

Acts

Chapters

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The Book of Acts, written by the apostle Luke, is the account of early followers of Jesus who, obedient to the [Great Commission](#), began to spread the good news of a risen Saviour throughout the known world. Each section of the book (1-7; 8-12; 13-28) focuses on a particular audience, a key personality, and a significant phase in the expansion of the gospel message. While the apostles are mentioned collectively at several points, this book really records the acts of Peter (1-12) and of Paul (13-28). Some have called the book the “Acts of the Holy Spirit.”

Themes

The major theme in Acts is the spread of the gospel. [8](#) sets the scene for the whole book:

- But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere– in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

The results of this empowerment can be seen with the gospel spreading to the Jews throughout Jerusalem and Judea in Acts 1-7, to Samaritans in Acts 8, and to the Gentiles throughout the “rest of the world” in Acts 9-28.

Mission

Acts shows that the church is a missionary community. The followers of Jesus are sent out to share the good news, starting in Jerusalem and moving outward into all nations. Each step of the gospel’s advance follows the pattern of Acts 1:8, with the message of Jesus crossing geographical and cultural barriers. The mission of the early church is carried forward by ordinary believers as well as apostles, reminding us that the work of witness belongs to the whole church.

Church Life

The Book of Acts also gives us a picture of church life in the first century. The believers devoted

themselves to the apostles' teaching, to fellowship, the breaking of bread, and to prayer ([Acts 2:42](#)). All the believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, and to fellowship, and to sharing in meals (including the Lord's Supper), and to prayer. They shared their possessions, cared for the poor, and gathered regularly for worship. Leadership roles began to develop as the church grew. These accounts show how the Holy Spirit shaped the community of believers into a family marked by unity, generosity, and devotion to God.

Persecution

Another important part of the narrative of Acts relates to persecution. From the very beginning, the apostles faced threats, imprisonment, and violence for speaking about Jesus. Stephen was put to death for his bold witness ([Acts 7](#)). Many others suffered as well, yet persecution did not stop the spread of the gospel - it often had the opposite effect, scattering believers and taking the message into new places ([Acts 8:1-4](#)). Acts teaches that opposition and suffering are to be expected when following Christ, but God uses even these hardships to advance His purposes.

The Holy Spirit

Above all, Acts highlights the work of the [Holy Spirit](#). From [Pentecost](#) onward, the Spirit gives power for bold preaching, guides the direction of the mission, works miracles, and unites people from different backgrounds into one church. The Spirit fulfills God's promises in the [Old Testament](#) and shows that the new covenant has begun. Acts makes it clear that the growth of the church and the success of its mission are not due to human effort alone, but to the presence and power of the Holy Spirit.

Kerygma and the Speeches in Acts

Acts records a number of speeches given by early Christians. These speeches combine the proclamation of the gospel to introduce the hearers to Jesus, and an appeal for them to believe and become his followers. The content of these initial proclamations is sometimes referred to as [Kerygma](#) (from the Greek word κήρυγμα, related to κηρύσσω).

In total, Acts records 16 speeches:

- Peter's 7 speeches:
 - To Jews - [Acts 2:14-39](#), [Acts 3:13-26](#), [Acts 4:10-12](#), [Acts 5:30-32](#)
 - To God-fearers - [Acts 10:34-43](#), [Acts 11:5-17](#)
 - To believers - [Acts 15:7-11](#)
- Stephen's speech - [Acts 7:2-53](#)
- Paul's 8 speeches
 - To Jews - [Acts 13:16-41](#), [Acts 22:1-21](#), [Acts 24:10-21](#), [Acts 26:1-27](#), [Acts 28:17-20](#), [25-28](#)
 - To pagans - [Acts 14:15-17](#), [Acts 17:2-31](#)
 - To believers - [Acts 20:18-35](#)

There is significant variation between speeches and each is closely tailored to the audience and context. All of them, however, proclaim salvation through Jesus Christ.

The Jewish World during the Time of Acts

After the resurrection of Jesus, the early church initially grew with only Jewish converts in Jerusalem, but soon, with persecution from Jewish leaders, and through the leading of God (in particular, the conversion of Cornelius in Acts 10), the gospel spread to Gentiles (non-Jews).

Jews of the time divided the world up into Jews and Gentiles. Jews were further divided into Jews from Judea and Galilee, and Diaspora Jews (born outside Palestine). Jews were also divided into Hebraists and Hellenists (who had embraced the Greek culture and language). Gentiles were divided into Proselytes (those who had converted to Judaism and been baptised), God-fearers (those who respected the Hebrew God Yahweh but had not been circumcised) and pagans (those who followed other gods).

Conclusion

The Book of Acts tells how the risen Christ continued His work through the Holy Spirit, sending His people into the world with the gospel. It reminds us that the church is called to live in fellowship, to face opposition with courage, and to depend fully on the Spirit's power. Acts ends with the gospel still advancing, pointing to the truth that God's mission is ongoing and that we are called to take our place in it today.

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