra. Miraculously Paul got back up and went back into the city! BOLDNESS!
- o. **Acts 15 - The Jerusalem council convenes to address the question of whether Gentile converts must be circumcised and follow Jewish law. They affirm salvation by grace through faith and send a letter of encouragement to the Gentile believers.**

This chapter ends with a disagreement between Paul & Barnabas over the inclusion of Mark on the missionary journey. Barnabas journeys with mark, and Paul travels with Silas. What was 1 missionary team, becomes 2.

i. Ever feel like religion is all about the rules? The council in Jerusalem made a decision that it is not all about the rules.

1. If it is not about a list of rules... what is it about? What do you think?

p. Acts 16 - Paul and Silas travel to Philippi, where they preach the gospel and face opposition. They are imprisoned but Paul & Silas worship God and are miraculously freed by an earthquake, leading to the conversion of the jailer and his household.

i. Worship is powerful and leads to freedom.

1. Have you experienced this freedom?

q. Acts 17 - Paul preaches in Thessalonica, Berea, and Athens, proclaiming Jesus as the Messiah and the Savior. Some believe, while others reject the message.

i. Acts 17:16-34 tells of Paul's ministry at Mars Hill.

1. Paul preaches the Gospel within the context of the people.

a. Paul quotes Greek poets and uses pagan statues to present the true "unknown God."

b. How can we preach the Gospel with the context of our city?

r. Acts 18 - Paul ministers in Corinth, where he meets Aquila and Priscilla and establishes a church. Paul faces opposition from the Jews but continues to preach boldly. Aquila and Priscilla share the Jesus they found with Paul with a Apollos who also becomes a preacher of the Gospel.

Paul meets Aquila and Priscilla while on the job as a tent maker! (Acts 18:3)

i. Can you share Jesus while on the job?

1. What might that look like?

s. Acts 19 - Paul encounters disciples in Ephesus who have not yet received the Holy Spirit. He baptizes them in the name of Jesus, and they receive the Holy Spirit. Paul performs miracles, and the gospel spreads throughout the region.

i. According to Paul just any belief won't do. You need to be connected to Jesus.

He commands the disciples of John the Baptist to be rebaptized in the name of Jesus so that they would be connected with the savior.

1. How are you connected to Jesus?

- t. Acts 20 - Paul travels through Macedonia and Greece, encouraging believers and preaching the gospel. He bids farewell to the Ephesian elders, warning them of future hardships.
 - i. A man named Eutychus fell asleep in Church... AND DIED! v7-12 Eutychus fell asleep and then fell out of a window, but Paul goes to him and declares him alive!
- u. Acts 21 - Paul arrives in Jerusalem, where he is warned through a prophetic act from Agabus (v11) about the dangers he will face. Despite opposition, he insists on going to the temple to worship. Paul is arrested in Jerusalem.
 - i. Paul was committed to his calling of sharing Jesus, even if it means the worst for him.
 - 1. Are you aware of your calling?
- v. Acts 22 - Paul gives a legal defense address to the Jewish crowd in Jerusalem. He uses this opportunity to preach the gospel, recounting his conversion story and emphasizing his mission to preach the gospel to the Gentiles.
 - i. Paul retells his Acts 9 conversion story.
- w. Acts 23 - Paul is brought before the Sanhedrin, where he cleverly divides the Pharisees and Sadducees. Learning of a plot to kill him, the Roman commander transfers Paul to Caesarea.
 - i. Paul has faced many dangers throughout the book of Acts. Again, he is faced with a plot to kill him, yet God thwarts the plan because God wants Paul in Rome.
- x. Acts 24 - Paul is brought before Governor Felix, who listens to accusations against him but finds no basis for charges. Paul defends himself, proclaiming his belief in the resurrection.
 - i. What kind of man is Felix? V26 &27 show that he is a corrupt leader who wanted bribes and favors.
- y. Acts 25 – Felix is replaced after at least 2 years. Festus, the new governor, takes over Paul's case but finds no wrongdoing in him. However, to appease the Jews, he offers Paul the option of being tried in Jerusalem.
 - i. Festus, like Felix, would rather appeal to people rather than receive the gospel.

1. We can see similarities in Pontius Pilot who saw no fault in Jesus, but out of fear of a crowd had him crucified.
 2. Will you receive the Gospel no matter who is looking?
- z. Acts 26 - Paul defends himself before King Agrippa, recounting his conversion and his mission to preach the gospel. Agrippa acknowledges that Paul has done nothing worthy of death. Agrippa also says that Paul “almost persuaded” him to become a Christian. (v28)

Paul is sent to Rome.

- i. Are you fully persuaded or almost persuaded to be a Christian?
- aa. Acts 27 - Paul sails for Rome as a prisoner, facing a perilous journey and a shipwreck. Despite the hardships, he encourages the crew and passengers, and they all survive.
- i. As a prisoner, Paul cared for his guards. This is a powerful lesson of caring for all, no matter how difficult the situation.
- bb. Acts 28 – On the island Paul is bitten by a poisonous viper. The natives thought Paul would die, but Paul did not. Instead, Paul prayed for many and they were healed. (v9)

Paul then arrives in Rome, where he is allowed to live under house arrest. He continues to preach the gospel, and many come to believe in Jesus despite opposition from some Jewish leaders.

- i. Paul is under house arrest. He had some freedom to have guests in his rented house (v30).
- ii. It is believed that while under Roman imprisonment around 60 A.D. Paul wrote several letters that are books in your New Testament – Ephesians, Colossians, Philippians, and Philemon.
- iii. Paul was faithful to the very end. Although a prisoner of Rome, He belonged completely to Jesus.
- iv. History records that Paul dies (beheaded) around 64-65 A.D. in Rome. ^{5 6}

9. “Turn to Acts 29.”

“Please turn with me to Acts 29.”

⁵ https://www.jesuswalk.com/paul/10_prison.htm

⁶ Aymer, The New Testament (p. 310) Kindle Edition.

The eager Bible students feverishly turned the pages of their Bibles. They found Acts... they turned quickly, as if a race, to get to chapter 29. They see chapter 28 and turn the page to see... "My Bible doesn't have Acts 29," someone says.

"Luke's writing ends at Chapter 28. Let's read that last verse together."

Acts 28:31 "He proclaimed the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ—with all boldness and without hindrance!"

What do you notice about the last verse? There is no "Amen." At the close of the book of Luke, there is an Amen. The rest of the gospels, Matthew, Mark, and John all end with "Amen." The "Amen" signifies "the end" to the book.

Because there is no "Amen" in Acts, the history of the Church is still being written. Every amazing thing God does in Acts, He is still doing today.

You are Acts 29. What history will you write? What person will you reach? What miracle will be done through you?

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