



Book Of Acts

Lecture 1 – Background and Culture

Author - Luke

- ▶ The author is Luke the Physician, a companion of Paul and probably a Gentile
- ▶ Well educated, familiar with formal titles, courts and procedures.
- ▶ Luke first writes the gospel of Luke, then Acts
- ▶ Luke-Acts were possibly part of Paul's legal defense in Rome, have very polished Greek, are Pro-Roman (centurions, governors always portrayed in a good light)
- ▶ Theophilus means "Lover of Theos (God)" possibly a real person or a general term of respectful address.
- ▶ Luke seems to be the instructor of Theophilus.

Date of Writing

- ▶ Before Paul's execution in A.D. 65
- ▶ After Paul's first visit to Rome so between A.D 60-62
- ▶ Definitely before the destruction of the Temple in 70 A.D.
- ▶ Both Jewish and Gentile Christians are very much part of the scene in Acts
- ▶ Acts has always been accepted as part of the New Testament canon (list of books) and is in the earliest lists such as the Muratorian Canon (170 A.D.) and fragments of Acts from as early as 110 A.D have been found.

Acts Timeline 1

- ▶ **A.D. 30** —Jesus is crucified under Pontius Pilate. Resurrection appearances, Pentecost, initial growth of the church in and around Jerusalem.
- ▶ **A.D. 31-33** —The events of Acts 3-7 transpire with mounting concern on the part of Jews and especially the Jewish authorities in Jerusalem. The rising tension results in vigilante action taken against Stephen, and then an authorized effort under Saul to disrupt and even destroy this new messianic sect, involving persecution and even the death of some Christians (cf. [Acts 8:1-3](#) to [Gal. 1:13](#)). The persecution led various Christians such as Philip to go elsewhere, such as Samaria, and bear witness ([Acts 8:4-40](#)). THE FIRST EIGHT CHAPTERS OF ACTS COVER ONLY THE PERIOD FROM ABOUT 30 TO 33.
- ▶ **A.D. 33 or 34** —Saul is converted on the road to Damascus during his period of persecuting the church (Acts 9; Galatians 1).
- ▶ **A.D. 34-37 or 38** —Saul is in Damascus and Arabia; he returns to Jerusalem for the first time as a Christian in 37.

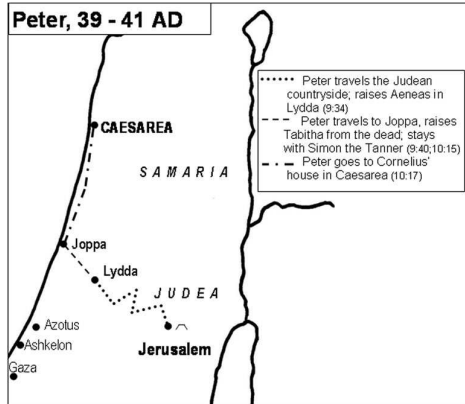
Acts Timeline 2

- ▶ **A.D. 37–46** —Saul sent off to Tarsus and home region. In the meantime, Peter has a notable ministry up and down the Mediterranean coast between Lydda, Joppa, and Caesarea, involving at least one notable Gentile and his family. This, in turn, leads to a report to the Jerusalem church (Acts 11). The precise timing is unknown.
- ▶ **A.D. 43** —James (brother of John) is killed, and Peter is imprisoned.
- ▶ **A.D. 44** —Agabus’s prophecy in Antioch; Herod Agrippa dies.
- ▶ **A.D. 46–48** —famine in Judea.
- ▶ **A.D. 48** —Second visit by Paul to Jerusalem (with Barnabas, cf. Galatians 2) for famine relief to Jerusalem (Acts 11:29–30).
- ▶ **A.D. 49** —Claudius expels Jews from Rome; Priscilla and Aquila go to Corinth; Jerusalem council (Acts 15).

Acts Timeline 3

- ▶ **A.D. 50–52** —Paul’s second missionary journey (Acts 15:36–18:23).
- ▶ **A.D. 51 or 52** —The Gallio incident in Corinth (Acts 18).
- ▶ **A.D. 53–57** —Paul’s third missionary journey (Acts 18:23–21:26).
- ▶ **A.D. 57–59** —Paul in custody under Felix, and then briefly under Festus.
- ▶ **A.D. 59–60** —Paul goes to Rome (for a fuller discussion of the Pauline material for the period from 48 to 50, see below).
- ▶ **A.D. 60–62** —Paul under house arrest in Rome.

