

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW OF ACTS

I. Introduction

A. The title

B. The purpose of Acts

1. Luke's stated purpose (Luke 1:1-4)
2. Further apologetic suggestions (F. F. Bruce com. on Gk text, 3rd ed., p22)
 - Defense against Judaism
 - Defense against paganism
 - Defense against political accusations

C. The date of Acts

D. Authorship

1. External evidence—early church fathers unanimously say that Luke wrote Acts
2. Internal evidence—the vocabulary and style of “we” sections matches the vocabulary and style of the rest of Acts

E. Sources

1. Luke an eyewitness of some events (“we” sections--ch. 16 etc.)
2. Careful research—other eyewitnesses (Luke with Paul in Jerusalem)
3. Selective in content

F. Speeches

1. Types of speeches
 - Evangelistic—Paul at Athens (ch 17)
 - Deliberative—Jerusalem Council (ch 15)
 - Apologetic—rioting crowd (ch 22)
 - Apologetic/polemic—Stephen to Sanhedrin (ch 7)
 - Pastoral—Paul to Ephesian elders (ch 20)
2. Reliable accounts
3. Why these speeches are included

Ch 2—beginning of church	Ch 10—Gospel to Gentiles
Ch 3—triggered persecution	Ch 13—preaching in Hellenistic synagogue
Ch 7—Gospel spread to Samaria & Gentiles (ch 8 & 11)	Ch 14—Gospel to uneducated pagans
	Ch 17—Gospel to educated pagans

G. Structure

1. Key=ch. 1:8
2. Early chapters inside/outside
3. Parallels between Peter and Paul
 - Raised one person from the dead
 - Miraculous release from prison
 - Healed a cripple
 - Extraordinary miracles (5:15 & 19:11-12)

H. Time Covered
Approximately AD30-60

I. Cutting through the hermeneutical haze

1. The problem—what’s normative and what’s not
2. Some guidelines
 - Repeated patterns and themes
 - What is prescribed in speeches
 - What is confirmed in the Epistles

II. Overview of Acts: tracing the development of the apostolic church

Acts 1:8 provides the key to understanding the direction in which the early church developed—Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, the ends of the earth. The primary thrust of these words, however, when spoken to Jews would not have been simply geographical but ethnical; Acts traces the expansion of the gospel from narrow Jewish nationalism to a world religion open to all regardless of race or nationality.

Stage One: The Jewish Church, chs. 1-7

1:6-8	Narrow nationalistic view of apostles corrected by Jesus
2:39	Peter unaware of the implications of his own proclamation that the gospel was for those “far off”
2:5ff	Earliest church composed of Jews and proselytes
6:5	Nicolaus, a proselyte, one of those chosen to serve the poor widows

Stage Two: The Samaritans (mixed race—Jew and Gentile), ch. 8

8:1-13	Gospel received by Samaritans
8:14-25	Samaritans received by Jewish Christians

Stage Three: The Gentiles, chs. 8-28

8:26-40	Through the Ethiopian eunuch (a Proselyte of the Gate?) the Gospel goes to Africa (Coptic Church)
9	Conversion of the Apostle to the Gentiles (Paul)
10	Gospel goes to the Gentile centurion Cornelius and others
11:1-18	Resistance among Jewish believers to accepting Gentiles
11:19ff	Establishment of Gentile church in Antioch
12	Persecution of Jerusalem leaders (perhaps partially due to their acceptance of Gentiles)
13	The Spirit’s call to the Gentile mission
13-14	The mission begun
15	The mission opposed
16-28	The mission continued and expanded
28:30-31	Paul preaching and teaching openly and unhindered

Acts 1

1:1-11 The link to Luke/Jesus' post-resurrection ministry

- Theophilus
- Jesus' resurrection
- Promise of the Spirit
 1. O.T. prophets
 2. John the Baptist
 3. Jesus
- World-wide witness
- Jesus' ascension

1:12-26 Waiting for the Spirit

- The people present
 1. Apostles
 2. Women
 3. Jesus' family
- The persistent prayer
- The position to be filled
- The problems to be solved
 1. Apparent differences with Matthew
Who bought the field? How did Judas die?
 2. Seeing Judas in the Hebrew Scriptures (Ps. 69:25; Ps. 109:8)
Jesus saw Judas in 41:9. Jesus repeatedly claimed Ps. 69 as His own
 3. The casting of lots to discern God's will.

