



A “bridge” book. The Book of Acts is the story of how the good news of the Living Water of Jesus Christ is moved from its historical and cultural source (Jerusalem and Judaism) to the rest of the Roman world. Acts tells us how the early Church under the empowerment of the Holy Spirit overcame social, religious and linguistic chasms and other obstacles to deliver its precious consignment, in much the same way a Roman aqueduct overcame geographical and engineering constraints to bring water to Roman towns and villas. Found between the four Gospels and the rest of the NT, the narrative of Acts bridges the gospel accounts of Jesus’ earthly ministry to that of his heavenly ministry and the apostolic records found in the NT epistles. But Acts is not just history; it delivers a direct and profound message to the Church, as we know it in the 21st Century.

The spiritual lessons of this book are essential for the well-being of contemporary communities of faith. The application of four main themes will help us keep the focus of the book in mind: worship, community, mission, and history. Acts reminds us that all of these are needed for the Church to function as the body of Christ in this world.

What comes to mind when you think of the Book of Acts?

Major Questions that the Book of Acts seeks to answer

- How should Christians fill their days? (Mission)
- How are we supposed to be the “salt of the earth” and the Body of Christ? (The Work of the Holy Spirit)
- Is the Gospel just for the people we think it should be for? (Inclusive Gospel)
- What reasons do we have to be confident and hopeful in our lives and faithful in service to God? (God’s sovereignty and omnipotence)
- How will God’s purposes be realized on earth? (Community)

Who was “Luke” and what is he doing writing two books (27%!) of my New Testament?

Luke’s style tells us he was educated, other references tell us he was a doctor (an elevated position in that society). Given his Greek style, he was likely a Gentile.

What Luke says about his “accounts” (Luke 1: 1-4)

In the ancient world, prologues/prefaces to multiple volumes were placed at the beginning of the entire work. Luke’s prologue in Acts is the only one of its kind in the NT; he may have been trying to match literary styles of his day (Polhill)

Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eye-witnesses and servants of the word. Therefore, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, it seemed good also to me to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught. (Luke 1:1-4)

What is Luke trying to communicate about his account for us in this passage?

In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach until the day he was taken up to heaven... (Acts 1:1-2a)

Luke’s introduction to Acts tells us that he sees the Gospel of Luke and the book of Acts as two _____ of Christ’s ministry (Acts 1:1)

Date: close to (but prior to) 70 A.D. The title, “The Acts of the Apostles” appears in the 180-190s.

Historical context and Luke's purpose in Acts

"There was widespread suspicion that [Christianity] was a subversive movement, a menace to imperial law and order... "Luke is in fact, the pioneer among Christian apologists, especially in that form of apologetic which is addressed to the civil authorities to establish the law-abiding character of Christianity. But other forms of apologetic are represented in the course of his work..." (Bruce 8, 13)

"Luke wishes to make it clear that the progress of this faith was no mere product of human planning; it was directed by divine agency." (Bruce 13)

Luke's purpose was not to write a chronicle of events, but to communicate the significance of the story. (Marshall 47)

Acts 1: 1-5: Luke gets us up to speed...

1. What did Jesus do on behalf of his followers?

2. Based on this passage, what can we know that Jesus will do for us?

Acts 1: 6-7: an on-going conversation about the immediate realization of the Kingdom of Heaven

3. Find three things wrong about the apostles' question.

4. How does Jesus' reply address these errors?

Acts 1:8 : a kind of index for the book of Acts: "In Jerusalem" (ch. 1-7), "in all Judea and Samaria" (Acts 8-11), "to the ends of the earth" (Acts 12-28)

Acts 1:9 : The Ascension of Christ. The account of the ascension is only written by Luke (Luke 24:50, Acts 1:9). Some of the disciples had seen Jesus enveloped in a cloud before (Mount of Transfiguration). The nature of Jesus' ascension would bring to mind numerous theophanies from the OT.

Acts 1:10-11 : The Grounding of the Apostles.

