

Acts – *Jesus is the Baptizer and Living Lord*

Title is “The Acts of the Apostles,” but would be better titled “The Acts of the Holy Spirit.”

Author is Luke. Volume 1 = Gospel of Luke
Volume 2 = The Book of Acts

To whom is it written? Theophilus (*Theo = God; Philus = Lover. So this is written to “God Lovers.”*)

Why was it written?

1. A bridge between the Gospel’s and Paul’s letters.
2. Traces the growth of the Church
 - a. numerically
 - b. geographically
 - c. socially
 - d. theologically
3. Explains and defends the Church.
4. Emphasizes the infilling of the Holy Spirit as key to witnessing.

Key text: Acts 1:

Outline of book:

Peter’s ministry (chapters 1-12)

Paul’s ministry (chapters 13-28)

Expansion of the Gospel:

Jerusalem (chapters 1-7)

Judea and Samaria (chapters 8-12)

All the world (chapters 13-28)

Just who was Paul?

Hometown: Tarsus

Employment Skills: Tentmaker / Pharisee

He could speak Aramaic, Greek and Hebrew. He studied Jewish Law.

His teacher was Gamaliel. He was from the tribe of Benjamin. He was also a citizen of Rome.

His name: Saul = Hebrew; Paul = Greek.

He worked in Antioch with Barnabas.

He was at least 40 years old when he went on his first missionary trip, and he ministered for 20 years.

He wrote many letters to churches and individuals, 13 of which are in our New Testament:

4 letters = SALVATION (soteriology) —*Romans, Galatians, Corinthians*

4 letters from PRISON (prison epistles) —*Ephesians, Philippians,
Colossians, Philemon*

2 letters = FUTURE (eschatology) —*1 & 2 Thessalonians*

3 letters to PASTORS (pastoral epistles)—*1 & 2 Timothy, Titus*

Prison Epistles: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, & Philemon

Paul writes as a prisoner.

EPHESIANS

Jesus is Head over all powers and authorities. He is our All in All!

In this epistle, we enter the Holy of Holies in Paul's writings. Paul speaks in 2 Cor. 12:2 of being "*caught up to the third heaven.*" Here, as it were, he gives his report. He seems to be carried away as he tells of it. It is the greatest revelation of truth that God has given to man. It is the mystery that has been hidden from before the foundation of the world.

This book shows us the great mystery of the Church. The real Church is the Christ, and believers are members of that sacred Body of which Christ is the head. The Father not only prepared a body for Jesus Christ to suffer in, but He prepared a Body for Him in which He should be glorified.

The Greek word for the church is *ecclesia*, which means "an assembly of called-out ones." Christ is taking out a people for His name. Acts 15:14, "*Simon has declared how God at the first visited the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name.*" The Church is an organism. It is the Body of Christ.

Come with Paul through this glorious structure as he outlines it in Ephesians:

- The believer's position (Chapters 1-3)
 - In Christ
 - In heavenly places

- The believer's walk (Chapters 4-6)
 - Spiritually (chapter 4)
 - Morally (chapter 5)
 - Socially (5:21-6:9)
 - Martially (6:10-24)

Paul seems to present a picture of Christ's temple of Ephesus" which the Christian may enter. It is a "holy temple in the Lord" (2:21). This is in contrast to the temple to Artemas (Diana)—the greatest Greek temple.

We are "IN CHRIST." Our blessings:

- 1:1 We are in Christ Jesus.
- 1:3 Blessed in Christ.
- 1:4 Chosen in Him
- 1:5 Adopted by Christ
- 1:6 Accepted in the Beloved
- 1:7 Redeemed and forgiven in Christ
- 1:9 Revealed His will in Himself
- 1:10 Everything centered in Christ
- 1:11 Inheritance in Christ
- 1:12-13 Glorified in Christ
- 1:15 Faith in Christ
- 1:17 Wisdom in Christ
- 1:18 Hope in Christ
- 1:19-20 Power in Christ
- 2:5-6 Quickened in Christ
- 2:10 Created in Christ
- 2:13 Made nigh in Christ
- 2:21 Growing in Christ
- 2:22 Built in Christ
- 3:6 Partakers of His promise in Christ
- 3:10-11 Wisdom of God manifested in Christ
- 3:12 Boldness and access through Christ
- 2:11-13 Was this always our position?

