

Walk Through the Bible

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Acts

I. Introduction

Where Luke concluded the Gospel of Luke he continues in Acts 1:8. He writes to an associate name Theophilus to tell him all he knew about the life of Christ (in the Gospel of Luke – Acts 1:1) and the life of the New Testament church (Acts).

Acts traces the rapid expansion of the gospel in the world. Each section of the book, 1-7, 8-12, 13-28, focuses in on a significant phase of the expansion of this gospel. The book also communicates the rapid growth of the church, the popular favor that they enjoyed (2:47), and the genuineness of the miracles performed (4:15-16).

II. Author

A. The author was acquainted with Paul in that he traveled with the apostle in 16:10-17, 20:5-21:8, 27:1-28:16. The words "we" and "us" are used in these sections. There is an intimate knowledge and detail in these sections.

1. Luke is associated with Paul in Col 4:14 and Phlmn 24.
2. Luke was a physician and therefore acquainted with medical terms, 1:3, 3:7, 9:18, 13:11, 28:1-10.

III. The Organization of the Book of Acts

A. Chapters 1-12, contain the development of Christianity from Jerusalem and the Jews, to development of the church in Antioch. There are several ways to organize the book:

1. In 1-12, Peter is the main character,
1. In 13-18, Paul is the main character.

B. The book may be divided into the 7 progress reports contained in the book: 2:47, 6:7, 9:31, 12:24, 16:5, 19:20, and 28:30-31.

IV. Important Characteristics of Acts

- A. It records the spread of Christianity from Jerusalem to the Gentile world, Acts 1:8.
- B. The book covers a 30-year time period.
- C. The book forms a transition from the age of Israel to the age of the church.
- D. The books emphasize the work of the HS. The HS is mentioned about 70 times in the book.
- E. It begins with the gospel given to the Jews and records the spread of the gospel to the Gentiles.

- F. Christianity is called "the Way" in 9:2, "the sect of the Nazarenes" in 24:5, "Christians," 11:26.
- G. It begins with believers under the law and practicing a centralized worship at the temple in Jerusalem and ends with the establishment of churches with both Jews and Gentiles throughout the Roman world.
- H. Two KEY CHURCHES in the book are the church in Jerusalem, Acts 15, and at Antioch, 11:26. The latter becomes Paul's home church.
- I. The book provides a guideline for missionary work in the church age.
- J. Acts also establishes patterns for the conduct of the local church, Acts 13:1-3, 14:23, 15:6-18, and 20:17-35.

VI. An Exposition of the Book of Acts

A. 1:1-6:8, The Gospel in Jerusalem:

1. The HS is the key member of the Godhead in the book of Acts beginning in Acts 2.
2. The question in 1:6, about the restoration of the kingdom is related to their understanding of the coming of the Holy Spirit (John 14-16).
3. 1:9-11-- marks the conclusion of Jesus' personal, visible ministry on earth and the beginning of the ministry of the church, on earth.
4. The choice of Matthias follows the apostles' praying and the drawing of lots. This is the last time lots are used to determine God's will in the New Testament. The question of whether Paul should have been the 12th apostle is a moot one, Rom 8:28.

B. 2:1-13, the beginning of the church age:

- 1) It occurred on the Day of Pentecost which was the 50th day after the feast of First fruits, Lev 23:16.
- 2) The sound of the wind and the appearance of fire, are audible and visible demonstrations by God of the new dispensation of the church.
- 3) The filling of the HS - is separate from the baptism of the HS.
 - a) The Baptism occurs once for each believer at the moment of salvation, 11:15-16, Rom 6:3, I Cor 12:13, Col 2:12. The filling occurs many times after a believer's salvation, Acts 4:8, 31, 6:3, 5, 7:55, 9:17, 52. Here, Acts 1:5, 11:16, the baptism of the HS on the Day of Pentecost refers to the initial inauguration of the church age.
 - b) The filling of the Holy Spirit took place at significant times in Acts:
 - i. Pentecost (2:1-4) – the beginning of the church age.
 - ii. When Philip preached among the Samaritans (8:17).
 - iii. Peter went to the house of Cornelius (10:44-46).
 - iv. When John the Baptist disciples came to Paul in Ephesus (Acts 19:6)

C. 2:12-40 Peter's discourse: is a rebuttal against drunkenness. He states that the HS has now come into the lives of the 120.

