



The Acts of the Holy Spirit through the Church – Part 1

Abounding Grace Christian Church

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I. Introduction: Today we begin our study through the Book of Acts. This book is unique among the books of the New Testament. First, it is written by Luke who is the only Gentile writer of the New Testament. It is also considered to be a continuation of Luke's earlier writing – the Gospel that bears his name. Many refer to this book as simply “**The Book of Acts**” or “**The Acts of the Apostles**”, but perhaps a more accurate title would be “**The Acts of the Holy Spirit through the Church.**” There are a couple of reasons for this. First, though all of the original apostles (excluding Judas Iscariot of course) are mentioned in **1:13**, most of them are not mentioned again and some are only barely mentioned. Peter is prominent in the first part of the book and Paul is prominent in the latter part. The second reason for this title is that the Holy Spirit is more prominent than any of the apostles and works through believers who are not apostles as well. In fact, the Holy Spirit is mentioned or referred to approximately 51 times throughout this book.

“All that is said and done, by means of preaching and teaching the Word of the Lord, declaring the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ in power, signs and wonders, and the phenomenal growth and development of the Church numerically, plus the Doctrine, Grace and Gifts and Word – all is found in the operation of the HOLY SPIRIT. He is the ‘key’ to the Book of Acts!”¹

II. Some reasons why we should study this Book?

- A. It is a record of how Jesus began to fulfill His promise to build His Church – **Matthew 16:18**.
- B. It is a record of the Church immediately after the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ and how the Church, by the power of the Holy Spirit, carried out the Great Commission - **Matthew 28:18-20**.
- C. It provides examples of such things as the Baptism in the Holy Spirit, evangelism, team ministry, missions, prayer and so much more.
- D. It stirs our faith in regard to what God wants to do in the Church today.

III. Authorship.

- A. The ultimate Author is the Holy Spirit (**II Peter 1:21; II Timothy 3:14-17**).
- B. As already mentioned, the human author was a man by the name of “**Luke.**”
 1. Luke was referred to by Paul as the “**beloved physician**” (**Colossians 4:14**).
 2. There is much evidence to establish Luke as the author.
 - a. Both Acts and Luke are addressed to the same person—Theophilus (**Acts 1:1; Luke 1:3**).
 - b. The writer refers to a former account—the Gospel of Luke (**Acts 1:1**).
 - c. The style of both the Gospel and the Book of Acts are the same. Fifty words are used in common to the two books that are not found anywhere else in the New Testament.

¹Kevin J. Conner, *The Book of Acts* (Portland, OR: Bible Press, 1973), 3.

- d. Luke was a companion of Paul and, therefore, qualified to write the book (**Acts 16:10, 20:4-6, 28:16; Colossians 4:14; II Timothy 4:11; Philemon 4**).
- e. Luke's authorship of both books is unanimously attested to by Early Church tradition.

IV. When was the Book written?

- A. Many scholars place the dating of the Book of Acts somewhere between A.D. 62 and 64!² Only about 30 years after Jesus's Death, Burial and Resurrection!
- B. Evidence of Early Dating of the Book of Acts.
 - 1. Luke does not record the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70
 - 2. The apostle Paul was martyred by Nero in A.D. 65-66, so his letters had to have come earlier.
 - 3. No mention of Nero's persecution of Christians in A.D 64 when the large stadium was burned (Nero blamed the Christians).
- C. The Book of Acts covers approximately 33 years from the ascension of Jesus to the time when Paul had been in prison in Rome for two years.

