

Survey of Acts

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1. It is evident from the prologues to Luke and Acts that they were both written by the same man as a two-volume work (Lu.1:1-4; Acts 1:1-5). Luke who was Paul's companion (Phil.24; 2Tim.4:11) has been considered the most likely author of the "we" sections of the book of Acts (Acts 16:1-17; 20:5-21:18; 27:1-28:16).
2. The book of Acts begins precisely where the gospel of Luke leaves off (Luke 24:49-51; Acts 1:8-10). The gospel of Luke told us about the time in the history of the church beginning with the preparation of the birth of Christ until the ascension of Christ into heaven. The book of Acts begins with the ascension of Christ into heaven continuing on by revealing the work of Christ in his church.
3. The book of Acts is a demonstration of Jesus' last spoken words. In Matthew 28:18-20, Jesus gives what is known as the Great Commission. He tells his disciples that he has power and authority to send them out to go and make disciples of every ethnic group. The book of Acts demonstrates the disbursement of Christ's disciples to every ethnic group to proclaim the gospel, beginning where they were in Jerusalem to the remotest parts of the earth (Acts 1:8). This work which Christ performs in us, his church, is performed through the power and person of the Holy Spirit.
4. An early date seems to be most appropriate for the writing of Acts, somewhere around 62 A.D. The book of Acts ends with Paul awaiting trial which most likely occurred around 62 A.D. Furthermore, the book of Acts says nothing about the Jewish persecution under Nero in 64 A.D. or the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. Consequently, it was most likely written before that time to trace the development of the church during its transitional generation from a primarily Jewish body to a predominately Gentile church.

OUTLINE (See ACTS 1:8)

Christ's witness in **Jerusalem**, Chps.1-7

Christ's witness in **Judea** and **Samaria** (Palestine), Chps.8-12

Christ's witness in the **remotest part of the earth**, Chps.13-28

MAIN POINTS AND APPLICATION

1. Let us imagine the thoughts going through the minds of the first century disciples as the events of the book of Acts unfold. What were they looking for from Jesus? (See Acts 1:6). How did Jesus respond? (Acts 1:7-8).
2. The book of Acts describes first century church growth (1:15; 2:41, 47; 4:4; 5:14; 6:7; 9:31; 12:24; 13:49; 16:5; 19:20). What does this description indicate about our God? Is it God's will for local churches to grow? How do we personally show our support of God's church growth plan?
3. What does Acts 1:11 teach us about Christ's future return to earth? (c.f. 1Thess.4:16; Lu.24:50-53).
4. One controversy which often divides Christians is "tongue speaking." This can be settled with a proper interpretation of how tongues speaking is described in Acts 2:1-13? (See especially v. 6,8,11). Why did God grant this experience of tongues speaking?
5. Let us remember in Acts 1:8 Jesus said the Holy Spirit would come upon them with power so that they would be "witnesses." Immediately after the disciples received the Holy Spirit, Peter stood up and preached a powerful sermon witnessing to the glory of Christ (Acts 2:14 ff). Here we have a clear distinction between those who are

filled with God's Spirit and those who are not, those who are truly recipients of the Spirit of God evidence the Spirit's work through their witness of Christ. In other words, the evidence of having the Spirit of God within us is not our ability to speak in another tongue but rather our ability to proclaim Christ as our Lord and Savior with authority on high.

6. The early church had not only a witness of the gospel but they had a very clear witness of devotion (Acts 2:42). What four things were the church devoted to? What does it mean to be devoted to something and how do we express it?

7. The witness of the disciples was a very recognizable witness (Acts 4:13). When Peter and John were arrested for preaching, the educated politicians of the day marveled at Peter and John's confidence and boldness to stand before them being uneducated and untrained. What is the key to having people marveling over our witness for Christ?

8. Speaking of bold and authoritative witnessing, consider the testimony of Peter and the apostles in Acts 5:29-32. According to this passage what makes our Christian witness different from the rest of the world?

9. Two things are emphasized in the book of Acts by way of repetition. One is the conversion of Saul, repeated three times (Acts 9, 22, and 26); and the other is the story of Cornelius, repeated three times (Acts 10 and 11). We get the Cornelius story one time when Peter has his vision, again when Cornelius tells about his vision, and then again when Peter goes in Acts 11 to report to Jerusalem about what happened and how God gave faith to the Gentiles. Why do we have these two emphases?

10. A good method for verbal witnessing is found in the example of Paul before King Agrippa (Acts 26):
 - v. 2-3 Introductory point of contact.
 - v. 4-8 Tell about the good part of your life before Christ.
 - v. 9-11 Tell about the bad part of your life before Christ.
 - v. 12-18 Explain your conversion circumstances.
 - v. 19-22 Reveal the results of your conversion to Christ — something only the Holy Spirit could do.
 - v. 23 Articulate the good news of Christ.
 - v. 26-27 Provide a personal appeal to your audience to trust Christ.