

WITNESSES TO THE END

PREACHING THROUGH THE BIBLE: ACTS

Acts 1:8 (NASV)

I. INTRODUCTION

II. BACKGROUND

A. COMPOSITION

1. AUTHORSHIP

- a. Same as Gospel of Luke

Acts 1:2-3—*The first account I composed, Theophilus, about all that Jesus began to do and teach until the day when he was taken up to heaven, after he had by the Holy Spirit given order to the apostles whom He had chosen. . .*

- b. Attribution of authorship

- Muratorian Canon (170)
- Irenaeus (180)

2. LUKE THE AUTHOR

- a. Not a circumcised Jew

- b. Unknown hometown—possibly Troas (where he joined Paul) or Antioch (Syria)

- c. ‘Beloved physician’ with Paul—**Col 4:14 m**

- d. Companion of Paul

- 1. With Paul on 2nd and 3rd missionary journeys—and to Rome [‘we passages’]

- **Acts 16:10-17**—from Troas to Philippi
- **Acts 20:5-15**—from Philippi to Troas—to Miletus
- **Acts 21:1-18**—from Miletus to Jerusalem
- **Acts 27:1-28:16**—from Caesarea to Rome

- 2. Identified with Paul in three passages

- **Philem 24**—Luke with Paul—with Mark, Aristarchus, and Demas
- **Col 4:14**—Luke with Paul—with Mark, Aristarchus, Justus, Epaphras, and Demas
- **II Tim 4:11**—only Luke was with Paul

3. DATE

- a. Probably after destruction of Temple (70 AD)

- Detailed descriptions of fall of Jerusalem and Roman siege warfare—Lk 19 and 20

b. Probably before 90 AD

- Luke says nothing about Pauline letters
- These began to be published about 90 AD

4. LOCATION

- Many scholars say Ephesus—but this is uncertain

5. AUDIENCE

- a. Primary recipient—Theophilus—[Acts 1:1](#)
- b. General readership—Gentile Christian church

B. CONTENT

1. HISTORICAL NARRATIVE OF CHRONOLOGICAL EVENTS

2. DIALOGICAL MATERIAL

- a. About half the book is speeches, discourses, and letters—26 items
- b. 21 speeches by Apostles and other Christians
 - 8 addresses by Peter—2 sermons
 - Stephen's long testimony/sermon
 - 9 sermons/speeches by Paul
 - Cornelius's account—[chapter 10](#)
 - James at Jerusalem Council—[chapter 15](#)
 - James's advice to Paul in Jerusalem—[chapter 21](#)
- c. 5 speeches by non-Christians
 - Gamaliel's advice—[chapter 5](#)
 - Demetrius the Silversmith—[chapter 19](#)
 - City clerk of Ephesus—[chapter 19](#)
 - Tertullus the High Priest's attorney—[chapter 24](#)
 - Governor Festus—[chapter 25](#)
- d. Two Letters
 - From Council of Jerusalem to Gentile churches—[chapter 15](#)
 - From Claudius Lysias to Governor Felix—[chapter 23](#)

III. ORGANIZATION

A. TWO PARTS

1. CHAPTERS 1-12

- Geographical center mainly in Palestine
- Focused mainly on Jerusalem
- Leadership of original Apostles—especially Peter and John

2. CHAPTERS 13-28

- Geographical extension to ‘Asia’ and Europe
- Leadership of missionaries—especially Paul

B. STRUCTURE

1. PART ONE—CHAPTERS 1-12

- Prologue and Ascension—**1:1-11**
- Pentecost and Founding of Jerusalem Church—**1:12-2:47**
- Work of Peter and the Apostles—**chapters 3-5**
- Persecution of Hellenistic Christians, Diaspora, and First Missions—**chapters 6-8**
- Saul’s Conversion and Preparation for Gentile Mission—**chapters 9-12**

2. PART TWO—CHAPTERS 13-28

- First Missionary Journey and Jerusalem Council—**13:1-15:35**
- Second Missionary Journey—**15:36-18:22**
- Third Missionary Journey—**18:23-20:38**
- Paul’s Arrest in Jerusalem and Imprisonment in Caesarea—**chapters 21-26**
- Paul’s Journey to Rome and Imprisonment There—**chapters 27-28**