V. Powerful Facts about the Book of Acts.

- A. Some things Scholars have said:

“Classical scholar and historian Colin Hemer chronicles Luke’s accuracy in the book of Acts verse by verse. With painstaking detail, Hemer identifies 84 FACTS IN THE LAST 16 CHAPTERS OF ACTS THAT HAVE BEEN CONFIRMED BY HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH.”³

“For Acts the confirmation of historicity is overwhelming.... Any attempt to reject its basic historicity must now appear absurd. Roman historians have long taken it for granted.”
Roman historian A. N. Sherwin-White⁴

“I began with a mind unfavorable to it [Acts].... It did not lie then in my line of life to investigate the subject minutely; but more recently I found myself often brought into contact with the book of Acts as an authority for the topography, antiquities, and society of Asia Minor. It was gradually borne in upon me that in various details the narrative showed marvelous truth.”⁵

“Luke is a historian of the first rank; not merely are his statements of fact trustworthy...This author should be placed along with the very greatest of historians.”
William Ramsay - Classical Scholar and Archaeologist.⁶

- B. Why is this Important?

- 1. Luke reports a total of 35 miracles in the same book in which he records all 84 of these historically confirmed details!!
- 2. Examples - The Lord Jesus through Paul:
 - a. Temporarily blinded a sorcerer (**13:11**);
 - b. Healed a man who was crippled from birth (**14:8**);
 - c. Cast out an evil spirit from a possessed girl (**16:18**);
 - d. **“performed many miracles”** that convinced many in the city of Ephesus to turn from sorcery to Jesus (**19:11–20**).

“Now, why would Luke be so accurate with trivial details like wind directions, water depths, and peculiar town names, but not be accurate when it comes to important events like miracles? In light of the fact that Luke has proven accurate with so many trivial details, it is nothing but pure anti-supernatural bias to say he’s not telling the truth about the miracle records.”⁷

²Josh McDowell & Sean McDowell, *Evidence that Demands a Verdict* (Nashville, TN: HarperCollins Publishers, 2017), 45.

³Norman L. Geisler and Frank Turek, *I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 256.

⁴A. N. Sherwin-White, *Roman Society and Roman Law in the New Testament*, p. 189. Quoted in Norman L. Geisler, *Christian Apologetics* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1976), 326.

⁵Sir William M. Ramsay, *St. Paul the Traveller and the Roman Citizen*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1953), as quoted in Josh McDowell, *Evidence that Demands a Verdict* (San Bernardino, CA: Here's Life Publishers, Inc., 1979), 70-71.

⁶Sir William M. Ramsay, *The Bearing of Recent Discovery on the Trustworthiness of the New Testament*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1962), 222. Quoted in Josh McDowell, *Evidence that Demands a Verdict* (San Bernardino, CA: Here's Life Publishers, Inc., 1979), 71.

⁷Norman L. Geisler and Frank Turek, *I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 260.

VI. Exposition of Chapter One.

- A. Verse 1 – **“The former account I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach.”** -
1. The **“former account”** is, as already stated, the Gospel of Luke.
 2. **“O Theophilus...”** – (cf. **Luke 1:3**). This name literally means; **“friend of God”, “dear to God”⁸, or “God lover.”⁹** The Bible tells us nothing about him. This was a very common name and it’s unclear whether it was being used as a proper name or as a title of honor. Dr. Stanley Horton suggests that **“...Theophilus was a Roman official of high rank, a personal friend whom Luke could count on to read the book and to have copies made and circulated.”¹⁰**
 3. **“...of all that Jesus began both to do and teach.”** – This tells us that the Gospels concern that which Christ began to do and teach and the book of Acts concerns His continued doing and teaching, by the Holy Spirit, through the Church. The book of Acts has no “amen” or ending!
- B. Verse 2 – **“Until the day in which He was taken up, after He through the Holy Spirit had given commandments to the apostles whom He had chosen.”** – This speaks of His ascension to the Father’s right hand. But, before He ascended, He, **“through the Holy Spirit”** gave them commandments. All throughout His earthly ministry, Jesus depended on the Holy Spirit. If it was true of Him, it certainly will be true of us!

⁸Stanley M. Horton, *Acts: A Logion Press Commentary* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 2001), 31.

⁹Robert James Utley, *Luke the Historian: The Book of Acts*, vol. Volume 3B, Study Guide Commentary Series (Marshall, TX: Bible Lessons International, 2003), 8.

¹⁰Horton, 32.