

ACTS

While there are four accounts of the life of Jesus, this is the only book that carries on from the Ascension of Christ to the period of the N.T. Epistles. Luke, the author, continues the "orderly account" he had begun in his gospel, noting what Jesus accomplished through the early church. As such it is the connecting link between the gospels and the epistles. Though known as "The Acts of the Apostles," Luke's strong emphasis on the ministry of the Holy Spirit could cause us to title it as "the acts of the Spirit working in and through the apostles."

Acts is a history of extraordinary events. It is truly an exciting and action-filled account that you will enjoy studying.

Luke was Paul's close friend and traveling companion as well as his personal physician. He is an accurate historian drawing on written sources as well as his eye-witness account when he was with Paul.

Acts was probably written sometime in the two years before Paul's trial in 62 A.D. If written after the trial why didn't Luke mention the outcome? He also does not mention the persecution under Nero (A.D. 64), Paul's death (A.D. 68), or the destruction of Jerusalem (A.D. 70).

Jesus' last recorded words, known as "The Great Commission," are reflected in Acts 1:8: "You shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." This concisely outlines the contents of the book of Acts: Jerusalem (1:1-8:4); Judea and Samaria (8:5-12:25) and the ends of the earth (13:1-28:31).

Acts traces important events in the early history of Christianity from the ascension of Christ to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit to the rapid progress of the gospel, beginning in Jerusalem and spreading throughout the Roman Empire.

After appearing to His disciples for "forty days" (1:3), Jesus tells them to wait in Jerusalem for fulfillment of His promise concerning the Holy Spirit. Ten days after His ascension, this promise is dramatically fulfilled as the disciples are suddenly empowered and filled with the Holy

Spirit. The disciples are transformed and filled with courage to proclaim the brand new message of the resurrected Savior. Peter's powerful sermon (Acts 2:22-36) is built upon the power of the resurrection, as are all his messages, and on this occasion 3,000 respond. From there the church experiences consistent growth. Make note, as you study, how often mention is made of those being added to the church. Beginning in chapter 13 Paul, not Peter, is the primary character.

What we are doing today as the church should be a continuation of that described in the 28 chapters of this terrific and exciting book.

A BRIEF OUTLINE OF ACTS

IN JERUSALEM (A.D. 33-35):

- The Power of the Church (1:1-2:47).
- The Progress of the Church (3:1-8:4).

IN JUDEA AND SAMARIA (A.D. 35-48).

- Expansion of the Church (8:5-12:25).

TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH (A.D. 48-62).

- Paul's Three Missionary Journeys (13:1-21:16).
- Paul's Three Trials (21:17-28:31).

HELPS: Before turning to these, read prayerfully the Word of God, praying that the Holy Spirit will guide you and instruct you.

If you don't own a Bible dictionary, encyclopedia, atlas, or reference search, don't worry. They are all available on the link below.

http://www.preceptaustin.org/2_corinthians_commentaries_3.htm

This excellent website is full of helps including commentaries. You will find John MacArthur, Ray Stedman and John Piper along with Charles Spurgeon and the Intervarsity Press Commentary (Navigators) as well as Matthew Henry's Commentary.