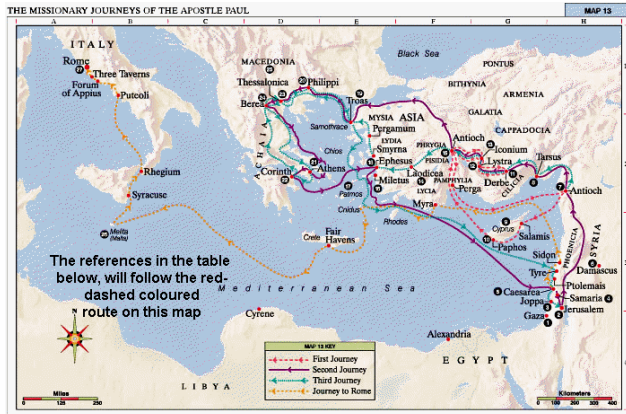
Peter’s Early Ministry



Ministry of Phillip



Ministry of Paul



Theological + Historical + Legal

- ▶ Paul wrote Luke-Acts to:
 1. Accurately put things in order (historical)
 2. To instruct and disciple Theophilus (theological)
 3. To defend the faith to the Roman world (legal)

Acts is also written by the Holy Spirit for the instruction of all believers at all times in how God works

- a) in His Church and
- b) through anointed leaders (apostles)

Apostles

- ▶ From Greek “apostelo” – ones sent out on a mission, a messenger from a high authority, an ambassador, in Latin became “missio” as in *emissary*, *missionary* and diplomatic “*mission*”
- ▶ Paul calls himself an ambassador for Christ
- ▶ An apostle is someone sent out by Christ, to represent Christ and His Kingdom.
- ▶ It is the highest of the five church offices: Apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor, and teacher (Ephesians 4:11)

6 Kinds of Apostles

- ▶ **Jesus** – The Apostle and High Priest of Our Confession (Hebrews 3:1) sent directly from God as His ambassador to the whole world.
- ▶ **The Twelve Apostles** – founders of the Faith, need to have been with Jesus from His baptism to His resurrection and ascension (no more of these today)
- ▶ **The Thirty Mighty Men** – founders of the early Church in various areas, some wrote the Bible Paul, Silas, Barnabas, John-Mark. No one alive today can add to the Scriptures.
- ▶ **God's Generals** – follow the founders of the Church and found the Kingdom in new areas and new eras: Timothy, Priscilla and Aquila, Apollos or Hudson Taylor or William Carey, perhaps only a couple of dozen alive at any one time.
- ▶ **Apostolic Visionaries** – have authority and vision over a city or a sector e.g. the minor apostles mentioned in Romans 16, perhaps a few thousand of these today.
- ▶ **False Apostles** – 2 Corinthians 11, false teachers, e.g. Joseph Smith of the Mormons.

Holding the Center – The Pillars

- ▶ James the Brother of Jesus – strict Jew, never leaves Jerusalem, Hebraic
- ▶ Peter: originally a strict kosher Jew, but eventually eats with Gentiles, travels extensively ministers only to Jews in Israel and abroad (Diaspora) including Babylonian Jews.
- ▶ James, son of Zebedee, executed early on, unknown
- ▶ John, son of Zebedee, Galilean, seems multi-cultural from the start, goes into hiding after his brother is killed, lives in Ephesus, very skilled in Greek thought and language.



Growing The Edges – Bilcultural Jews

- ▶ Paul: Jewish, Greek (tarsus) and Roman
- ▶ Barnabas: Jewish from Cyprus
- ▶ John-Mark: Jewish from Cyprus
- ▶ Timothy: Jewish mother, Greek father
- ▶ Silas: Jewish-Dalmatian
- ▶ Priscilla and Aquila: Jewish-Roman
- ▶ Apollos: Jewish-Greek
- ▶ The early missionaries were bicultural people fluent in a number of languages and home cultures from birth. No language learning required!



Way Out There: The First Gentile Leaders

- ▶ Luke
- ▶ Demas
- ▶ Titus
- ▶ Cornelius
- ▶ possibly Philemon, Erastus etc.