PENTECOST IN PERSPECTIVE: WHAT DOES THIS MEAN? Acts 2

INTRODUCTION

Jesus promised to build His church (Mt. 16:18-19). The day of its establishment was the day of Pentecost when the promised Spirit was poured out on the disciples. The result was a witnessing, worshiping fellowship of believers. But what can be said of the event itself and its relationship to the past and to the future? In the words of amazed observers, “What does this mean?” (2:12)

I. A Day of Fulfillment

A. O. T. prophecy

1. Joel 2:28-32
2. See also Ezek. 39:29; Isa. 44:3

B. John the Baptist’s prophecy

Mt. 3:11 (Mk. 1:8; Lk. 3:16; Jn. 1:33)—Jesus will baptize with the Spirit

C. Jesus’ prophecy

1. The upper room discourses

- Jn. 14:16-17—to serve as another Counselor
- Jn. 14:25-26—to teach the disciples
- Jn. 15:26-27—to witness regarding Jesus
- Jn. 16:7-11—to convict the world
- Jn. 16:12-15—to guide the disciples into all truth

2. The post-resurrection promise

Lk. 24:45-49; Acts 1:4, 5—the promise of the Father

II. A Day of Empowerment for Witness

A. Empowerment by the Spirit—central to the promise of Jesus (Lk 24:49; Acts 1:8)

B. The Spirit first revealed Himself to the disciples audibly and visibly (Acts 2:1-3)

1. Audibly—sound like a powerful wind

- Ezek. 37—vision of Valley of Dry Bones
- Jn. 3—Nicodemus “the wind blows wherever it pleases”

2. Visibly—tongues as of fire

- Ex. 3—the burning bush
- Ex. 13—the pillar of fire

C. The Spirit then revealed Himself **through** the disciples (Acts 2:4-40)

1. By tongues-speaking (2:4-13)
 - Their nature: various languages of the Jews and proselytes gathered in Jerusalem (2:6, 8, 11)
 - Their purpose: (1) attracted attention; (2) served as vehicles through which God's wonders were proclaimed (2:11)
2. By Peter's powerful preaching (2:14-40)
 - His aim: to convince his hearers of the truth of vs. 36 so they would respond in faith and obedience.
 - His argument: although Jesus' death was in accordance with God's predetermined plan, those responsible are not free from guilt. God vindicated Jesus by raising Him from the dead and exalting Him in fulfillment of prophecy. From the Father's right hand He has poured out the promised Spirit. Since Jesus is God's Anointed One, He must be acknowledged as Savior and Lord. With faith implied, acceptance involves repentance and baptism into Jesus' name for forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit. (2 conditions/2 promises)
 - His attestation
 - The miracles of Jesus (2:22)
 - Prophecy—Ps. 16; Ps. 110
 - Eyewitness testimony (2:32)
 - Manifestation of the Spirit (2:33)
 - His appeal: Peter urged his hearers to be saved (2:40)

III. A Day of Salvation

A. Salvation of Jews and proselytes experienced

1. About three thousand responded (2:11, 41)
2. Appropriateness of this on Pentecost. Pentecost was a harvest festival, also called the "feast of weeks" (Dt. 16:10), the "feast of harvest" (Ex. 23:16), and "the day of the first fruits" (Num 28:26), i.e. the wheat harvest.

B. Salvation of Gentiles implied

1. Proclamation of works of God in various languages (2:5, 6)
2. Joel's prophecy—"upon all people" (2:17); "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord" (2:21)
3. The promise is also for "all who are far off" (39). See Eph. 2:13 and Isa. 57:19

IV. A Day of Beginning

- A. After the entry of the first Gentiles into the church, Peter could look back at Pentecost and call it “the beginning” (Acts 11:15). The outpouring of the Spirit on the Gentiles showed it to be just that. Indeed, Peter’s statement in 2:39 implies it. In 10:45 Luke uses the same verb—“poured out.”
- B. Not all of Joel’s prophecy was fulfilled on Pentecost. The “last days” extend from Christ’s first coming to His second coming.
- C. The book of Acts and the N.T. letters testify that the Spirit continued to empower the apostolic church in its witness regarding Christ.
- D. The history of the church down through the centuries shows that the work of the Spirit of Jesus has not ceased. Today He continues to work—convincing, convicting, converting, renewing, empowering for witness. The Flame still burns!
The Wind still blows!

