

Mount Pisgah A.M.E Church

Rev. Jay B. Broadnax, Pastor

Bible Study, Wednesday, July 15, 2015

Survey of the Bible

Lesson 46: The Acts of The Apostles

The Book of Acts

The book of Acts is part 2 of a 2 part work which began with the Gospel According to Luke. The two may not have originally been separate, nor had a separate title. However, whereas “part 1” (the Gospel of Luke) focus primarily on the life and message of Jesus Christ, “part 2” focuses primarily on the lives and times of key apostles subsequent to Jesus’ ascension, and thus is referred to as *The Acts of The Apostles*. The original Greek manuscripts typically don’t have “of the Apostles” however. Where it is separated from the Gospel, it is simply referred to as *Praxeis* (Acts), which was a commonly used title in literature to summarize the accomplishments of outstanding people.

Author

Acts 1:1 refers Theophilus to “the former book,” that is, the Gospel of Luke. For similar reasons as in the Gospel of Luke, Luke is believed to be the author of Acts. There are several sections where Luke uses the pronoun “we” indicating an eyewitness account (Acts 16:10-17; Acts 20:5-21:18; Acts 27:1-28:16), so it appears that Luke traveled with Paul on at least his 2nd Missionary Journey and his Journey to Rome).

The Times of Acts

Suggested dates for the writing of Acts range from 62 AD to the middle of the second century. Twentieth century archaeology has proven many of Luke’s accounts to be historically accurate. The lack of an account of how Paul’s trials turned out in the end strongly suggest that the author did not have access to that information, and therefore that the book was written prior to Paul’s final trial before Caesar. Acts gives no indication of Paul’s death (believed to have been in 68 AD), or of the destruction of Jerusalem (which took place in 70 AD). So there is much evidence for the early dating of Acts, between 62 AD and 64 AD.

Overview

Luke begins the Book of Acts where he left off in his gospel. Acts records the initial fulfillment of the Great Commission of Matthew 28:19, 20 as it traces the beginning and growth of the New Testament Church. 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.

Acts is a pivotal book of transitions:

- From the Gospels to The Epistles
- From Judaism to Christianity
- From law to grace
- From Jews alone to Jews and Gentiles
- From kingdom to church
- From Peter’s leadership to Paul’s leadership

Outline

- I. The Witness of The Church in Jerusalem (1:1-8:4)**
 - A. The Gathered Believers Are Empowered (1:1- 2:47)
 - 1. Promise Given (1:1-1:11)
 - 2. Preparing to Receive the Promise (1:12-1:26)
 - 3. Power Given (2:1-2:13)
 - 4. Power Proclaimed (2:14-2:41)
 - 5. The Early Church (2:42-2:47)
 - B. The Church Makes an Impact (3:1-8:4)
 - 1. Peter and John Healing and Preaching (3:1-4:22)
 - 2. The Believers Pray for Boldness (4:23-4:31)
 - 3. Another Model of The Early Church (4:32-4:37)
 - 4. Ananias and Sapphira Lie (5:1-5:11)
 - 5. The Apostles Impact and Resulting Stir (5:12-5:42)
 - 6. “Deacons” are Appointed (6:1-6:8)
 - 7. Stephen’s Martyrdom (6:9-7:60)
 - 8. Introduction to Saul (8:1-8:4)
- II. The Witness of The Church in Judaea and Samaria (8:5-12:25)**
 - A. The Witness of Philip (8:5-8:40)
 - B. The Conversion of Saul (9:1-9:31)
 - C. The Witness of Peter (9:32-11:18)
 - 1. Peter’s Healings (9:32-9:43)
 - 2. Peter’s Vision and Witness to Gentiles (10:1-10:48)
 - 3. Peter Explains His Actions (11:1-11:18)
 - D. The Witness of the Early Church and Resulting Persecution (11:19-12:19)
 - 1. Witness in Antioch (11:19-11:30)
 - 2. Peter’s Escape (12:1-12:19)
 - 3. Herod’s Death (12:20-12:25)
- III. Witness To The Uttermost Parts of The Earth (13:1-28:31)**
 - A. First Missionary Journey (13:1-14:28)
 - 1. Barnabas and Saul Sent (13:1-13:3)
 - 2. Ministry at Cyprus (13:4-13:13)
 - 3. (Ministry at Antioch (13:14-13:50)
 - 4. Ministry at Iconium (13:51-14:5)
 - 5. Ministry at Lystra (14:6-14:20)
 - 6. Return and report (14:21-14:28)
 - B. The Jerusalem Council (15:1-15:35)
 - C. Second Missionary Journey (15:36-18:22)
 - 1. Contention over John Mark (15:36-15:40)
 - 2. Timothy Joins Paul and Silas (16:1-16:5)
 - 3. Troas – The Macedonian Call (16:6-16:10)
 - 4. Ministry at Philippi (16:11-16:40)
 - 5. Ministry at Thesalonica (17:1-9)
 - 6. Ministry at Berea (17:10-17:15)
 - 7. Ministry at Athens (17:16-17:34)
 - 8. Ministry at Corinth (18:1-18:17)
 - 9. Return to Antioch (18:18-18:22)
 - D. Third Missionary Journey (18:23-21:16)
 - 1. Galatia and Phrygia (18:23)

