

Introduction

The Bible is full of adventure, but the book of Acts is perhaps the most adventurous of all. It takes us to great cities of the ancient world: to holy Jerusalem, wealthy Antioch, scholarly Athens, cosmopolitan Corinth and powerful Rome. It introduces us to all kinds of people: apostles, prophets, martyrs, philosophers, governors, kings, merchants, jailors and sailors. It narrates a variety of events: dramatic spiritual experiences, missionary journeys, trials and imprisonments, powerful speeches that provoke dramatic responses, sea voyages and shipwrecks and the clash of ancient cultures.

This work is most thrilling because here we see Christianity in its earliest youth, being lived for the first time in history. We are not just objective historical observers. As we read that the story of Acts continues into our life and church today.

The Acts of the Apostles, also called "The Book of Acts" or simply "Acts", is a historical account of the first 30 years of the Christian church, from the final days of Jesus' ministry on the earth to about 60 AD. **Written in** either ad 63 or 70, perhaps from Antioch, Rome or Ephesus. It is the second part of a two-art work; the first being the Gospel according to Luke.

Authorship - Acts of the Apostles is a letter to a man named Theophilus written by Luke, the doctor who accompanied Apostle Paul on his missionary journeys and served as his helper and note taker.

Sources – Luke must have drawn from a variety of sources for Acts just as he did for his gospel. Oral and written accounts of individual heroes of the early church in different churches like Jerusalem, Antioch, Corinth, etc. Also travel diaries of himself and those who accompanied Paul. And also prominent people like Barnabas, Timothy, Mark, Silas, Aquila, etc.

A. The Importance of the Book of Acts

Record of the beginnings and development of the early church.

It also provides helpful information of the facts surrounding many of the letters of the apostles, which in turn helps us to better understand when they said what they said and why they said it.

B. The Purpose of Acts

Continuation of Luke

As was stated, Acts is the second part of what was originally a two-part, single volume (i.e. Luke-Acts; cf. Acts 1:1).

Account to Theophilus

"in order that he might know the certainty of the things he had been taught."

Theophilus "seems to have been a man, who though receptive to the gospel and perhaps even convinced by its claims, had many questions about Christianity as he knew it." Luke wrote to strengthen him in his belief.

Theophilus appears to have had questions about the coming and activity of the Holy Spirit, the ministry of the apostles, Paul and his dealings with the Jerusalem apostles and the advance of Christianity to the Imperial capital.

To emphasize that Christianity was a spiritual kingdom not a subversive political movement 1:6ff

Outline of Acts

1. Introduction to the Beginning of the Church (1)
2. The Church in Jerusalem (2-8:3)
3. The Church Scattered into Palestine and Syria (8:4-12:25)
4. The Church Advancing to the End of the Earth (12-28)

Special emphases of Acts

1. Birth and growth of the primeval church

The Gospel of Luke shows the life of Jesus from his birth to his glorified presence in heaven. Acts traces the life of the early church: starting from birth at Pentecost to its presence reaching our to the ends of the earth.

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Can you see the growth of your church despite tribulations that threatened to destroy it?

3. Work of the holy Spirit

Luke's unique description of God's saving plan is marked in three stages: Israel, Jesus and the Church. Both of Luke's writings begin with transition to a new stage, both of which are directed by the Holy Spirit.

Where or how do we see the workings of the Holy Spirit today?

4. **Expansion of the church from Jerusalem to Samaria to the ends of the earth – Acts 1:8**
As it is, we see that the Book of Acts is incomplete and open ended. Why?

Story – Ida Scudder's inspiration