

Acts Introduction

Author Luke compare Luke 1:3,4 Acts 1:1

The continuing ministry of the Lord Jesus. Yet - the continued ministry of the Lord Jesus from glory - a vital distinction to make!

Chapters 1-9:43; chapter 10 Peter Prominent

Chapters 11-28 Paul Prominent

Covers period of time approximately A.D. 30-65

Chapters 1-3 Chapters 4-9 Chapters 13-28

Jerusalem Judea & Samaria Uttermost Parts of World

Church Established Church Scattered Church Extended

Acts - a transitional book. A cautionary note is warranted - beware of building doctrines from transitional periods where certain phenomena occur for limited time periods and in unique situations. It is not apostolic experience we need to pursue - but apostolic doctrine!

Compare Exodus and the plagues Joshua and the first half of the book miracles

Jerusalem Judea & Samaria Uttermost Parts of World

4 Factual Observations

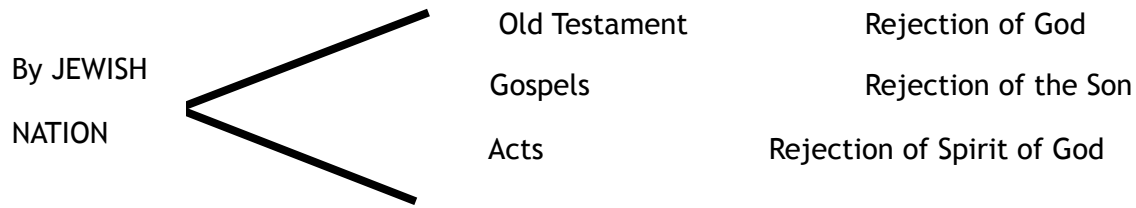
1. Center of activity moves progressively away from Jerusalem (towards Gentile Antioch)
2. Miraculous phenomena diminish
3. Apostles are dying off the scene
4. Word of God is being inscripturated (committed to writing)

Over 50 mentions of the Holy Spirit in Acts

3 Supernatural Beings prominent acting in Acts:

1. The risen glorified Christ
2. Holy Spirit
3. Satan

Compare also the parable of the Lord in Matthew 21:33-46 and the similarity to movement of the book of Acts. The offer, witness and rejection by Israel.



****Remember : The Old Testament is not primarily the history the world - it is the history of the nation- not the nations !***

Acts provides a bridge from the gospels. It also introduces us to Paul - or else we would wonder where did he come from? We have also the transition from Israel being the primary focus to the church - a new creation

“Luke records a series of crisis and decisions and solutions. Describing not just the spread of the gospel but what the gospel was that spread.” D.W.G.

“Luke invites us to watch Christianity define itself - by contrasts...” D.W.G.

Christianity is not a political movement, not spiritism, not Judaism, not another philosophy.

Why Study Acts?

1. Modern “world thinking” is not so different from “ancient” world thinking in which Christianity

was born.

2. Two big “stumbling blocks” to modern mind - #1 - supernatural nature of Christianity (such as

insistence on bodily resurrection) . And #2 - Christianity’s exclusive dogmatism (see Acts 4:12)

I. Examine the beginnings of Christianity and ancient world into which it was born – why does ancient world matter?

II. Much of Christianity unattractive to modern mind. Not the fatherhood of God, love your neighbor, peace, etc. What offends is two primary areas - #1 - supernatural nature of Christianity (such as

insistence on bodily resurrection). And #2 - Christianity’s exclusive dogmatism (see Acts 4:12)

III. In many western countries Christianity has gone out of favor. Dangerous “solutions” offered for

recovery – not from without – but from within! Church leaders claim the gospel only effective if “brought up to date” – don’t proclaim it in such a way that it presents difficulties to the modern mind. They further argue that the “troubling parts” are non-essential to the gospel anyway. Also {they say} Christianity is not the only game in town – there are today many players on the field. {Mosaics} They also say that what was successful in an ancient pre-scientific primitive society and culture can’t survive in today’s modern world.

However, Acts reveals an ancient world where Christianity was birthed that differs little in basic essentials to our modern society.

Modern Science	Ancient Philosophy	Jewish Religion
Unbelief on “scientific” grounds	Acts 17 Scorn for bodily resurrection	Sadducees cited Bible to prove their case

Western post Christian society is becoming increasingly more like the 1st century!

Luke’s history reminds us of the unwillingness to believe in the resurrection of the body based on scientific, religious, and philosophical grounds. Thus these are not new and not so different from today. Conclusion? Drop it from preaching? NO! Acts 2:22-24; 27; 31-33; 4:10; 5:29-32; 10:39,40; 13:34-37 (Samples)

Second big stumbling block – Acts 4:12 the exclusivity or claim of it. One way of salvation and only one. Some think that this was the view of those whose world was very small. First century people ignorant of the outside world. But that is a fallacy. Christianity was born into a world thickly populated with religions and philosophies of every sort and variety. It wasn’t that the followers of Christ didn’t know enough about these ideas and beliefs – it was that they knew too much about them! And they knew that cleansing, peace, forgiveness, salvation, hope for the future, and assurance were found only in Jesus Christ!

No other salvation or sacrifice valid – nothing else comparable – nothing else offered – nothing else necessary!

What about “tolerance”? “It’s okay for you to believe that but in a pluralistic society and a multicultural environment you will offend and disrupt people if you preach that way!” Acts records unrest and even riots (16:16-40; 19:23-41) occurring when the followers of Christ preached. But it wasn’t the Christians who started the riots. The Christians also didn’t insult the religions or temples (although they accused them and pointed out their shortcomings and errors). And Christians though persecuted never persecuted others! This leads to a deeper question – why did they constantly say things and preach things that they knew would offend and upset both Jews and gentiles?

For example, that Jesus was the risen Messiah which was divisive to the Jews. Or Stephen making the point emphatically that the temple at Jerusalem was now obsolete which was offensive to the cherished belief of the Jews. Why did they go about preaching and seeing people

“converted” and thus provoking some to animosity and strife? The answer? The whole book of Acts! The reason wasn’t intolerance or revenge. Rather as Acts 4:12 declares the salvation of all mankind is at stake!

Science – it must be proclaimed regardless of who is offended or embarrassed.

Religion – for example take circumcision, the rite of the cherished religion of the Jewish people, no less than the people’s salvation was at stake! See Acts 15:10,11. No religious tradition no matter how sacred must be allowed to put or keep the people in bondage.

Philosophy – all imperfect. Paul on Mars Hill (Acts 17) declared with dogmatic certainty that Jesus Christ will one day judge the world. This wasn’t a philosophical lecture but a Divine message designed to produce obedience to the Divine command!