POWER, PROCLAMATION, AND OPPOSITION

Chapters 3, 4a, 5b

Acts 3:1-4:31—A Miracle and its Consequences

- The healing of a man crippled from birth (3:1-10)
- Peter's speech to the astonished crowd (3:11-26)
 - 3:12-16 The source of the healing power
 - 3:17-18 The problem of a crucified Messiah
 - 3:19-26 Repentance and blessings
- Arrest of Peter and John (4:1-4)
- Peter and John before the Sanhedrin (4:5-12)
 - Filled with the Spirit
 - "Salvation is found in no one else"
- Decision to dismiss the apostles with a warning (4:12-22)
 - Restraining order/obey God not human authorities
- Prayer to the sovereign God (4:23-31)
 - Messianic interpretation of Psalm 2
 - Filled with the Spirit

Acts 5:12-42—Opposition Grows

- The apostles' healing ministry (5:12-16)
- The apostles imprisoned, miraculously released, and rearrested (5:17-28)
- Peter's reply to the charges (5:29-32)
- Gamaliel's counsel; the apostles beaten and released (5:33-42)

OPEN HEARTS, OPEN HANDS

Acts 2b, 4b, 5a, 6a

INTRODUCTION

Faith in Jesus Christ carries with it a variety of practical implications. Among these is serious and, if necessary, sacrificial concern for the physical well-being of our fellow Christians. Such concern characterized the early church.

I. Open hearts, open hands in the Jerusalem church

- A. The Jerusalem church met its own needs for several years through financial sacrifices by its members.

Acts 2:42-47

- Faith in Jesus brought a new estimate of people and things.
- As the verbs suggest the selling of property was not all at once but as the need arose. Luke knows that some did not sell their houses (Acts 12:12, 21:16).
- Their loving generosity had a positive effect on unbelievers.

Acts 4:32-35

- Close-knit unity was the motive for their generosity.
- Their benevolent ministry strongly supported the preaching of the gospel and demonstrated the great grace God poured out upon them. See II Cor. 8:1 for Christian generosity as an expression of God's grace and Rom. 12, where contributing to the needs of others is said to be a *charisma*.
- Again the verbs suggest that the selling took place as the need arose. Thus the monetary ministry of the earliest church differs from communism today both in motive and method.

Acts 4:36-37

Barnabas makes his debut in Acts as a good example of a compassionate believer.

Acts 5:1-11

- Ananias and Sapphira serve as bad examples regarding stewardship. Sinful motivation results in their death—a measure which preserved the integrity of the church in the eyes of believers and unbelievers alike.
- Peter's questions in vs. 4 assume the believer's right of private ownership of property. This, of course, must be balanced by our desire to meet the needs of fellow Christians (4:32).

Acts 6:1-7

- The problem was that of meeting the needs of Hellenistic widows who were believers. The Hellenists were Greek-speaking Jews; the Hebrews were Jews who spoke the Hebrew dialect which at this time was Aramaic.
- The tables of 6:2 are likely money tables (Mt. 21:12, Luke 19:23).
- The twelve gave priority to prayer and the ministry of the Word over the distribution of money to the poor. This does not mean that the work of Christian benevolence is unimportant, but that the apostles had been specifically called to the task of evangelism.

- B. The Jerusalem Church received help from other churches when its own resources finally failed.

Acts 11:27-30

- The wide-spread famine predicted by Agabus struck in about A.D. 46. Judea seems to have been especially hard hit.
- Giving by the believers in Antioch was according to one's ability (means). See I Cor. 16:2 and II Cor. 8:12.

Paul's Letters

- During a visit to Jerusalem (likely the famine relief visit of Acts 11), Paul is asked by the Jerusalem elders "to continue to remember the poor"—i.e. the Judean believers (Gal. 2:10).
- In the middle 50's we find him continuing to respond to this request as he appeals for assistance to the churches of Galatia, Asia, Macedonia, and Greece. See I Cor. 16:1-3; II Cor. 8-9; Rom. 15:25-27.