Tensions To Keep In Mind

- ▶ Traditional Jews (Pharisees) vs. First Christians
- ▶ Hebraic Jews vs. Diaspora Jews
- ▶ Jewish Christians vs. Gentile Christians
- ▶ Kosher Christians vs. non-Kosher Christians
- ▶ Circumcision for salvation
- ▶ Law-keeping for salvation
- ▶ Being Jewish culturally for salvation
- ▶ Food offered to idols
- ▶ Idol-makers vs Evangelists
- ▶ The Roman government and taxation



Major Turning Points

- ▶ Acts 1 - Ascension
- ▶ Acts 2 - Pentecost
- ▶ Acts 3&4 - Healing of The Lame Man (Name of Jesus)
- ▶ Acts 7 - Stoning of Stephen (Persecution)
- ▶ Acts 8 - Samaritan Revival (Samaritans)
- ▶ Acts 9 - Saul's Conversion
- ▶ Acts 10 - Cornelius' Conversion (Gentiles)
- ▶ Acts 15 – Council of Jerusalem
- ▶ Acts 19 – Ephesian Revival
- ▶ Acts 22 – Jews Reject Paul's Gospel
- ▶ Acts 28 – Paul arrives in Rome

Acts 1:8 And you shall be my witnesses

- ▶ Jerusalem
- ▶ Judea
- ▶ Samaria
- ▶ The uttermost parts of the world
- ▶ This forms the outline of the book of Acts:
Jerusalem (Acts 1-4) ,
Judea (Acts 5-7),
Samaria (Acts 8),
the entire world (Acts 9-28)

The Promised Holy Spirit

- ▶ The Holy Spirit is the “promise” of the Abrahamic Covenant
- ▶ Acts 1:4 *and, being assembled together with them, he charged them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, said he, ye heard from me:*
- ▶ Acts 2:33 *Therefore being exalted to the right of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured out this which you now see and hear.*
- ▶ Galatians 3:14 *so that the blessing of Abraham might be to the nations in Jesus Christ, and that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.*
- ▶ Ephesians 1:13 *in whom also you, hearing the Word of Truth, the gospel of our salvation, in whom also believing, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise,*

The Holy Spirit – “Upon You”

- ▶ Acts focuses on the Holy Spirit coming “upon” people in power. Focus on Holy Spirit baptism, being filled with the Spirit, tongues, prophecy, gifts, anointing and ministry. This is necessary for EFFECTIVE MINISTRY.
- ▶ The epistles focus mainly on the Holy Spirit “in” people for Christ-like transformation, teaching, spiritual fruit and wisdom. This is necessary for SALVATION
- ▶ Acts 1:8; 2:18, 2:39; 8:17-19,39; 9:17; 10:19,44-45; 11:15; 13:9; 15:28; 19:6

Who Is The Holy Spirit?

▶ A divine Person, the Third Person of the Trinity.

▶ Holy Spirit is a distinct person "He" :
John 14:26, 15:26, 16:13-14

who is counselor and teacher (personal activities)
Jn 14:26, 15:26, 16:7; Rom. 8:16, 26,27;

One who knows (1 Corinthians 2:10,11)
and who forbids (Acts 16:6,7)
speaks (Acts 8:29, 13:2)
and is grieved (Eph 4:30)



Each "Person" of The Trinity Is Fully God

▶ The Father is clearly God

▶ The Son is fully God: Jn 1:1-4, Jn 20:28,29, Hebrews 1 & 2

▶ Col 1:15-20, 2:9, Titus 2:13, 2 Peter 1:1, Romans 9:5, Is. 9:6

▶ The Holy Spirit is also fully God: Acts 5:3,4 1 Cor. 3:16;

▶ Ps. 139:7-8, 1 Cor 2:10,11; Jn 3:5-7 cf. 1 Jn 3:9

▶ God is three persons

▶ Each person is fully God

▶ But we do not teach tri-theism (three gods) but one God
in three persons.



There Is One God

▶ Deut. 6:4-5; Ex. 15:11; 1 Kings 8:60; Is. 45:5-6, 21-22

▶ 1 Tim 2:5, Rom. 3:30, 1 Cor. 8:6; James 2:19;

▶ Thus the Scriptures teach that:

▶ 1. God is three persons

▶ 2. Each person is fully God

▶ 3. There is one God

▶ Simplistic solutions e.g. JW's must all deny at least one of
the above



Jesus Pours Out The Spirit

▶ Eph 4:10; Acts 2:33

▶ Matthew 3:11; Mk 1:8; Lk 3:16; Jn 1:33; Acts 1:5; 11:16;

▶ Luke 11:13, John 3:34

▶ The Holy Spirit is given to three groups of people (which are one)

▶ **Those that thirst for the waters of life** - (Revelation 21:6 NASB) And He said to me, "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost.

