

Bible Snapshots



Acts – Book of Christian Actions

Author – Luke, ca. 65 A.D., to Theophilus (1:1; ca. Lk 1:1)

Facts

- While the title “Acts of the Apostles” was used even in some of the earliest manuscripts, the book is actually a fairly detailed account of only two of the apostles – Peter (1-12) and Paul (13-26) – with but a few mentions of any of the other apostles. John is mentioned only about three times and then only as the traveling companion of Peter. James is mentioned only because he is martyred. Other than that, none of the other 8 apostles is mentioned outside of chapter one, where they are simply listed.
- Nature of the book is historical
- Technically the book is a continuation of Acts of Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit through humans
- Often the book is referred to as the “fifth” gospel. As Matthew closes we are given the great commission and Acts is the beginning of its fulfillment.
- Four words describe the book – Power, preaching, persecution and progress
- The book has 28 chapters and 1,007 verses

Key chapter/verse

- Chapter 2 – The outpouring of the Holy Spirit / 1:8

Key phrase / word / thought

The promise of the Father (1:4 with Luke 24:49) / witness / we ought to obey God rather than men

Names for Christ in Acts

Jesus (1:11; 9:5); Jesus of Nazareth (2:22); A man approved of God (2:22); Holy one (2:27; 13:35); Christ (2:30); Jesus Christ (2:38); His Son (3:13); the Just One (3:14); the Prince of Life (3:15); Prophet (3:22); Stone (4:11); Holy Child Jesus (4:27); the Healer (4:29); Lord Jesus (4:33); Savior (5:31); Forgiver of sins (5:31); Son of Man (7:56); Son of God (8:37); Lord (9:5, 6); Lord of All (10:36); God’s Anointed (10:38); Judge of the quick and the dead (10:42); God’s ordained man (17:31); Purchaser of the church (20:28).

Miracles – Outpouring of the Holy Spirit (2); the gift of tongues (2); death of Ananias and Sapphira (5:1-11); prison opened for apostles (5:19, 20; 12:1-11); Stephens’ dying vision (7:55, 56); Christ appearance to Saul (9:1-6); Saul’s sight restored (9:15-22); vision of Cornelius (10:1-8); the vision of Peter (10:9-48); prophecy of Agabus concerning famine (11:28); the Macedonian vision (16:9); earthquake at Philippi (16:25-31); Sceva’s sons put to flight (19:13-16); prophecy of Agabus concerning Paul (21:10, 11); Paul unharmed by viper’s bite (28:3-5); Peter cured the lame man (3:7), healed sick (5:15), cured Aeneas of palsy (9:33), and restored Dorcas to life (9:36-40); Stephen did “great miracles” (6:8); Phillip performed various signs and wonders (8:6, 7, 13); Paul and Barnabas (14:3); Paul struck Elymas with blindness (13:11), cured lame man (14:10), cast out unclean spirits (16:18); special miracle at Ephesus (19:11, 12), restored Eutychus to life (20:10-12) and performed miracles at Melita (28:8, 9)

Key characters – Peter and Paul

Outline

- I. The church at Jerusalem (1:1-8:4)
 - a. Five years – Peter is prominent
- II. The church of Palestine and Syria (8:5-12:25)
 - a. Fifteen years – Peter is prominent with Antioch as the center
- III. The church of the Gentiles (13:1-28:31)
 - a. Eighteen years – Paul prominent with Rome the center
 - i. Paul’s three missionary journeys

1. First (13:1-15:35) 1,400 miles
 2. Second (15:36-18:22) 2,800 miles
 3. Third (18:33-21:16) 2,800 miles
- ii. Paul's three captivities
1. Jerusalem (21:17-23:35)
 2. Caesarea (24:1-26:32)
 3. Rome (27:1-28:31)

Key events

The Ascension of Christ – Chapter 1

- The pouring out of the Holy Spirit and indwelling of the Spirit – Chapter 2
- Foundation of the church – Chapter 2
- The church persecuted – Chapter 8-9
- The conversion of Saul – Chapter 9
- The case of Cornelius – Chapter 10
- Paul's Missionary trips – Chapters 13-21
- Jerusalem council – Chapter 15
- Paul's captivity – 21-28

Archeological considerations

Luke's accuracy of Greek words and expression, as well as place names and history. Archeology has confirmed over and over the accuracy of Luke's account in the book of Acts. Very telling is the fact that he uses the correct titles for the local officers – officers, Sejeants (lictors), etc. He also accurately talked about certain deities and relates them to carious areas (14:11, 12; 19:28).

The great famine predicted by Agabus is spoken of by two Roman writers of this period. Both Cassius and Tacitus recorded that the harvests were bad and prices for food were high during these years.

Magical books (19:19) – Many of these books have been found by archeological digs. One such book, which most scholars believe corresponds to those mentioned by Paul, can be seen in the British Museum in London.

Diana of Ephesus (18:27, 28) – Paul's preaching in Ephesus turned many away from the worship of Diana and there was a great loss of revenue by idol makers, who lead an uproar in the city over the matter (19:23-41). Evidence from Ephesus has given us much about this religion. Many statues of Diana have been found. Many coins with similar images have also been found. Diana's temple has been unearthed, along with several brothels and the amphitheater where there was a great uproar.

The importance of Acts

The book of Acts details not just the acts of a few of the apostles, but is really a treatise the show the truth of the teachings of Christ. It is not simply a history book, but proof as to the validity of the gospel itself. Several key ideas are relevant to this point.

- I. The changed lives of the disciples – Prior to Pentecost the disciples look a lot different. They are depicted as unbelieving, discouraged, disheartened and weak in their faith. After the day of Pentecost we see men that are vastly different. After they receive the Spirit they are bold, strong in faith, committed and ready to face even death for the truth. Why? They received that Spirit and he caused them, as promised, to remember all things that Christ had said, taught them all things they needed to know and then showed them some things that were to come (John 14-16).
- II. The spread of the church – As predicted the church rose up as a kingdom that would outlast every kingdom of the world. Men and women since Pentecost have been added to it and it has thrived. If it were all simply a fabrication then perhaps it would not have had the same early success. Compare it to, for instance, Islam, which only gained prominence after people were forced by threat of death into it.

The Old Testament in Acts – Judas betrayal (1:16-19 and Psalm 41:9); replacing Judas (1:20 and Ps. 109:8); promise of the Spirit (2:17 and Joel 2:28); Christ like Moses (3:22 with Dt. 18:15, 18, 19); the rejected stone (4:11 with Ps. 118:22); persecution of early saints (4:25, 26 with Ps. 2:1, 2).