

The Acts of the Apostles

Part I

Introduction

Ascension Men's Bible Study

Session I: Introduction

- Author
- To whom Acts was written
- When and where Acts was written
- Primary audience for Acts
- Structure
 - Leading figures
 - Central cities
 - Geographical movement
- Themes
 - Holy Spirit
 - Advent of the Christian Church
 - Mission to all the world
 - Peter
 - Paul
- Outline for the study of Acts

Author

- Anonymous: like most of the gospel writers, the author does not identify himself
- Tradition: identifies the author as Luke
 - Gentile physician
 - Same author as Gospel of Luke
 - See opening line Luke 1:1-3 and Acts 1:1-4 pg 1434 & pg 1527
 - Paul's companion 2 Timothy 4:11 pg 1695
 - Both the gospel and Acts show concern for the sick using medical terminology – consistent with Luke's occupation – see Colossians 4:14 pg 1675

Author & Date

- Eye witness to several of the events
 - Reference “we passages” in Acts 16:10 and 16:11 pg 1555-56
- Date: Around A.D. 63
 - Inferred by what Luke does not tell us:
 - Fire in Rome & Persecution by Nero in A.D. 64
 - Martyrdom of Peter and Paul in the mid 60's
 - Rome's military conquest of Jerusalem in A.D. 70
 - Luke was apparently bringing the history of the church up to date around A.D. 63 just after Paul's detainment in Rome from A.D.60-62

Written to Whom

- Definite link to the Gospel of Luke: Luke 1:1 and Acts 1:1 both refer to writing to Theophilus.
- Theophilus: essentially nothing is known for sure about this person. The result is several theories:
 - 1. Coptic view: Jew of Alexandria
 - 2. Roman Official: Luke refers to him as “Most Excellent” title often used for Roman officials. Luke 1:3 pg 1434
 - 3. Honorary title: Not a person but a title which means “Friend of God”. Therefore these books are not written to a specific person, but to all who believe – *friends of God*.
 - 4. Jewish Priest: Theophilus ben Ananus was a Jewish high priest of the Jewish temple from 37-41 A.D. He was a Sadducee and several scholars claim both Luke and Acts were written to the Sadducees.
 - 5. Titus Flavius Sabinus: a prefect of Rome and apparently a convert to Christianity.
 - 6. Paul Lawyer: Some believe he could have been Paul’s lawyer during the trial times.

Audience/purpose

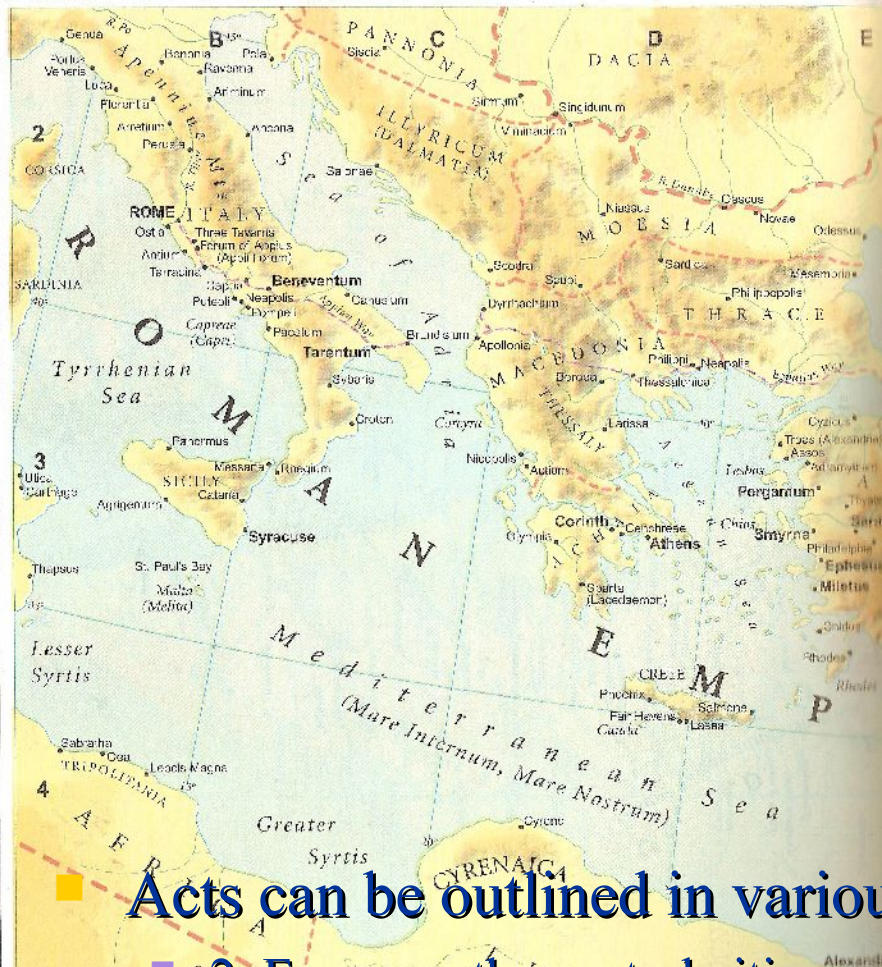
- Luke emphasizes the beginning of the universal church.
 - Expansion beyond the Jewish community to the Gentile communities.
 - Coming of the Holy Spirit leading the church into all the world.
 - Missionary journeys of Peter and Paul – especially Paul.
 - Acts thus becomes a bridge from the Gospels to the letter's of Paul.
 - Treatise to confirm the apostleship of Paul.