Principles for Believers

- The Christian faith brings together objective facts and subjective experience (Fernando 52)

- The Holy Spirit is essential to Christian ministry

Application

- Which of the things that Jesus does for his followers (Acts 1:1-5) do you need to ask for this week?

- We see the apostles in these verses hoping that there might still be a material, imminent realization of the Kingdom of God (in which they might benefit?), and then, in v. 10, gazing intently into the sky. What are the things in your life that keep your focus off of your mission?

- What in today's lesson might help you keep your focus on Christ and the work of expanding his kingdom?

- Reflection: Where do you need to ask for more power—giving greater authority to the Holy Spirit—in your life, in order to be a greater witness in your “end of the earth”? How do we do that?

- This week, how can you provide testimony to the objective and subjective truth of Jesus Christ in your life?

Reading & Study Schedule

Date	Topic
Sept. 7	Preview Sunday
Sept 14	Introduction Acts 1:1-11
Sept 21	Acts 1:12-2
Sept 28	Acts 3- 4:31
Oct. 5	Acts 4:32 – 6:7
Oct. 12	Acts 6:8 – 8:4
Oct. 19	Acts 8:5 - 9:1-30
Oct. 26	Acts 9:31—11:18
Nov. 2	Acts 11:9 – 13:4
Nov. 9	Acts 13-15:35
Nov. 16	Acts 15:36-18:22
Nov. 23	Acts 18:23-21:16
Nov. 30	Acts 21:17-23
Dec. 7	Acts 24-26
Dec. 14	Acts 27-28

References

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- Fernando, Ajith. *The NIV Application Commentary: Acts*. Grand Rapids (MI): Zondervan, 1998.
- Marshall, I. Howard. *Acts*. The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries. Downers Grove (IL): Intervarsity Press, 1980.
- Polhill, John B. *Acts*. The New American Commentary. Nashville: Broadman Press, 1992.
- Stott, John R. *The Message of Acts*. The Bible Speaks Today. Downers Grove (IL): Intervarsity Press, 1994.
- Veerman, Dave et al. *Life Application Bible Study: Acts*. Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, 1999.
- Wiersbe, Warren. *Be Dynamic* (Acts 1-12). Victor, 1987.
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Disciples' Aptitude Evaluation Report

Jesus, Son of Joseph,
Woodcrafters Carpenter Shop
Nazareth 91365

Dear Sir,

Thank you for submitting the names of the twelve men you have chosen for management positions in your new organization. All of them have now taken our series of tests; and we have not only run the results through our computer, but also arranged personal interviews for each of them with our psychologist and vocational aptitude consultant.

The profiles of all tests are included and you will want to study each of them carefully.

As part of our service, and for your guidance, we make some general comments, much as an auditor will include general statements. This is given as a result of staff consultation and comes without any additional fee.

It is the staff opinion that most of your nominees are lacking in the background, education, and vocational aptitude for the type of enterprise you are undertaking. They do not have the team concept. We would recommend that you continue your search for persons of experience in managerial ability and proven capability.

Simon Peter is emotionally unstable and given to fits of temper. Andrew has absolutely no qualities of leadership and would surely stay in the background. The two brothers, James and John, Sons of Zebedee, place personal interests above company loyalty. Thomas demonstrates a questioning attitude that would tend to undermine morale. We feel that it is our duty to tell you that Matthew has been blacklisted by the Greater Jerusalem Better Business Bureau. James the Son of Alphaeus, and Thaddeus definitely have radical leanings, and they both registered high on the manic-depressive scale.

One of the candidates, however, shows great potential. He is a man of ability and resourcefulness, meets people well, has a keen business mind, and has contact in high places. He is highly motivated, ambitious, and responsible. We recommend Judas Iscariot as your accountant and right hand man. All of the other profiles are self-explanatory and will follow.

We wish you every success in your new venture.

Sincerely yours,
Jordan Management
Consulting Company
123 Money Changer's Court
Nazareth 91365

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