C. KEY TURNING POINTS AND EVENTS

- ❖ Christ’s Command/Commission—**1:4-8**
- ❖ Ascension—**1:9-11**
- ❖ Pentecost and Peter’s Sermon—**chapter 2**
- ❖ Peter and John Healed the Lame Beggar—**chapter 3**
- ❖ Selection of First Deacons—**chapter 6**
- ❖ Stephen’s Martyrdom and Diaspora—**7:54-8:3**
- ❖ Saul’s Conversion—**chapter 9**
- ❖ Cornelius’s Conversion—**chapter 10**
- ❖ Antioch Mission—**chapter 11**
- ❖ Beginning of First Missionary Journey—**chapter 13**

- ❖ Paul's Turning to Gentiles—[13:44ff](#)
- ❖ Council of Jerusalem—[chapter 15](#)
- ❖ Macedonian Vision—[chapter 16](#)
- ❖ Paul Met with Ephesian Elders at Miletus—[chapter 20](#)
- ❖ Paul Appealed to Rome—[25:10-12](#)

IV. PURPOSES

A. HISTORICAL

1. TO GIVE AN ACCURATE ACCOUNT—LIKE LUKE
 - Based on 'authentic knowledge'—1:3-4
 - In proper sequential order
2. HISTORY OF THE APOSTOLIC CHURCH—30s to mid-60s
3. NOT A COMPREHENSIVE HISTORY—BUT LIMITED
 - a. Limited in **time**
 - Just before Ascension—to Paul's imprisonment in Rome
 - b. Limited in **geographical** scope
 - Does not try to trace all missions—extending from Pentecost
 - c. Limited in **personalities**
 - Does not tell of missions by all Apostles
 - Focuses primarily on Peter and Paul
4. SHOWS PROSPECT FOR FUTURE CONTINUITY AND MISSION OF CHURCH
 - No a strong eschatological emphasis

B. APOLOGETIC

1. SHOWS CHURCH WAS IN AGREEMENT WITH ORIGINAL JEWISH DOCTRINE
2. SHOWS CHURCH PRESENTED NO REAL THREAT TO ROMAN EMPIRE
 - a. Opposition in earliest days was mainly from religious leaders
 - b. Only political opposition came from client King Herod Agrippa
 - c. Shows favorable treatment of church by civil rulers
 - Centurion protected Paul in [chapter 21](#)
 - Festus and Felix found no fault in Paul—[chapters 24-25](#)
 - Herod Agrippa II found no fault with Paul—[chapter 26](#)

V. MAIN THEMES

A. GOD'S FULFILLMENT OF PROMISE TO/THROUGH ISRAEL

1. AS LUKE HAD SHOWED IN GOSPEL
2. GOD WAS FAITHFUL—FULFILLING OLD COVENANT IN CHRIST

B. GOD WORKING THROUGH THE CHURCH

1. SEAMLESS CONTINUITY FROM OLD TO NEW COVENANT

- a. Of **message/doctrine**

1. New Covenant of Christ fulfilled intentions of Old Covenant
2. Apostles perpetuated His preaching and teaching

- b. Of **ministry**

Apostles continued ministering as Christ did

2. THE CHURCH IS THE NEW 'WAY'

- a. Based on John 14:6—"*I Am the Way, the Truth, and the Life*"

- b. People of the 'Way'

- **9:2**—Saul persecuted them
- **18:25**—Apollos had been instructed in the Way
- **19:9, 23**—Ephesians opposed the Way—and it caused a disturbance there
- **22:4**—Paul said he had persecuted the Way
- **24:14, 22**—Paul said he was part of the Way—Felix understood more about the Way

C. UNIVERSAL OFFER OF SALVATION

1. THIS CONTINUED FROM LUKE'S GOSPEL
2. GOD WORKING THROUGH HISTORY TO REDEEM ALL CREATION
3. SALVATION INTENDED FOR PEOPLE OF ALL NATIONS

D. CHURCH FOUNDATION AND GROWTH

1. FOUNDED UPON TWO THINGS—PREACHING AND TEACHING

5:42—*And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they kept right on teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ*

- a. **Preaching** the Gospel—the **Kerygma**

1. First two examples—Peter’s two sermons—[Acts 2 and 3](#)

2. Message:

- God sent His son
- You/we crucified Him
- Repent and believe the good news

b. **Teaching**—The **Didache**

- They continued in the teachings of the Apostles—**2:42**

2. GROWTH

a. Pattern determined by Christ

- [Acts 1:8](#)—Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, uttermost parts of the earth

b. Divine Direction

- Every step and change of direction led by the Holy Spirit

c. Global expansion into Gentile world

E. THE GOSPEL OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

1. THE ACTION AND PRESENCE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT PERMEATE THE BOOK

- Holy Spirit or Spirit is mentioned 59 times!

