



# ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

A Supplement to Our Study through the Book of Acts

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We are diving into a brand new verse-by-verse study of a pivotal book of the New Testament. In some ways this exposition of the Acts of the Apostles should feel familiar because the human author, Dr. Luke, is the same author of the Gospel we just wrapped up this year. Not only are the first verses of both books addressed to “Theophilus” (Lk.1:3 & Ac.1:1), but the 750 unique Greek vocabulary words found only in Luke and Acts show the common source of these two books. And with Dr. Luke’s medical education, the polished style and use of medical terms make perfect sense.

One of the most interesting things about the authorship of Acts is that Dr. Luke himself ends up in the action of the narrative describing the Apostle Paul’s travels and preaching experiences. Luke’s use of pronouns shifts from third person (“him,” “he,” and “they”) to first person (“we” and “us”) in chapters 16 through 28. Of the seventeen ministry partners of the Apostle Paul that he names in all of his New Testament writings, cross-referencing them throughout the book of Acts eliminates all of them except for Dr. Luke. This is why there has been unanimous agreement among God’s people and biblical scholars that Luke is the author of both the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles.

Many have wondered about the initial recipient of these two books. He is named “Theophilus” which means “loved by God.” Beyond his name we can only speculate about who this man was. Some suggest he was not only the recipient but also the benefactor who underwrote this research project. Of course there is a broad audience in view, not only from Luke’s perspective and intention, but certainly from the Holy Spirit who governed the “God-breathed” superintendence of the writing of these two books.

The abrupt ending of the book of Acts has always been a curious feature. Chapter 28 records Paul’s imprisonment by the Romans, as Paul finds himself under house arrest in Rome for two years. Paul comes to Rome in AD. 61 and the story leaves off in AD. 63. Of course, we’d like closure as to how it all turned out, but this sudden ending leads us to the obvious conclusion that the “pause in the action” is the period of time when Luke finished composing this book. So, the dating of the writing of Acts can confidently be pinned at AD. 63. And add to this, that with all the coverage of Roman leaders and persecutions in the book, Luke makes no mention of Emperor Nero’s notorious persecutions of AD. 64 or General Titus’ destruction of Jerusalem in AD. 70.

While the book of Luke seeks to give us an orderly account of Christ’s earthly ministry, the book of Acts is intending to show us the ongoing work of Christ in the world through the Holy Spirit in his authoritative Apostles. In one sense Luke’s first volume is “the works of Christ,” and his second “the work of Christ through his Apostles.” The book of Acts covers a 30-year period of history, from Christ’s ascension to the expansion of the church through Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey) all the way to Greece and Rome.

The book of Acts chronicles the unstoppable nature of God’s work through the Church. As the record of Christ’s words in Acts 1:8 mandates, the witness of Christ’s people will invincibly move from “Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” The book of Acts carefully defends the fact that Christianity is not an “unbiblical cult” or some politically subversive group. The selection of recorded sermons is strategic in proclaiming Christianity as the logical and necessary extension of the prophetic hope of the Old Testament.

In Ephesians 2:20 Paul wrote that the church is “built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets” with “Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone.” We have in the book of Acts a divinely intended record of this unique foundational period in which the Apostles and prophets authoritatively and miraculously established and expanded the Church from which every successive generation of Christians would benefit.

I look forward to studying this book verse-by-verse in the months and years ahead. May God bless our mutual study and my exposition of this critically important book. Below I have provided a short list of select resources, which I hope you find helpful as you dig deeper into Acts between our weekend studies. All of these will be available through the Compass Bookstore and can also be acquired electronically through Logos Bible Software (Logos.com). May God prepare us for transformational spiritual and numerical growth in the days ahead.

-- Pastor Mike

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**EXEGETICAL COMMENTARIES** - *books that seek to grapple with various aspects of interpretation*

Bruce, F. F. ***The Book of the Acts***. The New International Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1988.

Gaebelein, Frank E., Merrill C. Tenney, and Richard N. Longenecker. ***The Expositor's Bible Commentary: John and Acts. Vol. 9***. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981.

Marshall, I. Howard. ***Acts: An Introduction and Commentary. Vol. 5***. Tyndale New Testament Commentaries. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1980.

Kistemaker, Simon J., and William Hendriksen. ***Exposition of the Acts of the Apostles. Vol. 17. New Testament Commentary***. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1953–2001.

Schnabel, Eckhard J. ***Acts***. Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012.

Trites, Allison A., William J. Larkin. ***Cornerstone Biblical Commentary. Vol 12: The Gospel of Luke and Acts***. Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2006.

Peterson, David G. ***The Acts of the Apostles***. The Pillar New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009.

**EXEGETICAL SUMMARIES** - *books that summarize all the interpretive options in the passage*

Cheng, Belinda, and Robert Stutzman. ***An Exegetical Summary of Acts 1–14***. Exegetical Summaries. Dallas, TX: SIL International, 2017.

Abernathy, David, and Robert Stutzman. ***An Exegetical Summary of Acts 15–28***. Exegetical Summaries. Dallas, TX: SIL International, 2018.

**PATRISTIC/HISTORICAL COMMENTARIES** - *a book that records the interpretations of Acts through AD. 750*

Martin, Francis, and Evan Smith. ***Acts. Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture NT 5***. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006.

**HOMILETICAL COMMENTARIES** - *books that record the exposition of Acts by a preacher*

Lloyd-Jones, David Martyn. ***Authentic Christianity. 1st U.S. ed. Vols. 1-6. Studies in the Book of Acts***. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2000.

MacArthur, John F., Jr. ***Acts. MacArthur New Testament Commentary***. Chicago: Moody Press, 1994.

Hughes, R. Kent. ***Acts: The Church Afire. Preaching the Word***. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1996.

Ogilvie, Lloyd J., and Lloyd J. Ogilvie. ***Acts. Vol. 28. The Preacher's Commentary Series***. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Inc, 1983.

**BIBLICAL ATLASES** - *important resources regarding the many geographic references in the book of Acts*

Beitzel, Barry J. ***The New Moody Atlas of the Bible***. Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2009.

Currid, John D., and David P. Barrett. ***Crossway ESV Bible Atlas***. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010.

Rasmussen, Carl G. Zondervan ***Atlas of the Bible***. Revised Edition. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010.