Acts 24:17

Paul explains to Felix the governor that he has returned to Judea to bring "gifts for the poor and offerings." This was at the conclusion of Paul's 3rd journey (AD 57)

II. Other Cases of Open Hearts, Open Hands

A. Benevolence

Acts 9:36-42

- Dorcas ministered in a practical way to a number of widows.
- Her ministry fostered a bond of love and appreciation evident in the tears of the widows.

Acts 20:33-35

- Paul exemplified the proper Christian attitude toward possessions and people.
- Giving to those in need is a significant motive for work.
- This saying of Jesus is found nowhere else in Scripture.

B. Hospitality

Acts 9:19-20 Ananias and perhaps others provided hospitality for Paul.

Acts 9:43 Peter stayed "many days" with Simon, a tanner.

Acts 10:43 Cornelius hosted Peter for "some days."

Acts 12:12 Mary opened her home as a meeting-place for believers.

Acts 16:15 Lydia housed Paul and his companions. See 15:40, 16:1-3.

Acts 18:3 Paul stayed with Aquila and Priscilla in Corinth.

Acts 21:4, 7-10, 15-16 On their way to Jerusalem with funds for the poor, Paul and his companions were hosted by believers at Tyre & Ptolemais and by Philip the evangelist at Caesarea. In Jerusalem they lodged with Mnason. See Acts 20:4-6 for a list of those traveling with Paul, including Luke.

Acts 28:16, 30 Under house-arrest at Rome, Paul was permitted to live in a house at his own expense. He received a gift from the Philippians (Phil. 4:10-21).

STEPHEN: THE MAN AND HIS MINISTRY

Acts 6-7

I. His Character

- 6:3 Along with the rest of the seven, he was “full of the Spirit and of wisdom”
- 6:5 “full of faith and of the Holy Spirit”
- 6:8 “full of God’s grace and power”
- 6:15 face like the face of an angel
- 7:55 “full of the Holy Spirit”
- 7:59-60 character seen in death: forgiveness and faith

II. His Ministry

- 6:1-7 Administration of benevolent funds
- 6:8 Miracles among the people
- 6:9-10 Witness in the Synagogue of the Freedmen (Hellenists)
- Stephen was obviously a significant figure in the church and community.

III. His Trial

A. The accusations

1. Blasphemy against the law of Moses (6:11, 13, 14)
2. Blasphemy against God, i.e. Temple worship (6:11, 13, 14)

B. The defense

In a manner familiar to the Jews (Ps 78; Ps 106) Stephen traces the history of Israel as the means of defending himself.

1. Acts 7:1-19—God’s activity through Abraham and the Patriarchs
 - a. God’s presence is not restricted
 - b. God’s people are a pilgrim people
 - c. The rejection of Joseph by his brothers (vs 9)
2. Acts 7:20-43—God’s activity through Moses
 - a. This section responds to the charge of blasphemy of the law.
 - b. Stephen establishes his orthodoxy by affirming his belief in
 - The divine call of Moses as deliverer & ruler (vs 35)
 - The divine appointment of Moses as mediator of God’s revelation (vs 38)
 - The relevance of the “**living** oracles” for his own generation (vs 38—“to us”)
 - The prophecy among these oracles which found fulfillment in Jesus (vs 37-Deut. 18:15)
 - c. The rejection of Moses by the people. (vss 27, 35)
 - d. The rejection of the unbelieving & rebellious Israelites by God (vss 39-43)
3. Acts 7:44-50—God’s activity through David and Solomon
 - a. This section responds to the charge of blasphemy of the temple.
 - b. Stephen’s arguments:
 - The tabernacle was the only place of worship which God ordered to be made. (vs 44)

- The temple was constructed not on God's orders but by His permission. (vss 45-47)
 - Stephen's position is the same as the prophet Isaiah (vss 48-50). See Isa 66:1-2 and also the prayer of Solomon (I Kgs 8:27). Jer 7:1ff shows how easily the temple could become a source of false religious security.
4. Acts 7:51-53—Stephen's counter-accusations
 - a. His hearers were as rebellious as their fathers had been. This is shown by their rejection of the Righteous One.
 - b. His hearers' lofty view of the law was only in theory and not in practice, for they had rejected the One of whom it testifies.
- IV. His Death
- A. The first Christian martyr (7:54-8:1a) but others were soon to follow. See 8:3; 9:1 (22:4; 26:9, 10); 12:1,2
 - B. Strengthened by the vision of the Son of Man standing at God's right hand
 - C. Followed the example of Jesus in death by (1) committing his spirit into the care of the Lord and (2) praying for the forgiveness of those responsible for his death
 - D. The language of hope: "he fell asleep"
- V. His Influence
- A. Influence on Paul