Structure

- Acts can be outlined in various ways
 - 1. Focusing on the leading figures
 - Chapters 1-12: leadership of Peter
 - 13-28 missionary efforts of Paul expanding the church.

Structure

MAP 13



MAP 13



Acts can be outlined in various ways

2. Focus on the central cities

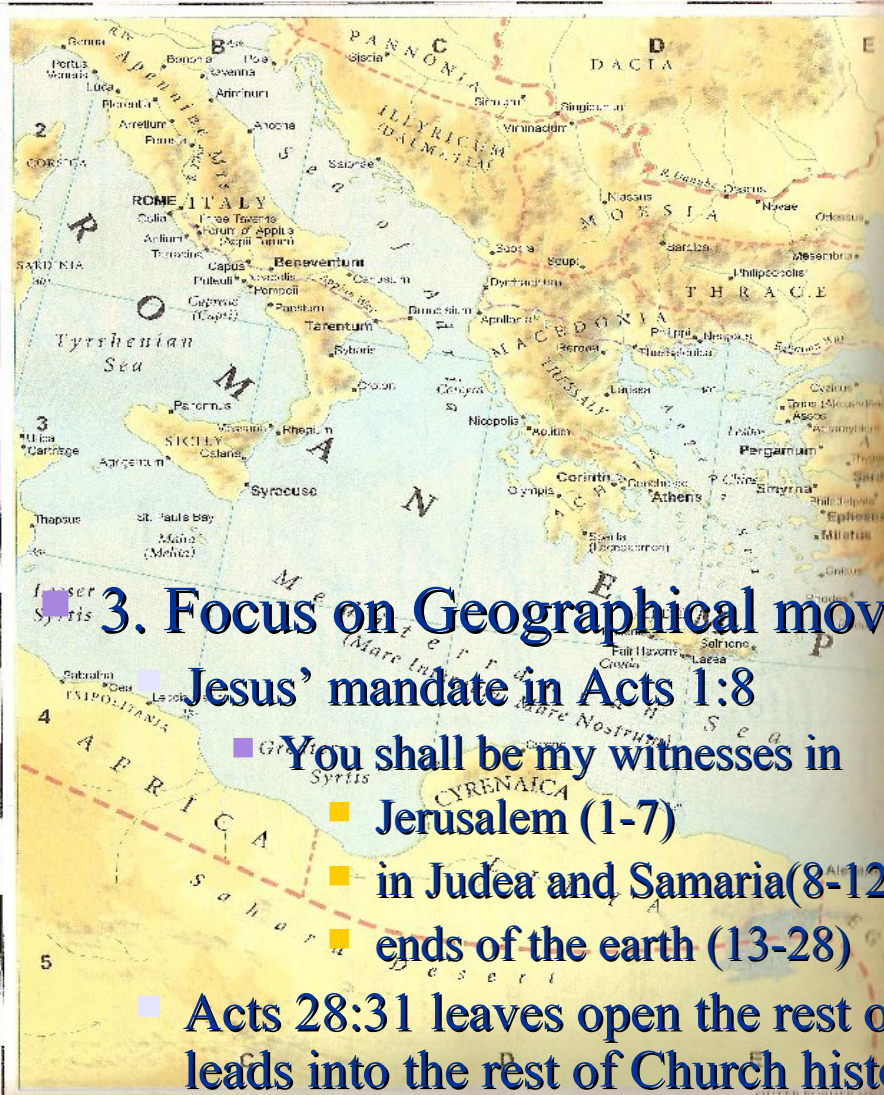
Jerusalem Acts: 1:4

Rome: Acts 28:14

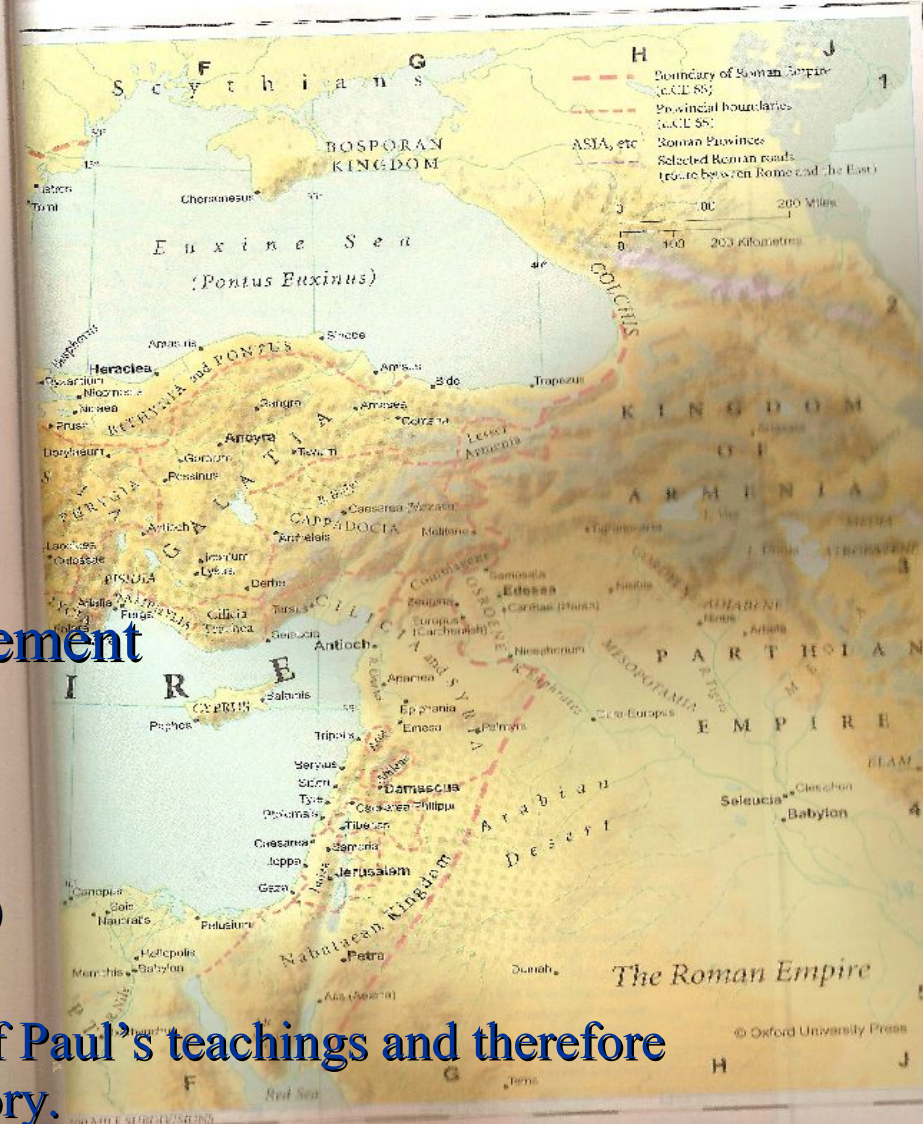
The Roman Empire

Structure

MAP 13



MAP 13



3. Focus on Geographical movement

Jesus' mandate in Acts 1:8

You shall be my witnesses in

Jerusalem (1-7)

in Judea and Samaria (8-12)

ends of the earth (13-28)

Acts 28:31 leaves open the rest of Paul's teachings and therefore leads into the rest of Church history.

Themes

- First 30 years of church history: from Jesus Ascension to Paul's imprisonment in Rome
- Narrative of inspiring heroes, speeches, and adventures
- Theological meaning of history showing how God orchestrated things to further the plan of salvation
- Moral lessons highlighted by particular people and events
- Concentrates on only Two of the Apostles, not all 13
- Main emphasis is on the Holy Spirit
- Apologetic defense of the Apostleship of Paul

Emphasis on Holy Spirit

- Upon the Apostles: Acts 2:1-4 pg 1528
- Sends them out to evangelize Israel Acts 1-9
ref Acts 1: 8 pg 1527
- Gentiles: ref Acts 10:27-29 pg 1545
- Gospel meets with staggering success
 - Church is quickly built up
 - In the face of opposition the church
 - Prisons, persecutions, plots against the church
 - Holy Spirit guides and delivers the church

General Outline for our study

- January: Introduction
- February: Ascension to Pentecost
- March: Gospel in Jerusalem – Early Church
- April: Gospel in Jerusalem – Establishment of the church and her mission, Apostleship of Peter and Paul
- May: Gospel in Judea and Samaria – Ministry of Phillip and Peter
- June: Gospel in Judea and Samaria – Conversion of Saul, Gentile conversions, persecution of the church
- July/Aug: Gospel to Ends of the Earth – Paul's first missionary journey, Counsel of Jerusalem
- Sep: Paul's second and third missionary journeys
- Oct: Paul's arrest and imprisonment
- Nov: Paul's journey to and ministry in Rome.

