

Acts

The book of Acts is the second book in a two-part series written by a man named Luke. This second book begins in the exact place the first book ended. It starts by retelling part of the story of Jesus appearing to his disciples in Jerusalem and ascending to the Father in heaven. A large part of the Gospel of Luke focuses on Jesus' journey to Jerusalem and Jesus' teaching, death, and resurrection there. Now in his second book, Luke follows Jesus' disciples and apostles as they proclaim the good news of God's Kingdom starting in the city of Jerusalem, then to the region of Judea, in the neighboring region Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.



Writer: Luke, a medical doctor, and co-worker of the apostle Paul.

Date of writing: Between 60-69 AD

Original Audience: A man named Theophilus and all followers of Jesus.

Main Purpose of the Book: Luke's Gospel told of the acts and teachings of Jesus. Sometimes people call this second book the "Acts of the Apostles," but this book could be called the "Acts of the Holy Spirit." Jesus promises the coming of the Holy Spirit, saying, "you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" (1:8). The rest of the book tells the story of the Holy Spirit empowering ordinary everyday people to do incredible things and taking the good news of Jesus to more and more places.

Acts is a history book. Luke writes the history of the first 30 years of the church. The story moves from Jerusalem to Judea, Samaria, Syria, Cyprus, many cities in Asia Minor, Macedonia, Greece, and finally, Rome. Luke tells about everything from preaching and miracles to jailbreaks and shipwrecks. Luke focuses on two men who became leaders in the church: Peter in chapters 1–12 and Paul in chapters 13–28. After the introduction, there are six parts to the book of Acts, each divided by a statement of the church's growth:

1. Introduction: **1:1-11**
2. The beginning of the church in Jerusalem: **1:12-6:7**
And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith. (6:7)
3. Persecution of the church and transition to Samaria and surrounding countries: **6:8-9:31**
So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it multiplied. (9:31)
4. Peter takes the Gospel to the Gentiles: **9:32-12:24**
But the word of God increased and multiplied. (12:24)
5. Paul takes the Gospel to the Gentiles: **12:25-16:5**
So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and they increased in numbers daily. (16:5)
6. Paul takes the Gospel to new Gentile areas: **16:6-19:20**
So the word of the Lord continued to increase and prevail mightily. (19:20)
7. Paul's journey to Jerusalem, arrest, defense, and imprisonment **19:21-28:31**

Luke concludes the book with Paul under house arrest in Rome, but the church and the Kingdom of God are still expanding! The final verses say, “He lived there two whole years at his own expense, and welcomed all who came to him, proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance” (28:30–31).

The Work of the Holy Spirit

It is always good to study a book of the Bible from beginning to end, paying close attention to every section. It is also possible to study specific topics in a book. One topic you can study is the work of the Holy Spirit in the book of Acts. Read each of these passages two or three times and ask this question: what is the Holy Spirit doing in this story?

Acts 1:6-8	Acts 2:1-13	Acts 4:1-13	Acts 4:23-31	Acts 6:8-15
Acts 8:26-40	Acts 11:19-30	Acts 13:1-12	Acts 16:6-10	Acts 20:13-28

Prayer

Another important topic in the book of Acts is prayer. Read each of these passages two or three times and answer these two questions: What do I learn about prayer? How can I follow the example of the people in the book of Acts?

Acts 2:42-47	Acts 4:23-31
Acts 6:1-7	Acts 8:9-25
Acts 9:32-42	Acts 12:1-19
Acts 14:21-28	Acts 16:16-40
Acts 27:27-44	Acts 28:1-10

The True Temple

Many of the first stories in Acts take place in the temple courts. Luke tells how the disciples of Jesus were doing all the things that should have been happening in the temple. They were praying, worshiping, providing healing, and selling their possessions to care for the



poor. At the same time, the Jewish priests

of the temple that rejected Jesus were trying to stop the Jesus followers. The stories Luke tells in Acts chapters 3-5 point out the shift from the temple in Jerusalem to the true temple. The true temple is the community of Jesus' followers.

The New Temple

One theme early in the book of Acts is about the new temple. In the Old Testament, King David wanted to build a temple for God. God spoke through a prophet and told David that He did not need a house or a temple built for him. This is because the whole earth is the temple of God, but God did allow King David's son to build a temple in Jerusalem. When King David's son, Solomon, dedicated the temple, he prayed, “But will God really dwell on earth? The heavens, even the highest heaven, cannot contain you. How much less this temple I have built!” (1 Kings 8:27). The temple was to be a place of prayer and sacrifice and the place God's spirit dwelled. Jesus provided the ultimate sacrifice for all people for all time, and we no longer need a place for sacrifice. Then, after Jesus rose again, he sent his Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God, to live inside every follower of Jesus. We are now the temple where God dwells. Peter writes, “You also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 2:5).