

THE BOOKS OF ACTS – OCTOBER 1-28

I. AUTHOR: Luke, the physician.

II. INTRODUCTION:

- Luke's two-volume work of the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts explains how Jesus brought and began to build God's earthly Kingdom through the proclamation of the gospel.
- In the Gospel of Luke, Luke described the foundation that Jesus laid for the Kingdom during his earthly ministry.
- In the book of Acts, Luke described how Jesus poured out the Holy Spirit to empower the apostles and the church to continue His Kingdom-building work. In this way, God's Kingdom is the overarching story of both volumes of Luke's work.
- Luke showed throughout the entire Book of Acts that internal tensions and external opposition were constant difficulties, but they could not stop the progress of the gospel witness that was empowered by the Holy Spirit.

III. DATE: A.D. 61 and 64

IV. PURPOSE:

- A. The Book of Acts provides a condensed history of the early church, an eyewitness account of the miraculous spread of the gospel from Jerusalem to Rome.
- B. The book details how the Holy Spirit authorized our spiritual forebearers to carry out Jesus' mandate throughout the world.
- C. The accounts in Acts include stirring examples for us to follow, but the recurring theme of the Book of Acts is that our spiritual ancestors were empowered by the Holy Spirit.
- D. The same power is available for us today. God has not left us at the mercy of our own weaknesses or at the mercy of the systems of this world; He has sent the Holy Spirit to help us follow their example, and to be Jesus' witnesses in all the earth.

V. OUTLINE:

- A. The Apostles' Witness In Jerusalem (1:1 – 6:7)
 1. The Acts of the Holy Spirit (1:1-26)
 2. The Birth of the Church (2:1-47)
 3. The Healing of the lame man (3:1-26)
 4. Salvation is in no one else (4:1-37)
 5. The arrest of Peter and John (5:1-42)
 6. The Leadership of the Infant Church (6:1-7)

- B. The Early Church's Witness To All Judea And Samaria (6:8 – 9:31)
 - 1. Stephen's Defense and Martyrdom (6:8 – 7:60)
 - 2. The Church Scattered (8:1-40)
 - 3. Saul's Conversion (9:1-31)

- C. The Witness To The End Of The Earth (9:32-28:31)
 - 1. Extension of truth to the Gentiles (9:32-11:30)
 - 2. Peter's miraculous escape from prison (12:1-25)
 - 3. Paul's first missionary trip (13:1 – 14:28)
 - 4. The Jerusalem conference concerning Gentiles in the Church (15:1 – 35)
 - 5. Paul's second missionary trip (15:36 – 18:22)
 - 6. Paul's third missionary trip (18:23 – 21:26)
 - 7. Paul's trip to Rome (21:27 – 28:31)

VI. ORGANIZATION

- A. Luke organized the book of Acts around Jesus' call for geographical witness expansion.
 - 1. First, Luke described the growth of the gospel in Jerusalem: Acts 1:1-8:4.
 - 2. Second, Luke described the growth of the kingdom in Judea and Samaria: Acts 8:5 - 9:31.
 - 3. Third, Luke recounted the way the church carried the gospel to the ends of the earth: Acts 9:32 – 28:31.

- B. This third section is long and focuses on four stages of growth suggested by Luke's summary statements:
 - 1. First, in Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch: Acts 9:32 – 12:25.
 - 2. Second, in Cyprus, Phrygia and Galatia: Acts 13:1 – 15:35.
 - 3. Third, in Asia, Macedonia and Achaia: Acts 15:36 – 21:16.
 - 4. Fourth, all the way to Rome: Acts 21:17 – 28:31.

VII. STRUCTURE

- A. **The Birth of the Church and the Commission Acts 1:1-8**
 - 1. The Book of Acts begins in Jerusalem with the disciples who were gathered in a room on the Day of Pentecost as per Jesus' instruction and command.
 - 2. Jesus commissioned the apostles in Acts 1:8, and instructed them to serve as witnesses, proclaiming the gospel first in Jerusalem, and then spreading out to the rest of the world.
 - 3. Consider Jesus' words to the apostles in Acts 1:8:
“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”
 - 4. Here Jesus laid out a geographical strategy for the gospel witness of the church.
 - 5. Empowered by the Holy Spirit, the apostles were to begin witnessing in Jerusalem, then carry the gospel to Judea and Samaria, and finally to the ends of the earth.

- B. **The Growth of the Kingdom in Jerusalem: Acts 1:9–8:4**
 - 1. Jerusalem was the capital city of ancient Israel, God's special nation in the Old Testament. Jerusalem was the starting point of Luke's account because of the central

role it had played in God's Kingdom throughout the Old Testament, and also in Jesus' ministry.

2. Luke reported the growth of the kingdom through the gospel in Jerusalem in four major batches of narratives:
 - a. First, the anticipation and outpouring of the Spirit in Acts 1 and 2;
 - b. Second, Peter's temple sermon and the persecution that followed in Acts 3 and 4;
 - c. Third, the story of Ananias and Sapphira and the persecution that followed in Acts 5; and
 - d. Fourth, the selection of deacons and the persecution that followed in Acts 6:1-8:4.

