

## The Acts of the Apostles

<b>Where Do I Belong?</b>	The NT contains three distinctive sections: (1) The Gospels; (2) The Pauline Epistles and (3) The General Epistles (Hebrews; James; 1-2 Peter; 1-3 John; Jude; *Revelation*). Acts belongs in section I.
<b>Why Acts Should Be Included with the Gospels.</b>	<p>Luke, the author of a Gospel that bears his name, wrote the Book of Acts. He designed it to be a continuation of the Gospel. We see this most clearly in the introductions to both books:</p> <p><i><sup>3</sup> With this in mind, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, I too decided to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, <sup>4</sup> so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught (Lk 1:3-4)</i></p> <p><i><sup>1</sup> In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach <sup>2</sup> until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen (Acts 1:1-2).</i></p>
<b>Why Call It Acts?</b>	The title “Acts” comes from the Greek word, <i>praxis</i> , meaning “practice.” Thus, we should view the Book of Acts as the “practice” of the Christian faith, or what our faith looks like in action.
<b>A Most Important Concept for Reading Acts</b>	Biblical writers did not write their materials with chapter and verse notations. Instead, they wrote their materials with a structure that let their readers know what the material is about. Luke/Acts is a great example of this literary structure. Luke’s Gospel begins with Jesus’ public ministry in the regions of Judea, Samaria, etc. and ends with his crucifixion in Jerusalem. On the other hand, Acts begins with Jesus’ ascension after the resurrection in Jerusalem and the moves through Judea, Samaria until it gets to the ends of the earth (i.e., Paul under house arrest in Rome). In essence, Luke leads to the cross and resurrection. Acts, on the other hand, is <u>because of</u> the cross and resurrection.
<b>What’s the Main Idea of Acts?</b>	The main idea of Acts comes to us from Jesus himself in Acts 1:8: “and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” The commission is clear: Jesus wanted his message of salvation to extend to <u>all</u> people, not just the Jews. Acts shows how the apostles went about that <i>praxis</i> .
<b>Why Is Acts So Important?</b>	Acts is the only book in your NT that chronicles the history of the church after the ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ. As a result, it’s valuable for knowing how the church was able to grow and spread outside of Jerusalem to the heart of the Roman Empire in Europe, North Africa, and Asia Minor
<b>Outline</b>	The Book of Acts is composed of two sections. The first deals <u>primarily</u> (not solely) with the ministry of Peter in Jerusalem and Samaria (Acts 1-12) and the second deals with Paul on his missionary journeys throughout the Roman Empire (Acts 13-28). Our quest tonight will be to highlight some of the most important themes in each of the two main sections.

### The Most Important Themes in the Ministry of Peter in Jerusalem and Samaria (Acts 1-12)

#### 1. Pentecost Started It All and Explains It All.

-) Jews from around the world were gathered in Jerusalem. They believed and took it back into the world. - <sup>7</sup> Utterly amazed, they asked: “Aren’t all these who are speaking Galileans?<sup>8</sup> Then how is it that each of us hears them in our native language?<sup>9</sup> Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia,<sup>10</sup> Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome <sup>11</sup> (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!” <sup>12</sup> Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, “What does this mean?” (2:7-12)

-) In the OT, 3 thousand die while Moses is on Mt. Sinai. Here 3,000 believe. The implication is the Gospel brings life, not death - <sup>41</sup> Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day. (2:41)

-) Church was simple - <sup>42</sup> They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. . . And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved. (2:42, 47)

#### 2. The Conversion of the Gentile Cornelius Was A Defining Moment for the Church

-) Until the conversion of Cornelius, all of the converts in the early church were Jewish. But God had a plan for the Gentiles. <sup>3</sup> One day at about three in the afternoon he had a vision. He distinctly saw an angel of God, who came to him and said, “Cornelius!” <sup>4</sup> Cornelius stared at him in fear. “What is it, Lord?” he asked. The angel answered, “Your prayers and gifts to the poor have come up as a memorial offering before

God. <sup>5</sup> Now send men to Joppa to bring back a man named Simon who is called Peter. <sup>6</sup> He is staying with Simon the tanner, whose house is by the sea.” (10:3-5)

-) God's Plan Made Peter Uncomfortable - About noon the following day as they were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up on the roof to pray. <sup>10</sup> He became hungry and wanted something to eat, and while the meal was being prepared, he fell into a trance. <sup>11</sup> He saw heaven opened and something like a large sheet being let down to earth by its four corners. <sup>12</sup> It contained all kinds of four-footed animals, as well as reptiles and birds. <sup>13</sup> Then a voice told him, “Get up, Peter. Kill and eat.” <sup>14</sup> “Surely not, Lord!” Peter replied. “I have never eaten anything impure or unclean.” (10:10-14)

-) Then the Same Thing That Happened at Pentecost, Happened Again With Cornelius and the Gentiles - <sup>44</sup> While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message. <sup>45</sup> The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on Gentiles. (Acts 10:44-45)

## The Most Important Themes in Missionary Journeys of Paul Throughout the Roman Empire (Acts 13-28)

### 1. The Most Important Theme in Paul's Missionary Journeys is Found in the Last Two Verses of the Book of Acts:

-) Here, Paul is under house arrest in Rome and from there the Gospel goes forth unhindered: <sup>30</sup> For two whole years Paul stayed there in his own rented house and welcomed all who came to see him. <sup>31</sup> He proclaimed the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ—with all boldness and without hindrance! (28:30-31)

### 2. The Three Missionary Journeys, Not Only Show The Gospel Going Forth, It Shows You How the Bulk of Your New Testament Came to Be

First Missionary Journey	Second Missionary Journey	Third Missionary Journey
In the First Missionary Journey, Paul goes from Antioch to Cyprus to Asia Minor and Back to Antioch.  Asia Minor included the region of Galatia as well as Colossae	In the Second Missionary Journey, Paul Starts from Jerusalem, Goes Through Asia Minor, Then into Europe.  Churches Started in Asia Minor included Ephesus  Churches Started in Europe included Thessalonica, Corinth, and Philippi	In the Third Missionary Journey, Paul starts in Antioch and travels through Asia Minor and Europe and Ends Up Back in Jerusalem.  On this trip, he revisits Ephesus, Philippi, Thessalonica, and Corinth  *He never visited Rome on his own accord.

### 3. Luke Had a Vested Interest in this Section Because He, A Gentile, Was A Part of It.

-) He joined Paul on what is known as the "Macedonian Call" (2<sup>nd</sup> Missionary Journey) - <sup>9</sup> During the night Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, “Come over to Macedonia and help us.” <sup>10</sup> After Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them. (16:9-10)

-) Now, For Luke, He Includes Himself In the Story - <sup>11</sup> From Troas we put out to sea and sailed straight for Samothrace, and the next day we went on to Neapolis. <sup>12</sup> From there we traveled to Philippi, a Roman colony and the leading city of that district<sup>[a]</sup> of Macedonia. And we stayed there several days. <sup>13</sup> On the Sabbath we went outside the city gate to the river, where we expected to find a place of prayer. We sat down and began to speak to the women who had gathered there. (16:11-13)

“The Book of Acts is the best aid in approaching our work. We do not find there anyone consecrating himself as a preacher nor anyone deciding to do the Lord's work by making himself a missionary or a preacher. What we do see is the Holy Spirit Himself appointing and sending people out to do the work.” --- Watchmen Nee