7:58; 8:1 Paul consented to Stephen's death. See also Acts 22:20.
 9:28-30 After his conversion, Paul "resumed" Stephen's ministry among the Hellenists in Jerusalem. Gal. 1:18 indicates that Paul was only in Jerusalem for 15 days.
 - B. Influence on Jewish/Christian relations
 1. Stephen's death hastened the decline of Jewish/Christian relations. Tension already existed (chs 4 & 5) but Stephen's teaching brought it to a breaking point.
 2. The ensuing persecution seems to have been directed mainly against Hellenistic Christians, as the immunity of the apostles suggests (8:1). If so, then Stephen was a leading spokesman for the Hellenists who, it appears, more readily saw the universal implications of the gospel than did the Hebrews.
 - C. Influence on Christian missions

Stephen's death marks the turning point announced in Acts 1:8. The persecution which followed resulted in:

 1. The beginning of the Samaritan mission 8:1, 4-25
 2. The beginning of the Gentile mission 11:19-26

Conclusion

"He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose." Jim Eliot

ACTS 8

THE GOSPEL GOES TO SAMARIA AND AFRICA

The Gospel Goes to Samaria (8:4-25)

Philip's ministry (8:4-8)

- A ministry of proclamation
- A ministry marked by miracles
- A ministry resulting in joy

The power of the gospel (8:9-25)

- Power to convert
- Power to discredit the occult (Simon)
- Power to unite previously hostile people
 - By preaching the gospel extensively (8:25)
 - By the sending of Peter and John to represent the apostles/ delay of giving the Holy Spirit until Peter and John prayed for the Samaritans

The Gospel Goes to Africa (8:26-40)

Missiological components:

- An influential enquirer—Ethiopian eunuch
- A divine directive to an obedient disciple
- A messianic text—Isaiah 53
- A Jesus-centered message (included baptism)
- A responsive heart
- A joyous outcome

Evangelistic lessons

- We should be prepared to take the gospel to everyone regardless of race.
- We should be responsive to divine guidance.
- We should begin our witness where the person is and proceed from there.
- We should have a good grasp of Scripture.
- We should preach Jesus.
- We should be ready to handle questions.
- We should never underestimate the potential of bringing one person to Christ.

THE CONVERSION OF THE APOSTLE TO THE GENTILES

Acts 9:1-31 (22:1-21; 26:1-23)

Saul's murderous agenda 9:1-2

Saul's encounter with the risen Lord 9:3-9

- The light and blindness—see 2 Cor. 4:4-6
- The dialogue
- The witnesses
- The reasons for mercy—see I Tim. 1:12-17
 - A man of integrity acting in ignorance
 - A model of the extent of Christ's amazing grace

Saul's encounter with Ananias 9:10-19

- Ananias' vision, resistance, and compliance
- Saul's ministry revealed to Ananias
- Ananias' two-fold ministry to Saul
 - Physical healing
 - Spiritual healing

Saul's preaching in Damascus 9:20-22

- Immediate and powerful proclamation/astonishment
- Probably went to Arabia (Gal. 1:17) at this point
Compare Acts 9:19 ("spent several days") and Acts 9:23 ("after many days") with Gal. 1:17.

Saul's escape from Damascus 9:23-25

- Also reported in 2 Cor. 11:32-33

Saul's return to Jerusalem, then Tarsus 9:26-31

- Reluctant welcome
- Bold witness to Grecian Jews (same ministry as Stephen!)
- Danger and departure to Tarsus
- The church's peace and spiritual prosperity

PETER'S MINISTRY TO JEWS AND GENTILES

Acts 9b-11a

Peter's miracles bring many Jews to faith 9:32-43

- Peter heals Aeneas, a paralytic in Lydda
- Peter raises Tabitha from the dead in Joppa

Peter's God-directed mission to the Gentiles 10:1-11:18

The importance of this event is evident from the amount of space Luke devotes to it.