2. ACTS BEGINS—WITH THE SPIRIT—being promised to the disciples—[1:5](#)

3. ACTS ENDS—WITH THE SPIRIT—speaking through Isaiah—[Acts 28:25](#)

4. SURE SIGN/PRODUCT OF SALVATION IS—RECEIVING THE HOLY SPIRIT

- At Pentecost—[2:38](#)
- The Samaritans—[8:15-17](#)
- Cornelius—[10:44](#)
- Twelve Ephesian elders—[19:1-7](#)

VI. UNIQUE CONTRIBUTIONS

A. ONLY BIBLICAL ACCOUNT OF ASCENSION—[1:9-11](#)

B. EMPHASIS ON JESUS AS ‘SERVANT’

1. LUKE—ONLY GOSPEL AUTHOR TO DESCRIBE JESUS AS ‘SERVANT’—[Lk 22:26-27](#)

2. REFERENCES IN ACTS TO JESUS AS SERVANT

- [Acts 3:13, 26](#)

- Acts 4:27, 30

3. SUCCINCT PROCLAMATION OF DUAL ROLE OF JESUS

- GOD HAS PROCLAIMED HIM—‘LORD AND CHRIST’—2:36

4. PROVIDES KEY TO DATING EARLY MISSIONARY ACTIVITY

- 18:2—Claudius’s expulsion of Jews from Rome—about 49 AD
- 18:18ff—Gallio’s rule in Achaia—about 51-53 AD

VII. BIBLICAL TEXT

1 The first account I composed, Theophilus, about all that Jesus began to do and teach, 2 until the day when He was taken up to heaven, after He had by the Holy Spirit given orders to the apostles whom He had chosen. 3 To these He also presented Himself alive after His suffering, by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a period of forty days and speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God. 4 Gathering them together, He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised, “Which,” He said, “you heard of from Me; 5 for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.” 6 So when they had come together, they were asking Him, saying, “Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?” 7 He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority; 8 but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.”

VIII. EXPOSITION

A. THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

1. POWER THAT EMBOLDENED

- Religious rulers were amazed at Peter and John’s confidence—though they were ‘uneducated’ and ‘untrained’—4:13
- When threatened—they were not intimidated

4:31—And when they had prayed, the place where they had gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak the word of God with boldness.

- The courage to be witnesses—was accompanied by the Holy Spirit

5:29-32—when commanded to stop teaching—But Peter and the apostles answered, “We must obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom you had put to death by hanging Him on a cross. He is the one whom God exalted to His right hand as a Prince and a Savior, to grant repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. And

we are witnesses of these things; and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey Him.”

2. POWER THAT EQUIPPED

a. To **Preach**

1. At Pentecost

- They spoke the mighty deeds of God—**2:11**
- In tongues—given by the Holy Spirit—that people could understand—**2:4**

2. In Peter’s Pentecost sermon—he explained

- The gift of prophecy would come with the Holy Spirit—**2:18**

3. Peter—filled with Holy Spirit before preaching second sermon—**4:8**

4. Holy Spirit worked on listeners

- Cornelius’s household—as Peter preached—**10:44**

5. Paul was ‘pressed in the Spirit’—when he testified in Corinth—**18:5**

b. To **Heal**

- Peter and John healed lame man—**chapter 4**
- Peter raised Tabitha—**chapter 9**
- Paul raised Eutyches—**chapter 20**

c. To **Perform Miracles**

- Early—in Jerusalem—the apostles did many signs and wonders—**2:43**
- Later—Paul did many miracles in Ephesus—**chapter 19**

d. To **Prophecy**—predictively

- Agabus prophesied—by the Holy Spirit—famine in Palestine—**11:27-28**
- Agabus prophesied—by the Holy Spirit—binding/imprisonment of Paul—**22:11**

3. POWER THAT DELIVERED

a. Freed Peter from jail—**chapter 12**

b. Freed Paul and Silas from Philippian jail—**chapter 16**

4. POWER THAT DIRECTED

a. **Philip the Deacon**—**chapter 8**

- Directed him to the Ethiopian eunuch
- Afterward—transported him away instantly

b. **Peter**

- Directed him to go to Cornelius's home—**chapter 10**

c. **Paul**

- Forbade going to Asia or Bithynia—directed to Macedonia—**chapter 16**
- Told Paul to stay in Corinth longer [6 months]—**chapter 18**
- Directed him to return to Jerusalem—then Rome—**chapters 19 and 20**