1. The resurrection of the Lord is also a main point. It is contrast to David who is still buried.

- a) No one disputes with Peter about the resurrection. Instead, there is the convicting question, "what must we do?"

D. Peter quotes Joel 2:28-32 which has a two-part fulfillment (HS + 2nd Advent.). What took place on the day of Pentecost was a partial fulfillment of the prophecy of Joel 2:28-29 for the following reasons:

- 1) They support this because there are several things that are quoted in this passage that did not take place that will take place in the last days. I will explain.

E. 2:41-47, the description of the first church.

1. Note the 4 activities of the church.
2. Note the growth and favor of the early church.
3. Although these are the basic founding elements for the early church, they do not provide the sum total for all the NT church's activities.
4. NOTE, that people were daily being saved. The church grew rapidly.

F. 3:1-6:7, THE EXPANSION OF THE CHURCH:

1. The early church first met as a group in and around the temple in Jerusalem. They also met in groups in homes, Acts 2:46, Rom 16:5.
2. The healing of the crippled man helped with the expansion. He attributes the power to the healing to the same Jesus, whom the Jews crucified and who was later resurrected.
3. 3:19-21, "restore" is anticipation of the coming Kingdom, Acts 1:6, Mt 17:11.

G. Chapter 4, the internment and release of Peter and John:

1. In vv 1, the principal accusers were the Sanhedrin.
2. Note how leaders of the early church were jailed, but the Word of God was not bound, Acts 28:30-31, Phil 1:12-14.
3. In vv 13, it is noted that the apostles were illiterate men, but had been with Jesus, John 7:15.
4. 4:23-31 - the release, is used to introduce Barnabus, this shows the contrast of the early church generosity with the greed of Annias and Sapphira, chap 5.
5. The materially sharing of goods was voluntary and temporary.

H. Acts 5:1-11 -- The Deceit of Ananias and Sapphira – The establishing of the authority of the NT Church:

1. The key point is that this is the first church discipline, I Cor 5:1, Matt 18:15-20.
2. In vv 3, "Satan has filled your heart," is the idea of control, Eph 5:18, through a lack of I John 1:9.
3. Lying to the HS was the same thing as lying to God, vv 3, 4.
4. The "sin unto death," I John 5:16, I Cor 11:30.

I. Acts 5:12-42, The progress of the church:

1. After the leaders have been tested.
2. After the work of the Holy Spirit.
3. After church discipline.
 - a) Note 5:12-16, the church grew, 2:41, 47, 4:4, 6:1, 7, 9:31.
 - b) In vv 17f, the church is persecuted.
 - c) In vv 29, Peter states a basic principle of 4:19-20. Christians are to obey government, unless it is a sin to do so, Rom 13:1-7, I Peter 2:13-17.
 - d) Peter's message is basically the same, in 2:23-f, 3:15, and 4:16.
 - e) Gamaliel's point is that Christianity will soon die out.

J. Acts 6:1-7, the need for Administration of the church.

1. The choosing of the 7 solved a problem between two groups in the early church, food distribution to the widows and who were served first.
2. The primary goal was for the apostles to continue the ministry of teaching. It is not that they are above waiting on tables (John 13).
3. The passage is used to introduce Stephen and Philip.
4. 6:7 contains another progress report in Acts.

K. Acts 6:8-9:31 -- The Witness in all Judea and in Samaria:

1. 6:8-8:1a, the martyrdom of Stephen.
 - a) In 6:8-7:1, He is arrested.
 - b) This is the 3rd of 4 times believers in Acts have stood before a Jewish court (4:15, 5:27, and 22:30).
2. 7:2-53, His message. Note three ideas in his message:
 - a) The progress and change in God's program, from Abraham to the building of a tabernacle.
 - b) God's blessings are not limited to Israel in the Promised Land and the temple.
 - c) Israel's has always opposed God, so they are just like your fathers. (The problem of 400 years, 7:6, Gal 3:17, and Gen 15:13-16. Stephen could have simply used round numbers).