2. Ephesus: 3 Years of Ministry (18:24-19:41)
3. Macedonia: 3 Months of Ministry (20:1-5)
4. Troas-Eutychus (20:6-12)
5. Paul Bids Farewell to Ephesian Elders (20:13-20:38)
6. Warnings about Going to Jerusalem (21:1-21:16)
- E. Paul's Trials and Trip to Rome (21:17-28:31)
 1. Paul's Witness in Jerusalem (21:17-23:33)
 2. Paul's Witness at Ceasarea (23:34-26:32)
 - a) Tried before Felix (23:34-24:27)
 - b) Tried before Festus (25:1-25:22)
 - c) Tried before Agrippa (25:23-26:32)
 3. On To Rome (27:1-28:31)
 - a) Journey and Shipwreck (27:1-27:44)
 - b) Witness at Melita (28:1-28:15)
 - c) Witness at Rome (28:16-28:31)

Some Keys to understanding The Book of Acts

- While there are four accounts of the life of Jesus, this is the only book that carries on the story from His ascension to the period of the New Testament Epistles. Acts is a historical link between the Gospels and the Epistles..
- While the gospel of Luke moves inward *toward* Jerusalem, the Book of Acts moves *outward from* Jerusalem. Symbolic of this, Paul's base actually moves from Jerusalem to Antioch.
- Luke emphasizes the ministry of the Holy Spirit in both his gospel and in Acts. This book could equally have been called "The Acts of The Holy Spirit working through The Apostles."
- As a historian and a missionary himself, Luke's interest is in the progressive spread of the gospel outward, as concentric circles.
- Luke traces the development of the body of Christ over the one-generation transition from being a primarily Jewish movement to being predominantly Gentile in its makeup.
- The book of Acts ends somewhat "anticlimactically" with Paul remaining on "house arrest" for 2 years, but the final statement indicates that even though PAUL may have had restrictions on him, the MESSAGE is unrestricted. The book of Acts is open ended because in many ways today's disciples still have "missionary journeys" to complete and chapters to write.

Some Lessons from Acts

- God will faithfully complete his mission in our lives if we let him decide how we get there.
- As the Holy Spirit breaks boundaries, the church and it's people must ADJUST their thinking (not their TRUTH, but their thinking)
- The necessity of the Holy Spirit's power for ministry is emphasized in Acts. The Holy Spirit can accomplish in our lives far more than we ever can in and of ourselves.
- Even though LOVE may compel us to move outward across boundaries to bring liberation and healing, this will disturb those who wish to see the status quo retained.
- No one is beyond being reached and used for God's glory (e.g., Paul)
- God's Word is superior to idolatrous, self serving worship and beliefs
- WE must not limit the progress of the Word of God. It must be free to reach outward. If we bottle it up, it will move around us. If we cooperate with it, even the negative things in our lives will move us toward mission completion.
- Other people around us will be blessed when WE are on God's mission.