- Cornelius' devotion and vision 10:1-8
- Peter's devotion and vision 10:9-23
- Peter's proclamation of Jesus to Cornelius, his family and friends 10:24-43

Key points:

- God accepts people from every nation
 - The audience's knowledge of Jesus
 - Jesus' powerful ministry, death and resurrection, and appointment as universal judge
 - Forgiveness is found through faith in Him
-
- God's pouring out of the Holy Spirit on the Gentiles 10:44-48
 - Six Jewish brothers were amazed
 - Peter orders that the Gentiles be baptized
 - Reason the Spirit was poured out *before* baptism
 - Peter's defense of his actions 11:1-18
 - Emphasis on divine guidance—the vision (11:4-10), the Spirit (11:12), an angel (11:13), the coming of the Spirit on the Gentiles (11:15-17)
 - Confirmation by 6 Jewish Christian brothers
 - The striking parallel with Pentecost
 - Acceptance of the Gentiles!

GROWTH AND OPPOSITION

Acts 11b-12

Growth in Antioch 11:19-30

- A church initiated and integrated by Greek-speaking Jews 11:19-21
- A church endorsed by the Jerusalem church through Barnabas 11:22-24
- A church strengthened by the teaching of Barnabas and Saul 11:25-26
- A church engaged by the challenge to give to the poor believers of Judea 11:27-30

The Antioch church serves as a model.

- A Christ-centered church 11:26
- An integrated church 11:19-21
- An educating church 11:25-26
- A caring church 11:27-30
- A Spirit-guided church 13:1-3
- A mission-minded church 13 & 14
- A cooperating church 11 & 15

Opposition in Jerusalem 12:1-24

- The execution of James by King Herod Agrippa I (10 BC-AD 44) 12:1-2
- The deliverance of Peter by an angel 12:3-19a
- The death of Herod 12:19b-23
- The victory of the Word of God! 12:24
This one of several summary statements marking the progress of the gospel—2:41, 4:4, 5:14, 6:7, 9:31, 12:24, 16:5, 19:20, 28:31.

Lessons:

- God uses His servants in different ways
- God's Word and work will prevail over even the most powerful opponents

PAUL'S 1st MISSIONARY JOURNEY: CYPRUS/ANTIOCH

Acts 13

The Call and Commissioning of Barnabas and Saul 13:1-3

- Diverse leadership team in a multicultural city
- Spirit's instructions in a context of worship

Mission Work on Cyprus 13:4-12

- Witnessing in the synagogues of Salamis
- Witnessing to the proconsul, Sergius Paulus
 - Opposition by Elymas the sorcerer
 - Conversion of the proconsul

Missionary Work at Antioch of Pisidia 13:13-52

John Mark's departure 13:13

- The content of Paul's speech 13:16-41
 - Preparation for the Savior 13:16-22
 - Coming of the Savior Jesus 13:23-37
 - God's action v23
 - John's testimony vss24-25
 - Paul's inclusiveness v26
 - Jesus' rejection & resurrection vss27-31
 - Support of Scripture vss32-37--Ps. 2; Isa. 55; Ps 16
 - Call to accept, not reject, the Savior Jesus 13:38-41
 - Forgiveness and freedom from the law vss38-39
 - Warning not to scoff & perish vss40-41—Hab. 1
 - The consequences of Paul's speech 13:42-52
 - A high level of interest 13:42-44
 - Opposition by some Jews 13:45-47
 - Many Gentiles believe 13:48-49
 - Missionaries expelled but the joyful, Spirit-filled disciples remain 13:50-52

NOTE: Need to balance vs. 46 (human decision) with vs. 48 (divine appointment). See 1 Tim. 2:3-4, 2 Pet. 3:9, 1 John 2:2

PAUL'S 1ST MISSIONARY JOURNEY: ICONIUM, LYSTRA, DERBE

Acts 14

Witness at Iconium 14:1-7

- In the synagogue “as usual”—used natural channels 1
- Message confirmed by miracles 3
- Opposition develops 2-4
 - Meaning of “apostles” in vss 4 & 14
 - Used 26 times in Acts—24 times of the Twelve
 - Used in the more general sense here: those who represent the Lord, ie. “missionaries.” See Gal. 1:19 (James) and Rom. 16:7 (Adronicus & Junias ?); 2 Cor. 11:13 and Rev. 2:2 (false apostles)
 - Also used of church representatives. See 2 Cor. 8:23 (“representatives”) & Php. 2:26 (“messenger”)
- Danger and departure to Lystra and Derbe 5-7