PHILIPPIANS

Jesus is our JOY; the One through Whom God supplies all our needs.

Paul had been imprisoned in the Philippian jail—beaten and in the deepest, darkest place in the jail. He praised! His strength came from the joy of the Lord. He was delivered!

It hardly seems possible that Paul is writing this letter from another prison, with chains once again holding him. His words seem to come from a light heart. It is evident that the soul of this great apostle is free! There is an atmosphere of joy, even from prison.

This letter has no definite plan, but it is the sweetest of all Paul's letters. There is no scolding. It is more of a love letter.

Paul mentions the Savior's name 40 times in this short epistle, and explains how we can have:

1. Joy over circumstances (chapter 1)
2. Joy over people (chapter 2)
3. Joy over things (chapter 3)
4. Joy over worry (chapter 4)

Important verses in Philippians for us to memorize:

Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! (4:4)

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. (4:6-7)

I have learned to be content, whatever the circumstance. (4:11-12)

And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus (4:19).

COLOSSIANS

Jesus is the image of the invisible God. He is the Creator, and Head of His body—His Church.

He is our LIFE!

Ephesians and Colossians were written about the same time, while Paul was a prisoner in Rome. They both contain great doctrines of the gospel, and were to be read aloud in the churches. They are very similar in style, yet very different in emphasis.

EPHESIANS	COLOSSIANS
Talks about believers, calling them the “body of Christ.”	Talks about the Head of the Body, Jesus Christ.
Church of Christ is important.	Christ of the Church is emphasized.

Heresy had broken out in the church at Colosse, misleading the young believers, calling for the worship of angels (2:18) and a strict observance of Jewish ceremonies (2:16, 21). This heresy was a mixture of Jewish, Greek, and Oriental religions. Paul wanted to provide a faithful portrait of Christ in all His glory and dignity.

Have you noticed that many of the epistles were used to answer the heresies that crept into the early churches everywhere?

This letter begins, like 12 others, with the name of Paul, and is addressed to Gentile believers. Philemon was a member of this church.

PHILEMON

Jesus is our Lord and Master.

Christian love and forgiveness are given prominence in this book. It shows the power of the gospel in winning a runaway thief and slave, and in changing a master’s mind. This is a book in *applied Christianity*, a textbook of social service.

Tucked away between Titus and Hebrews, we find a personal letter from Paul to Philemon. Only one chapter, 25 verses, but containing such strong and beautiful statements and so well expressed, that it stands out as a gem.

Notice the courtesy and tactfulness of Paul's letter. Our letter writing can be a ministry for God—if we make it so. He intercedes with Philemon for a runaway slave by the name of Onesimus who had stolen from his master and made his way to Rome. There he was brought face to face with Paul and had found Christ as his Savior. He wanted to assist Paul. But Paul knew he was Philemon's lawful slave and so he could not think of keeping him permanently. So, Paul sent him home, and pleaded with Philemon to take him back. He made himself personally responsible for the debts that Onesimus owed, asking that they be charged to Paul's account. He wished to save the runaway slave from the severe and cruel punishment he deserved according to Roman law. Paul felt that the slave must not encounter his outraged master alone.

Onesimus was merely one of a world of slaves belonging to a handful of masters. Roman masters owned from 10 to 200, even a thousand or more slaves, who had no rights of life or liberty.

This letter deals with the question of slavery. Paul does not demand the abolition of slavery, but he shows that slavery can never be the fruit of Christianity.