Those that believe - (John 7:39 NASB) But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

Those who obey - (Acts 5:32 NASB) "And we are witnesses of these things; and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey Him."



The Baptism In The Holy Spirit

- ▶ Is when the Holy Spirit comes upon you to make you a powerful witness for Christ (Acts 1:5,8)
- ▶ Baptizo – to immerse, immersed in God
- ▶ Separate and different from water baptism, water baptism – John, Spirit baptism - Christ
- ▶ A normal part of the Christian life: conversion, water baptism, Spirit baptism. (Analogy: falling in love, marriage, consummation)
- ▶ Part of the reason for Jesus' ascension into Heaven (Eph 4:10)
- ▶ Accompanied by spiritual gifts (Ephesians 4:7-16)
- ▶ Tongues a minor but still important gift (1 Cor. Chapter 14)
- ▶ Gifts are for the edification of the Church (1 Cor. 12:1-11)



All Is In Christ

- ▶ All the blessings in the heavenly realms are in Christ (Eph 1:3)
- ▶ But that does not mean that we unfold them all at conversion (for instance we don't get our resurrection body then)
- ▶ There is an unfolding of redemption, sanctification and glorification.
- ▶ Everything is in Christ but it is released by faith "according to your faith be it unto you" (Matt. 9:29) and our Christian life is "from faith to faith" (Rom 1:17, Gal 3:2; Matt 17:20)
- ▶ We receive the Spirit in us (an inward work of wisdom and character) at conversion (Jn 20:22) producing fruit (Gal 5:22,23, Rom 8:9) and imparting wisdom (1 Cor 2:9-16, 1 Jn 2:20,27)
- ▶ We receive the Holy Spirit "upon" us at our Pentecost experience (Acts 1:8, 2:17-18; Numbers 11:25-29) – power for ministry / witness / gifts
- ▶ Jesus had the Spirit "in" Him from conception giving Jesus wisdom but the Spirit came "upon" Him at His baptism (Matthew 3:16) giving Jesus power to do miracles. Disciples to wait until the Spirit came "upon" them (Acts 1)



The Work Of The Holy Spirit

- ▶ Creation / Life: Gen 1:2; Ps. 104:30; Job 34:14-15; Rom 8:11
- ▶ Spiritual Life: Jn 6:83; 2 Cor. 3:6; Acts 10:44-47; Titus 3:5
- ▶ Born-Again: Jn 3:1-8; Gal 4:29; 1 Jn. 3:9; 4:7; 5:1,4,18
- ▶ Blessing: Isa. 32:14-18 and Spiritual Fruit: Gal 5:22,23
- ▶ Love: Romans 5:1-5, Eph 3:14-21
- ▶ Wisdom: 1 Cor 2:9-16, Jn 14:26, Eph 1:17, Col 1:9, 1 Jn. 2:20,27,
- ▶ Holiness / Sanctification: Jn 16:8-11; Acts 7:51; 1 Cor. 6:11; Titus 3:5; Matt 3:11, Lk 3:16; 2 Cor. 3:16-18, 1 Peter 1:2;
- ▶ Empowerment for Ministry: Acts 1:8, Eph 4:7-16, 1 Cor. 12, Matt 12:28
- ▶ Assurance of Salvation: Rom. 8:16; 1 Jn 3:14; 4:13
- ▶ Unity & Community: Acts 2:16-18, 44-47; 2 Cor. 13:14; Phil 2:1-2; Eph 2:18,22; 4:3;



Prayer For Baptism In The Holy Spirit

- ▶ *Lord Jesus Christ, You ascended into Heaven so that You might fill all things in Heaven and on earth with yourself, Lord Jesus, You are the One who baptizes with the Holy Spirit and so I ask You to be my Baptizer and to baptize me with the Holy Spirit in power.
Please fill me with the Holy Spirit now so that I might be Your witness and glorify Your Name and also grant me gifts of the Spirit according to Your will for the building up of the saints.
I now receive the promise of the Holy Spirit by faith believing that You will do as You have said in Your Holy Word.
In Jesus' Name. Amen.*