3. The attack upon Stephen (7:54-60).

L. Acts 8:1b-40 -- The ministry of Philip:

1. 8:1b-25, The Samaritan revival. Note that this began with the persecution of the church.
2. The arrival of Peter and John and the bestowing of the HS was God's confirming to the lead Apostles, the fulfillment of Acts 1:8.
3. 8:26-40 The Ethiopian Eunuch. It occurred in Gaza. He evidently was Jewish proselyte. Note the sovereign guiding of God in this story.

M. 9:1-19a, The Conversion of Saul:

1. It is probably the most important event in the book of Acts, outside of Pentecost. His conversion is recorded in Acts 9, 22, 26.
2. It introduces the 2nd half of the book, and the gospel going out to the Gentiles, Acts 10.
3. Paul becomes an apostle to the Gentiles, Gal 2:8, Eph 3:8.
4. Paul was ideally suited: he was Jew, he was raised in Tarsus, he was a Roman citizen, He was trained in Jewish theology, he had a secular trade, and he was a born leader.
5. The astonishment of the Jews at Paul's conversion, soon turned to open persecution, 9:23-31.
6. He evidently spent 3 years in the Arabian Desert, Acts 9:23, 26, and Gal 1:17.
7. Acts 9:31 contain another progress report in Acts.

N. The Church now Expands to the World (9:32-11:18):

1. Philip in the city of Samaria and the saving of Simon (8:4-24).
2. Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch (8:25-40).
3. Saul's conversion (9:1-31):
 - a) He goes to Jerusalem and is accepted first by Barnabas (vs. 27-28).
 - b) The Hellenistic Jews rejected him (vs. 29-30).
 - c) As a result of Paul's conversion, the church experienced a time of peace (vs. 31).
4. Peter is challenged by God to go to Cornelius's house, who is a (10:2,22) devout man (10:1-33):
 - a) Peter had to learn that God wanted for him to go to the Gentiles even though this was in violation of the law written by Moses (10:28).
 - God's request perplexed Peter (10:17) but Peter still obeyed God (10:28-29).
 - Peter, in preparation of the Jerusalem Council learnt that God loves Jews just as much as He loves Gentiles (10:34; 42, 45,47).
5. All the brethren who objected to Peter going to Cornelius's house soon understand and glorified God (11:18).
 - a) This process is important because Paul being sent to the Gentiles is the very next issue the church must resolve.
6. The Gospel expanded to Antioch where believers were first called Christians (vs. 11:19-30):
 - a) Gentiles began to preach the Gospel and this created a stir.
 - b) Barnabas was sent by the disciples
 - c) Barnabas later brought Paul who taught considerable numbers.

O. After the First Missionary Journey the gospel spread so Powerfully, to the Gentiles, that it created a Need for the Jerusalem Council (15-16:5) to resolve some serious issues. The issue is do these new Christians who are Gentiles have to obey the law? The response provided by the disciples is as follows:

1. Peter's experience with Cornelius reminded him of God's message that they should preach the gospel to the Gentiles (15:7).
2. God will provide the Holy Spirit for the Gentiles just like He did for the Jews (15:8).
3. The law was a yoke they could not bear so why make something for the Gentiles to follow (15:9).
4. It is not the law that saves it is the grace of God through faith (15:10).
5. Paul and Barnabas were sent to Antioch with the report of the decisions of the apostles (15:22-23).
6. The only law that they wanted to people to follow was to not do the following;
 - a) Abstain from food offered to idols.
 - b) Abstain from blood, which comes from the meat of strangled animals.
 - c) Abstain from sexual immorality.

P. Paul fulfilling his call to the Gentiles is now placed in full gear (16:6-21:17):

1. Paul travels to the following Gentile cities:
 - a) Macedonia (16:6-17:15).
 - b) Athens (17:16-34).
 - c) Corinth and Ephesus (18:19-21:17).

Q. Paul's arrest, trial and arrival in Rome (21:18-28:31).