

Contents

The Book of Acts

1. “‘The Holy Spirit Will Come to You’ ”— <i>June 30–July 6</i>	4
2. God Pours His Holy Spirit on His People — <i>July 7–13</i>	11
3. Church Life During New Testament Times — <i>July 14–20</i>	18
4. The Church’s First Leaders — <i>July 21–27</i>	25
5. Paul Becomes a Christian — <i>July 28–August 3</i>	32
6. Peter’s Work for God — <i>August 4–10</i>	39
7. Paul’s First Trip to Share the Good News — <i>August 11–17</i>	46
8. The Jerusalem Group — <i>August 18–24</i>	53
9. Paul’s Second Trip to Share the Good News — <i>August 25–31</i>	60
10. Paul’s Third Trip to Share the Good News — <i>September 1–7</i>	67
11. Paul’s Arrest in Jerusalem — <i>September 8–14</i>	74
12. Paul in Prison — <i>September 15–21</i>	81
13. Paul’s Trip to Rome — <i>September 22–28</i>	88

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Introduction



The Power and the Success of the Good News About Jesus

Many history experts believe that the most important time in history happened when a small group of men told people everywhere about Jesus and the Good News. This small group of men was mostly Jews. The Holy Spirit gave them power to do their work.

The book of Acts is the story about that important time in history. That time lasts a little over 30 years. It starts with Jesus' waking up from the dead and coming back to life in A.D. 31. It ends when Paul is put in prison in Rome for the first time in A.D. 62 (Acts 28:30). We believe Luke wrote the book of Acts soon after Paul went to prison. Why do we think that Luke wrote the book soon after that happened? Because the story in the book of Acts ends just after Paul becomes a prisoner. The Bible shows us that the Romans let Paul go free from prison later. Then Paul continues to tell people the Good News about Jesus. Paul preaches and travels until he is arrested a second time, a few years later. This time, Paul is killed in Rome in A.D. 67.

The book of Acts does not tell us anything about who wrote it. But church leaders told stories many years later that say Luke wrote the book of Acts. Luke is also the same "dear doctor" that Paul writes about in Colossians 4:14 (NLV). Luke is Paul's friend, and he travels with Paul (2 Timothy 4:11; Philemon 24). Many people believe that Luke also wrote the third Gospel story about Jesus. The Gospel stories about Jesus are the first four books of the New Testament: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Bible experts believe that Luke's Gospel is the book that Acts 1:1 talks about when it says, "the first book" (ERV). Both the Gospel of Luke and the book of Acts teach us about how the Christian religion started. The Gospel of Luke tells us about Jesus' life and His work. The book of Acts also talks about the work that Jesus' first followers did to take the Good News about Jesus everywhere on the earth during New Testament times.

Together, both the Gospel of Luke and the book of Acts make about 27%, or almost 1/3, of the New Testament. That means Luke wrote more words in the New Testament than any other writer. Paul seems to say in his letter to the Colossians that Luke is not

Jewish (Colossians 4:7–14). Luke is the only non-Jewish writer who writes part of the New Testament. All other New Testament writers are Jews.

When we keep in mind that Luke is not Jewish, we will understand an important topic he writes about: God wants to save everyone. God has no favorites. God commands the church to witness to everyone everywhere (Acts 1:8; Acts 2:21, 39, 40; Acts 3:25; Acts 10:28, 34, 35). If we fail to do this work, then we go against the Good News itself and a very important Bible truth: we are all the same before God. We are sinners who need Jesus to save us.

Other important topics in Acts are: (1) God's power over everything and His plan to save us (Acts 17:24, 25; Acts 20:27; Acts 23:11); (2) the truth that Jesus is both Lord and Savior (Acts 2:32, 36; Acts 3:13, 15; Acts 4:10–12; Acts 5:30, 31); and (3) the Holy Spirit's work to lead the church and make it grow strong to do God's work (Acts 2:1–4; Acts 4:24–31; Acts 8:14–17, 29, 39; Acts 10:19, 20). The New Testament church's success does not come from human wisdom or skill. The New Testament church's success comes from God. The same thing is true for us today. No other church leader in Paul's time is able to do what Paul did (1 Corinthians 15:10). God uses Paul to change the world in a powerful way, and God will use us too.

We are all the same before God. We are sinners who need Jesus to save us.

Acts tells the story about how fast the New Testament church grew. We can see one example of how fast the church grew when we read about how the church answers hard questions. The church answers hard questions about (1) faith and how our faith helps us become saved, (2) the things non-Jewish members must do, and (3) the time when Jesus will come back to earth. The New Testament church does a lot of work in a short time. The church's success shows us what God can do when we give our lives to Him and pray. But we must not be proud. We must not let our problems or disagreements with other believers stop our work for God. Then the Spirit can use us to bring honor and glory to God.

The book of Acts tells us the story about the people in the New Testament church who did God's work. God asked them to start this work. Today, God asks us to finish the work they started. What can we learn from their story to help us do God's work?

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