Witness at Lystra 14:8-20

- The healing of a man crippled from birth 8-10
- The crowd’s reaction—a case of mistaken identity, Zeus and Hermes 11-13
- The apostles’ response 14-18
 - Dramatically declared their humanity
 - Decisively proclaimed the character of the God they represent. He is
 - The one true living God contrasted with “these worthless things”
 - The Creator
 - The gracious but just God who holds people accountable. (Compare v15 “turn” & v16.) See Acts 17:30 & Rom. 3:25. BUT guilt and accountability are clear in Rom. 1:18-32, 2:12, 3:9 & 19
 - The witnessing God, who shows His kindness by providing for human needs and happiness. Note the appeal to God’s revelation of Himself through nature rather than Scripture.
- The stoning of Paul 19-20
See also 2 Cor. 11:25; Gal. 6:17; 2 Tim. 3:11

Witness at Derbe and return to Syrian Antioch 14:21-28

- Witness at Derbe 21
- New churches made more stable 22-23
 - By further instruction and encouragement
 - By appointing elders in each church
- Witness at Perga 24
- Report to the sending church (Syrian Antioch) 26-28
 - Work viewed as completed
 - God is honored for opening the door of faith to the Gentiles

THE JERUSALEM COUNCIL: CONFLICT RESOLVED

Acts 15

The Cause of the Controversy 15:1-5

- The problem—the requirements for Gentiles to be saved: faith/grace vs. circumcision and obeying the law of Moses.
- The protagonists—unauthorized Jewish Christians vs. Paul and Barnabas
- The plan for resolution—referral to the apostles and elders in Jerusalem
Note the joy in Phoenicia and Samaria at news of the Gentile converts.

The Council's Core Considerations 15:6-21

- Key points
 - Appeal to God's work
 - Appeal to God's Word
- Key people
 - Peter—God's decision to save Gentiles (Cornelius) and Jews by faith/grace 7-11
 - Barnabas and Paul—God's confirmation of the Gentile mission by miracles 12
 - James
 - Confirms Peter's point
 - Appeals to Amos 9:11-12
 - Proposes a solution involving concessions without compromising the principle of salvation by faith/ grace 13-21

The Communication of Conclusions 15:22-35

- The letter carried by two representatives 22
- The letter's contents 23-29
 - Senders and recipients
 - Troublemakers discredited; Barnabas and Paul commended
 - Commendation of Judas and Silas
 - Guidance by the Spirit
 - List of concessions—dietary and moral
- The letter welcomed at Antioch 30-31
- The church strengthened 32-35

Guidance for Solving Problems in the Church Today

1. The leaders of the church assumed primary responsibility for resolving the problem 15:6, 23
2. Both points of view were heard 15: 5, 7a
3. Appeal was made to God's work 15:7b-12
4. Appeal was made to God's Word 15:13-18
5. Concessions were made without compromising the principle 15:19-21, 28-29
6. Careful reporting as broad as the problem (by letter and delegates) 15:22-35; 16:4
7. Openness throughout to the Spirit's leading 15:28

PAUL'S 2nd MISSIONARY JOURNEY: PHILIPPI

Acts 15b-16

Paul Initiates the Second Journey 15:36-41

- Disagreement between Paul and Barnabas over John Mark
- Choice of Silas
- Ministry in Syria and Cilicia

Pastoral Ministry in Galatia 16:1-5

- Choice of Timothy (at Lystra)
- Delivery of decisions of the Jerusalem Council

Divine Direction to Macedonia 16:6-10

- Spirit of Jesus keeps them from entering Asia and Bithynia
- Vision of the Macedonian man
- First “we” section begins at 16:10 and concludes at 16:40 “they left.” It resumes in 20:5.

