

# A LOOK AT THE BOOK ACTS

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## Author and Date

The parallel introduction demonstrates that the writer of Acts and the writer of Luke were the same person. It has already been argued in the introduction to Luke that Luke the physician and traveling companion of Paul was the author of Luke. The "we" passages, compared to the historical comments in the epistles, would confirm this view (16:10-17; 20:5-21:18; 27:1-28:16). Luke's authorship is also affirmed by the external evidence of tradition.

Historical references at the conclusion of the book place it in the early sixties. Dates suggested are about A.D. 61-63.

## Historical Background

The Book of Acts picks up the story where Luke concludes. The Messiah has come. When He came, Israel's leaders did not want to hear the good news of His arrival. They were more interested in protecting their interests than in participating in God's program.

Only the outcasts of society were interested in following Him. Therefore, God began a new program with them. Acts explains how God formed His new program with the remnant of faithful Old Testament saints and those who had been excluded from God's program previously.

After the death and resurrection of Christ time passes. The church continues to grow. However, Christ has not yet come. The apostles are beginning to die. Therefore, Luke wants to leave an accurate record of the early development of the church. Acts bridges the gap between the life of Christ and the early church.

## Purpose and Theme

Luke's purpose is to describe how God formed the early church.

He presents the change from life under Judaism in a national context, to life in the church as the body of Christ.

The book serves as an apologetic for the church because it demonstrates that God was at work in its formation.

God's confirmation of His hand in its formation is clearly demonstrated.

The evidence of God's participation in the formation of the church, as well as the evidence of His protection of those who form part of it, serve to encourage those who are suffering for their faith in Christ.

This is God's work and He will care for them.

The content of the book traces the historical development of the church.

Attention is directed to the groups that came to form part of that church and to the way in which God brought each group into it.

The problems faced are handled wisely as the Spirit of God directed them.

These decisions set the pattern for the future life of the church as well.

## Organization

The book is organized according to the major theological and geographical movements revealed in Acts 1:8.

First the book looks ahead to the coming of the Holy Spirit (1:1-26).

Then attention is given to the testimony of the early church in Jerusalem (2:5-8:3).

Next the church moves into all Judea and Samaria (8:4-12:25).

Finally, its expansion is traced into the corners of the earth (13:1-28:31).

## ACTS

### HOW GOD FORMED HIS CHURCH

Ralph Porter

| PREPARATION FOR THE COMING OF THE SPIRIT<br>1  | TESTIMONY IN JERUSALEM<br>2-8:3  | TESTIMONY IN JUDEA AND SAMARIA<br>8:4-12:25   | TESTIMONY TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH<br>13-28   |   |  |  |  |
|--|--|---|---|---|--|--|--|
|  |  |   | FIRST MISSION-ARY JOURNEY<br>13-14  | COUNCIL AT JE-RUSALEM<br>15:1-35  | SECOND MISSION-ARY JOURNEY<br>15:36-18:22  | THIRD MISSION-ARY JOURNEY<br>18:23-21:16   | ROAD TO ROME<br>21:17-28:31  |
| <p>Final instructions of Christ<br/>1:1-11</p> <p>Review of Luke's conclusion<br/>1:1-3</p> <p>Promise of the Spirit's coming<br/>1:4-8</p> <p>Description of the Lord's ascension<br/>1:9-11</p> <p>Dedication to prayer<br/>1:12-14</p> <p>Selection of a substitute<br/>1:15-26</p> | <p>Foundation of the church<br/>2-4:31</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Its birth<br/>2</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Its growth<br/>3-4:31</p> <p>Administration of the church<br/>4:32-6:7</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Demonstration of love<br/>4:32-5:11</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Acceptance and opposition<br/>5:12-42</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Appointment of the seven<br/>6:1-7</p> <p>Persecution of the church<br/>6:8-8:3</p> | <p>Response of the church to persecution<br/>8:4</p> <p>Ministry of Philip<br/>8:5-40</p> <p>Evangelization of the Samaritans<br/>f5-25</p> <p>Evangelization of the eunuch<br/>26-39</p> <p>Evangelization in other cities<br/>40</p> <p>Conversion of the persecutor<br/>9:1-31</p> <p>Continuation of ministry<br/>9:32-43</p> <p>Extension of the gospel to the Gentiles<br/>10-11</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Salvation of Cornelius<br/>10</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Defense<br/>11:1-18</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Growth<br/>11:19-30</p> <p>Salvation from persecution by Herod<br/>12</p> | <p>Call of Saul and Barnabas<br/>13:1-3</p> <p>Encounter with a false prophet<br/>13:4-12</p> <p>Testimony in Antioch<br/>13:13-52</p> <p>Opposition in Iconium<br/>14:1-6a</p> <p>Testimony in Lystra<br/>14:6b-20</p> <p>Return to Antioch<br/>14:21-28</p> | <p>The issue raised<br/>15:1</p> <p>The journey to Jerusalem<br/>15:2-3</p> <p>The confrontation before the apostles<br/>15:4-5</p> <p>The council convened<br/>15:6-29</p> <p>The response in Antioch<br/>15:30-35</p> | <p>Preparation for the journey<br/>15:36-41</p> <p>Selection of Timothy<br/>16:1-5</p> <p>Advance into Macedonia<br/>16:6-11</p> <p>Message proclaimed at Philippi<br/>16:12-40</p> <p>Message proclaimed at Thessalonica<br/>17:1-9</p> <p>Message proclaimed at Berea<br/>17:19-15</p> <p>Message proclaimed at Athens<br/>17:16-34</p> <p>Message proclaimed at Corinth<br/>18:1-17</p> <p>Return to Antioch<br/>18:18-22</p> | <p>Ministry in Galatia and Phrygia<br/>18:23</p> <p>Ministry in Ephesus<br/>18:24-19:41</p> <p>Ministry in Macedonia and Greece<br/>20:1-5</p> <p>Ministry in Troas<br/>20:6-12</p> <p>Ministry at Miletus<br/>20:13-38</p> <p>Ministry at Tyre<br/>21:1-6</p> <p>Ministry at Caesarea<br/>21:7-16</p> | <p>Paul's Witness in Jerusalem<br/>21:17-23:35</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Detention<br/>21:17-36</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Defense<br/>21:37-23:10</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Deliverance<br/>23:11-35</p> <p>Paul's witness in Caesarea<br/>24-26</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Before Felix<br/>24</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Before Festus<br/>25:1-12</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Before Agrippa<br/>25:13-26:32</p> <p>Paul's witness on the way to Rome<br/>27-28:15</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">On ship<br/>27</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">In Malta<br/>28:1-15</p> <p>Paul's witness in Rome<br/>28:16-31</p> |