

ACTS

Introduction

1. While in prison, Paul wrote to Timothy asking that he “make every effort to come to me soon” noting that all but Luke had left him (II Tim.4:9-11). Luke was Paul’s faithful companion until the end of Paul’s life about c.e. 64. Luke being the only Gentile author of the NT, was not one of the 12 disciples and did not have first hand exposure to Jesus (Lk.1:2). His connection with the faith was through Paul and this gave him great authority in the early church. Luke wrote both the Gospel of Luke and the book of Acts.
2. Luke begins the Book of Acts where he left off in his gospel. Acts records the initial fulfillment of the Great Commission of Matthew 28:19-20 as it traces the beginning and growth of the New Testament church. The text follows the ministry of Peter (ch.1-12) and Paul (ch.13-28) with lesser attention given to Philip, John, James, and Stephen.
3. The parallels between Jesus’ ministry and the ministry of the Apostles are remarkable. Both start with the coming of the Spirit, both involve miracles, and teaching, both receive opposition from religious authorities, and both experience similar fates.
4. The ministry of Peter (1-12) & Paul (13-28) is paralleled in Acts.

	PETER	PAUL
Heals a lame man	3:2-	14:8
His shadow heals	5:15	19:12
Exorcized demons	5:16	16:18
Victory over Sorcerer	8:18-	13:6-
Raise the dead	9:36-	20:9
Gentile vision	10:9	22:17-
Deliverance from prison	12:7-	16:25-

5. Christ’s last words before His ascension were so perfectly realized in the Book of Acts that they effectively and concisely outline its contents: *“You shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem (ch.1-7), and in all Judea (ch.8-12), and to the end of the earth (ch.13-28)”* - Acts 1:8. Thus, Acts traces the rapid expansion of the gospel, beginning in Jerusalem and spreading throughout the Roman Empire.

Ch 1	7 8	1 13
		28
“Jerusalem”	“Judea & Samaria”	“the uttermost part of the earth”
Peter		Paul

Ch13	14	15	16	18	19	21	22	28
Mission #1		Mission #2		Mission #3		Prison #1		Prison #2
Galatians		I & II Thessalonians Titus		I & II Corinthians Romans		Ephesians Colossians Philemon Philippians		I & II Timothy

Some literary considerations in reading Acts.

- It was customary for NT writers to paraphrase as they “quoted” from the OT. Sometimes they were reflecting the sense of the LXX (an early Greek translation of the OT) more than the original Hebrew text. This was not uncommon.
- It was customary for NT writers to insert speeches that helped explain the character and meaning of events. These speeches were again, paraphrases and greatly abbreviated versions of the original sermons.
- There are controversies surrounding the historical accuracy of the chronology of certain events in Acts. Ancient historians were more sensitive to the reporting of the character and spirit of the events than the technicalities of the events themselves. We should not expect the Biblical record to meet a modern criterion for historical recording. Nonetheless, we can assume that the material was based on actual historical events.
- Much of Acts is descriptive (recording what happened in the past), not prescriptive (exhorting us to expect certain events to happen in our present). For example, the Apostles were commanded to wait for the coming of the Spirit in the upper room. This does not suggest that we should receive the Spirit by waiting in the upper room.
- A literary pattern in Acts punctuates the various sections with summary statements.

INTRODUCTION

Section 1 Events that launch the Christian mission. 1:1-2:47

Summary statement 2:41 “So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and there were added that day about three thousand souls.”

PART I - The Mission to the Jewish world through Peter. 3:1-12:24

Section 2 The earliest days of the Church at Jerusalem. 3:1-6:7

Summary statement 6:7 “And the word of God kept on spreading; and the number of the disciples continued to increase greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were becoming obedient to the faith.”

Section 3 Critical events in the lives of three pivotal figures. 6:8-9:31

Summary statement 9:31 “So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria enjoyed peace, being built up; and, going on in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it continued to increase.”

Section 4 Advances of the Gospel in Palestine - Syria. 9:32-12:24

Summary statement 12:24 “But the word of the Lord continued to grow and to be multiplied.”

PART II - The Mission to the Gentile world through Paul. 12:25-28:31

Section 5 The first missionary journey and the Jerusalem council. 12:25-16:5

Summary statement 16:5 “So the churches were being strengthened in the faith, and were increasing in number daily.”

Section 6 Wide outreach through two missionary journeys. 16:6-19:20

Summary statement 19:20 “So the word of the Lord was growing mightily and prevailing.”

Section 7 To Jerusalem and then to Rome. 19:21-28:31

Summary statement 28:31 “And he stayed two full years in his own rented quarters, and was welcoming all who came to him, preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all openness, unhindered.”

Time line of events in Acts

NOTE: This is a **possible** chronology and date reference to the events in Acts.

Acts	Event	Date
2	Pentecost	30
		31
		32
		33
		34
9	Saul's conversion	35
		36
		37
		38
		39
		40
		41
		42
		43
12	Peter in prison – Herod dies	44
		45
		46
13	First Mission	47
	“	48
14	“	49
15	Jerusalem Council	50
16	Second Mission	51
17	“	52
	“	53
18	“	54
19	Third Mission	55
	“	56
21	“	57
22	Paul arrested in Jerusalem	58
	Paul in prison in Jerusalem and Caesarea	59
26	“	60
27	Paul's voyage to Rome and prison	61
28	Paul in prison in Rome	62
	“	63

Tradition and the missing disciples

NOTE: There is no valid historical record of what happened to the disciples not accounted for in the book of Acts but traditions developed in the early church to satisfy the curiosity about their fate.

Thomas - martyred in India

Andrew - crucified in Greece on an X shaped cross. His arm bone was taken to Scotland, where he became the patron saint and his cross the national flag.

Thaddaeus - ministered in Africa

Philip & Bartholomew - martyred in Asia

Matthew - ministered in North Africa

James the son of Alphaeus - associated with Spain

Simon the Zealot - traveled to England