C. The Growth of the Kingdom in Judea and Samaria: Acts 8:5–9:31

1. In spite of the internal tension and outward opposition the fledgling church in Jerusalem was not discouraged.
2. Instead, under the power of the Holy Spirit, the gospel witness continued to go forth with great strength, and unhindered in its progress.
3. The second major division of Acts focuses on the gospel witness of the church in Judea and Samaria in Acts 8:5 – 9:31.
4. Luke's focus on Judea and Samaria can be divided into two main batches of stories:
 - a. the ministry of Philip in Acts 8:5-40 and
 - b. the conversion of Paul in Acts 9:1-31.

D. The Growth of the Kingdom in Phoenicia, Cypress and Antioch: Acts 9:32–12:25

1. The third major section of Acts describes how the gospel expanded beyond the borders of the Promised Land, to the ends of the earth, as it was known in that day, beginning with the advance of the gospel in Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch.
2. It concerns the first significant spread of the gospel beyond Judea and Samaria as it extended into the nearby Gentile lands. In this portion of Acts, we read of:
 - a. Peter's ministry in Lydda and Joppa in Acts 9:32-43; in
 - b. Peter's ministry in Caesarea to the Gentile Cornelius in Acts 10:1-11:18;
 - c. The expansion of the gospel to Syrian Antioch in Acts 11:19-30; and
 - d. Peter's miraculous deliverance from prison in Jerusalem in Acts 12:1-25.

E. The Growth of the Kingdom in Cyprus, Phrygia and Galatia: Acts 13:1–15:35

1. In Acts 13:1-15:35, Luke turned to his fourth major section: the spread of the gospel in Cyprus, Phrygia and Galatia.
2. In this section, the gospel moved further from Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria, stretching into the eastern portions of Asia Minor. There are two main parts:
 - a. Paul's first missionary journey itself in Acts 13:1 – 14:28, and
 - b. the council in Jerusalem in Acts 15:1-35.
3. In keeping with his strategy, Luke reflected the pattern of internal growth and tension in this section as well. He pointed to internal growth through things such as:
 - a. Paul's strengthening of the churches in Galatia in Acts chapter 14; and
 - b. The Jerusalem council's decision not to demand circumcision of Gentile converts to Christ in Acts 15.

4. Tension arose between Jewish and Gentile believers over the issues of Circumcision and the rigors of the traditional Jewish diet in Acts 15.

F. The Growth of the Kingdom in Asia, Macedonia and Achaia: Acts 15:36–21:16

1. The fifth major section of Acts runs from Acts 15:36-21:16, where the gospel witness was extended to the Roman provinces of Asia, Macedonia and Achaia.
2. This portion of Acts focuses on Paul's second and third missionary journeys, during which time Paul traveled through eastern Asia Minor, as he had before, but then pressed on to the province of Asia in western Asia Minor, and across the Aegean Sea to many cities in Macedonia and Achaia in modern-day Greece.
3. Paul's second missionary journey is recorded in Acts 15:36-18:22, and his third missionary journey in Acts 18:23-21:16.

G. The Growth of the Kingdom in Rome: Acts 21:17–28:31

1. Finally, the last major portion of Luke's narrative concentrates on gospel witness in Rome in Acts 21:17-28:31.
2. This section roughly divides into four large sections:
 - a. Paul's final witness in Jerusalem in Acts 21:17- 23:11;
 - b. Paul's imprisonment in Acts 23:12-26:32;
 - c. Paul's difficult journey to Rome in Acts 27:1-28:14; and finally
 - d. Paul's witness in Rome in Acts 28:15-31.
3. The Holy Spirit empowered the church to take the gospel from Jerusalem to the very capital of the Roman Empire.

NOTE: Despite the internal tensions and external oppositions that the church endured, the unhindered gospel brought the church to spiritual maturity and numerical expansion as it spread the Kingdom of God to the ends of the earth. Each major section of the Book of Acts proves that the faithful witnesses of the gospel had not failed.

S.O.A.P. ing THE BOOK OF ACTS TOGETHER

- A. Scripture:** Pay attention to the Scripture you're reading. Underline or write out verses that stand out to you. You'll be amazed at what the Holy Spirit would reveal to you by doing that.
- B. Observation:** Who is/are the audience? What was the purpose/reason for that portion of Scripture? Is there repetition of any words? Does anything stand out to you?
- C. Application:** How can I apply what the Holy Spirit is showing me from God's Word? What changes do I need to make? Is there an action to take? How am I encouraged?
- D. Prayer:** Pray God's Word back to Him. It helps to pray/declare out loud if possible. Confess any sin of commission or omission. Meditate on God's Word in prayer, and let it sink deep into your spirit.

Conclusion: When you take the time to SOAP the Scriptures, you're enabled to dig deeper into your understanding of the Scriptures, and properly apply them to your life.