

Acts

Purpose: “To show how the church penetrated the world of his day in ever-widening circles” (NIV Study Bible).

Outline: 1:1-12:25 – Peter and the Beginnings of the Church in Palestine

13:1-15:35 – Paul’s First Missionary Journey

15:36-18:22 – Paul’s Second Missionary Journey

18:23-21:16 – Paul’s Third Missionary Journey

21:17-28:31 – Paul’s Fourth Missionary Journey (via his arrest, trial, and imprisonment)

Author: Luke, the writer of the third Gospel, companion of Paul

Date: 60ish

Highlights:

Compare Acts 1:1 with Luke 1:1-4 to see that Luke-Acts is a two volume work by the same author.

The disciples are waiting in Jerusalem, because Jesus said they should wait until the Holy Spirit comes (1:4-5).

The purpose statement for the book, and a virtual outline of Acts is given in verse 8. The apostles were to be witnesses in Jerusalem (chapters 1-7); Judea and Samaria (chapters 8-9); and the ends of the earth – including Caesarea, Antioch, Asia Minor, Greece and Rome (chapters 10-28).

Compare Acts 1:9-11 with Luke 24:50-53 for the account of the ascension of Jesus.

Matthias is chosen to replace Judas as one of the Apostles. He was chosen through prayer and the casting of lots (Proverbs 16:33). This is the Bible’s last mention of casting lots.

Pentecost is described in chapter 2. (NOTE: The apostles were reported to have spoken in tongues. They spoke in languages understood by others, there is NO INDICATION that they spoke in indiscernible language).

Peter’s Sermon Outline – 1) an explanation of events [2:14-21], 2) the Gospel of Jesus Christ [2:22-36], 3) an exhortation (application) to repentance and baptism [2:37-40]. About 3,000 became believers that day.

2:42-6:7 is about the establishment of the Church in Jerusalem. There is a description of the church and the ministry, led by Peter. Acts 5:11 is the first use of the term “church” in Acts. We see incredible wisdom as an act of God’s sovereignty in Acts 5:38-39. The first deacons were chosen in Acts 6:1-7

6:8-9:31 begins looking at the wider horizons for the church through Stephen, Philip, and Saul. The conversion of Saul is told in 9:1-19. It is retold in 22:1-21 and again in 26:1-18.

9:32-12:24 focuses back on Peter and the first Gentile convert.

12:25-15:35 examines the **first missionary journey** of Saul/Paul. We are introduced to John/Mark (author of the second gospel) in 12:25. Saul becomes Paul in 13:9. Paul is listed as the leader in 13:13. The journey goes from the Syrian Antioch church to Cyprus, Antioch in Pisidia, Iconium, Lystra, Derbe, and back to Antioch in Syria. There is also an important meeting in Jerusalem for the discussion of important doctrinal issues (15:1-35) – the “First General Assembly” if you will ☺.

15:36-18:22 records the **second missionary journey** of Paul. A disagreement between Paul and Barnabas causes the two of them to split up and make separate journeys. Barnabas took Mark to Cyprus and Paul took Silas to Syria. Timothy joins Paul and Silas in chapter 16. Luke the author of Luke-Acts joins them in Macedonia (*note the beginning use of the term “we” in 16:10*). The journey goes back through Antioch in Syria, [then, possibly, Tarsus (Paul’s hometown)], Derbe, Lystra, Iconium, Antioch in Pisidia, and then up through the region of Phrygia and Northern Galatia to Troas. From there they went across the sea to Samothrace, Neapolis, Philippi, Amphipolis, Apollonia, Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, Corinth, Cenchrea, Ephesus, and back to Caesarea and Jerusalem; and back to the Syrian Antioch church.

18:23-21:26 records the **third missionary journey** of Paul. Priscilla and Aquila are key players at the church in Ephesus. Paul’s journey goes back through Galatian and Phrygia visiting all of the disciples and churches. He then heads to Ephesus for a prolonged stay (2 ½ years). He then heads up through Macedonia and Greece (visiting disciples and churches from second journey), back to Ephesus, and eventually back to Jerusalem.

21:27-28:31 records Paul's **fourth missionary journey** – including the arrest, series of trials, and travel to Rome where Paul is imprisoned. After Paul's arrest (21:27-36), Paul speaks to the crowd (21:37-22:21) about his conversion. Paul then reveals to the crowd that he is a Roman Citizen (22:22-29), which lead to Paul receiving a series of trials. He is brought before the Sanhedrin [the Jewish Supreme Court] (22:30-23:11). Following a foiled attempt on Paul's life (23:12-22), Paul is transferred to Caesarea for a trial before Governor Felix (24:1-27). Paul was put in prison for two years until Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus. So Paul had a trial before Festus (25:1-12). Paul exercises his right, as a Roman Citizen, to appeal to a higher court so he is brought before King Herod Agrippa II (25:23-26:32). It is determined that Paul is to be taken for a trial in Rome.

The journey to Rome is not a smooth one. A storm (27:13-26) causes the ship to be wrecked (27:27-44) on the island of Malta. After many events on Malta (28:1-10), over the course of three months, they continued on to Rome; where Paul is permitted to preach while awaiting his trial (28:17-31). The book of Acts ends by saying that Paul preached, while imprisoned in Rome, for two years.

The fact that Acts stops here suggests that Paul was released at this time. Further evidence is in Paul's writings to churches expecting to visit them soon.

Tradition indicates that Paul went on a Fifth Missionary Journey to Spain. The Pastoral Epistles (letters) suggests that he also returned to Asia Minor, Crete, and Greece.