5. POWER THAT INSTRUCTED

- Guided Jerusalem elders in decision at Jerusalem Council—**chapter 15**

6. POWER THAT COMMISSIONED

- a. Set apart Barnabas and Saul—for first missionary journey—**13:2**
- b. Selected and set apart elders [at Ephesus]—**20:28**

7. **APPLICATION**

Every aspect of our ministry must be empowered and directed by the Holy Spirit

B. WITNESSES

1. MEANING

- a. Qualified and prepared to give a testimony of what we have seen
- b. Literally—**μαρτυς** = to be a 'martyr'

2. CONTEXT

- a. Jesus had identified them as His witnesses—to be empowered by the Spirit

Lk 24:48-49—*You are witnesses of these things. And behold, I am sending forth the promise of My father upon you, but you are to stay in the city until you are clothed with power on high.*

- b. **Now**—He reiterates that promise—with a commission to fulfill
- c. This was the *basic* identity of an Apostle—**1:21-22**
 - One who had walked with Jesus from the beginning
 - And who had **witnessed** His resurrection

3. FULFILLMENT IN ACTS

- a. **Ten times**—Apostles identified themselves in **Acts** as 'witnesses'
- b. Personal knowledge and testimony—gave **credibility** and **power** to their message

4:33—*And with great power the apostles were giving testimony to the resurrection of the lord Jesus, and abundant grace was upon them all.*

c. Personal experience with Jesus' Resurrection gave them **confidence** and **certainty**

d. Active Witnesses

1. Not just seeing—witnessing an event
2. But also testifying—*proclaiming* what we have seen

e. Witnesses to the Resurrection

1. Became the power of the Early Church
2. Knowing this power—gave Christians confidence to put their lives on the line
3. The '**blood of the martyrs became the seed**'
4. Literally 'martyr-witnesses'

a. Jesus warned James and John of martyrdom

Mk 10:39—*You will drink the cup I drink and be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with.*

b. Biblical record of martyrdom

1. **Stephen**—stoned in Jerusalem—**Acts 8**
2. **James**—John's brother—beheaded by Herod Agrippa I (44 AD?)—**Acts 12**

c. Church tradition

1. **Peter**—crucified by Nero (c. 64)—in Rome
2. **Andrew**—crucified—by Governor Aegeas under Nero—in Greece (c. 60AD)
3. **Philip**—crucified upside down (or beheaded) in Hierapolis in Phrygia (Turkey)
4. **Bartholomew**—flayed and crucified in Armenia—by king's brother Astyages
5. **Matthew**—martyred in Ethiopia—killed by sword at the altar
6. **Thomas**—pierced by spears—under King Misdai—in India
7. **James** son of Alphaeus—crucified at Ostrakine, Lower Egypt
8. **Thaddeus/Jude**—axed to death in Beirut, Syria (c. 65) with Simon the Zealot
9. **Simon the Zealot**—martyred with Thaddeus (above)
10. **Matthias**—stoned by Ethiopian cannibals
11. **Paul**—beheaded by Nero (c. 64)—on Ostian Way in Rome

12. **Barnabas**—stoned in Salamis (Cyprus)
13. **Timothy**—stoned by pagans in Ephesus (c. 97)

4. APPLICATION

- We too are called to ‘witness’ to the power of the resurrection
- We do this by martyrdom—dying to self—and carrying our cross for Christ.

C. TO THE REMOTEST PART OF THE EARTH

1. MEANING

- a. Remotest part = **εσχατου της γης**
- b. Literally—the ‘end’ [eschatos] = **last in space—in rank—in time**

2. PRACTICAL DIMENSIONS—APPLICATION

a. Last in Space

1. **Geographical**—to every corner of the world
2. **Cosmic**—all creation—God is redeeming His entire realm—all life!

➤ **Mk 16:15**—*Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation.*

b. Last in Rank

1. **Ethnic/national**—to all peoples and races
2. **Social**—to people of every rank—every class—*every* person has value!

c. Last in Time

Eschatological—until the end of the world—the end of the age—until He comes!

➤ If He comes suddenly—He should find us hard at work

d. Existential

1. Our uttermost **effort**
 - Give it all we have—to the very end of our energy and days
2. Our ultimate **purpose**
 - This is our ‘end’—our reason for being—to glorify Him

3. METHOD/PATTERN

a. Concentric circles

Jerusalem → Judea → Samaria → the End of the Earth

b. Begin with—the close relationships God has given us

c. But don't forget

- He also calls us to go to the fringe
- Beyond our comfortable inner circles