

New Testament Foundations: Session Seven

Acts: The First Church History

Authorship

1. Acts is Luke's _____ volume. His first account records what Jesus *began* to do (Luke 1:1) and the second volume records what Jesus *continued* to do by the ministry of the Holy Spirit.
2. Luke wrote Acts and _____ in some of the action. The point of view changes from the third to the first person the three times Luke joins the narrative (16:10; 20:5; 27:2).
3. Luke used many different _____ to compile his work including personal experiences, Paul's firsthand accounts, the account of Phillip (Luke stayed in his house for some days on their last visit to Jerusalem), and the elders and leaders in Jerusalem.
4. Acts ends with Paul still under _____ awaiting his trial in Rome. Because there is no mention of the trial, it is assumed it was written before it transpired. This would put the date around 62 AD.
5. Acts provides the historical _____ for most of Paul's epistles.

Structure

1. An interesting feature of Acts is the " _____ " Luke provides at various intervals throughout his account.

| | |
|----------|--|
| 2:47 | And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved. |
| 6:7 | So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith. |
| 9:31 | Then the church throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria enjoyed a time of peace and was strengthened. Living in the fear of the Lord and encouraged by the Holy Spirit, it increased in numbers. |
| 12:24 | But the word of the Lord continued to spread and flourish. |
| 16:5 | So the churches were strengthened in the faith and grew daily in numbers. |
| 19:20 | In this way the word of the Lord spread widely and grew in power. |
| 28:31,32 | For two years Paul stayed in his own rented house and welcomed all who came to him. He preached the kingdom of God and taught about the Jesus Christ—with all boldness and without hindrance. |

2. Luke's _____ statement is: "You shall 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."
3. The first section displays the ministry of the Holy Spirit through the Church to the Jews in _____ and Judea.
4. The second section displays the ministry of the Holy Spirit through the Church to the _____.

5. The third section displays the ministry of the Holy Spirit through the Church to the _____.
6. The remainder of the book is centered around Paul's _____ missionary journeys (including his trip to Rome).
 - Paul's first missionary journey began in 47 AD with Barnabas (and Mark, briefly). He went to Asia Minor through Cyprus. (13:1-14:28)
 - Paul's second missionary journey began in 49 with Silas (later Timothy and Luke) He went to Europe through Asia Minor. (15:36-18:22)
 - Paul's third missionary journey began in 52 with Timothy (and probably others). He went to Ephesus through Asia Minor. (18:23-21:16)
 - After almost three years in Ephesus, Paul visited Corinth and then traveled to Jerusalem. There he was arrested by the Romans, imprisoned in Caesarea for two years, and then sent to Caesar.

Purpose

1. Luke's purpose for writing Acts was _____.
 - Luke wanted to demonstrate the _____ of the Church from the isolated city of Jerusalem to the great metropolis of Rome through the infilling, empowerment, and guidance of the Holy Spirit.

William Barclay

*"Luke's great aim was to show the expansion of Christianity, to show how that religion which began in a little corner of Palestine had in a little more than 30 years reached Rome."*¹

2. Luke's purpose for writing Acts was _____.

F.F. Bruce

*"The author of Acts has a right to be called the first Christian historian; he should also be recognized as the first Christian Apologist."*²

- Acts demonstrates the superiority of Christianity to _____ religions.
- Acts demonstrates the superiority of Christianity to _____.
- Acts demonstrates that Christianity is not contrary to the _____.
- Acts is also an apologetic to large segments of the first century church that were suspicious of the Gentile mission and the ministry of Paul.

| PETER | PAUL |
|--------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Lame man healed (3) | Lame man healed (14) |
| Simon the sorcerer (8) | Elymas the sorcerer (13) |
| Influence of shadow (5) | Influence of handkerchief (19) |
| Laying on of hands (8) | Laying on of hands (19) |
| Worshipped by crowd (10) | Worshipped by crowd (14) |
| Tabitha raised (9) | Eutychus raised (20) |
| Peter imprisoned (12) | Paul imprisoned (18) |

¹ William Barclay, The Acts of the Apostles, p. xvii

² F.F. Bruce, The Acts of the Apostles, p. 22

3. Luke's purpose for writing Acts was _____.

- Acts provides an experiential _____ for much of the theology of the New Testament that is expressed in the Pauline and General epistles.

The Theology of Acts

1. The following is a brief and partial list of some of the important doctrines featured in Acts.

| DOCTRINE | TEXT | VERSE |
|---------------------------|-------|---|
| The return of Christ | 1:11 | "This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven." |
| Salvation in Christ alone | 4:12 | "And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved." |
| God is the Creator | 4:24 | "Sovereign Lord, you made the heaven and the earth and the sea, and everything in them." |
| The exaltation of Jesus | 5:31 | "God exalted Him to His own right hand as Prince and Savior." |
| The Lordship of Jesus | 10:36 | "Jesus Christ is Lord of all." |
| The Holy Spirit ministry | 13:2 | "And while they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.'" |
| The resurrection | 13:30 | "But God raised Him from the dead." |
| Church government | 14:23 | "And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, having prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed." |
| Salvation by faith alone | 16:31 | "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you shall be saved." |
| The providence of God | 17:25 | "...He Himself gives to all life and breath and all things." |
| Final judgment | 17:31 | "He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed..." |

2. But the primary doctrine that shines on every page is the person and work of Jesus Christ.

The foundation of the faith of these first disciples was a Person who lived among them and who claimed to be the Son of God. Luke began the book of Acts with some affirmations about Jesus. The risen Christ gave evidence and encouragement to the disciples in facing the task before them (1:1-5). The ascended Christ universalized and vitalized the gospel (1:9). The coming Christ will return to bring to a culmination all that God has done (1:10-11).

The sermons included in the book of Acts (2:14-40; 3:12-26; 4:8-12; 5:29-32; 10:34-43; 13:16-41) further developed these themes concerning Jesus Christ and affirmed that all of this happened in fulfillment of the promises God made to the people of Israel. Luke was proclaiming to the people of his day the centrality of Christ.