Saving Power of God at work in Philippi 16:11-40

- Lydia: the quiet conversion of a worshiper of God 13-15
 - “Opened her heart”
 - Household conversion--for greater clarity of issues, see the requirements for the jailer and his family. Also see I Cor. 7:12-14—in some cases not all family members became Christians.
- The slave girl: an exploited victim of the occult 16-24
 - Fortune teller possessed by a pythonic spirit
 - Instant exorcism in the name of Jesus Christ
 - Lost profits lead to a severe flogging and imprisonment
- The jailer: a tough man of the world 25-40
 - Prayers and praise in prison
 - Freed by an earthquake
 - Conversion of the jailer and his household: faith, baptism, service, joy!
 - Released from prison, Paul and Silas appeal to their Roman citizenship and insist that the magistrates escort them out
 - Missionaries depart

PAUL'S 2nd MISSIONARY JOURNEY: THESSALONICA, BEREIA, & ATHENS

Acts 17

Witness at Thessalonica 17:1-9

- A strategic city—capital of 2nd district & the entire province of Macedonia 1
- Paul's normal evangelistic strategy 2-3
- Mixed response to the gospel 4-9

Witness at Berea 17:10-15

- A populous city in the 3rd district of Macedonia
- Jews & Gentiles welcome the Word 10-12
- Enter the Thessalonian Jews—exit Paul 13-15

Witness at Athens 17:16-34

- A small but influential city
- Paul's agitation at a city "full of idols" 16
- Paul's witness in the synagogue & in the marketplace 17-21
- Paul's speech to a meeting of the Areopagus 22-31
The Areopagus, composed of former administrators, was the supreme legislature and judicial council. The council licensed lecturers.

Paul's main points are:

- The Athenians, although very religious, are ignorant of the true God 22-23
- The one true God is Creator, Lord, & Sustainer of all 24-25
Three implications related to idolatry:
 - He does not live in temples 24
 - He does not depend on human service 25
 - He should not be represented by an idol made by man 29
- God has a special relationship with mankind 26-31
 - He made every nation from one man 26
 - He assigned them two tasks 26-28
 - To inhabit the whole earth 26
 - To seek Him 27-28
 - He has a Creator Father/offspring relation to mankind 28-29
 - In the past He did not punish people for turning away from Him 30a
 - In the present He holds all people accountable and calls them to repentance 30b
 - In the future He will judge the world with justice through the man He has appointed. Proof: the resurrection
- The three-fold response 32-34
 - Rejection: sneered at the resurrection 32a
 - Curiosity: hear more later 32b
 - Acceptance: some became believers 33-34

PAUL'S 2nd MISSIONARY JOURNEY: CORINTH AND RETURN TO SYRIAN ANTIOCH

Acts 18

Witness at Corinth 18:1-17

- Paul's work—leather working 1-3
- Paul's witness 4-5b
 - Part-time, then full-time 4-5a
 - His method/message: "the Messiah is Jesus" 5b
- The mixed response 6-8
- Paul's fear and the Lord's assurance in a vision 9-11
- Paul's trial before Gallio 12-17
 - Date—AD 51
 - Decision—Christian faith no threat to Rome
Theophilus would be interested!

Return to Syrian Antioch via Ephesus & Jerusalem 18:18-22

- Paul's vow ends (Nazarite vow Num. 6:1-21) 18
- Paul's brief witness at Ephesus 19-21
- Paul's brief visit to Jerusalem, then on to Syrian Antioch 22

Start of the 3rd missionary journey 18:23

Apollos' ministry in Ephesus & Achaia 18:24-28

- Apollos' strengths 24-25
- Apollos' deficiency (a disciple of John the Baptist?) 26
 - Model of courteous instruction—Priscilla and Aquila
 - Model of teachable spirit
- Apollos' effective apologetic ministry in Achaia 27-28

PAUL'S 3rd MISSIONARY JOURNEY: EPHESUS

Acts 19

Gospel encounters “disciples” with a pre-regenerate knowledge of the Messiah 19:1-7

- Strong similarities with Apollos & in same region 1
- Reception of the Spirit closely connected with faith and baptism 2-3
- Instructions and response 4-7
- What's normative and what's not? See Larkin quoting Stott, p. 274

Gospel encounters Judaism 19:8-10

- Mixed response 8-9
- The province of Asia evangelized during 2 year ministry 10

Gospel encounters the occult 19:13-20

- God's extraordinary miracles through Paul 11-12
- Seven sons of Sceva and the evil spirit 13-17
- Burning of books of magic by new Christians 18-20

Paul's plans for the future 19:21-22

- Paul's plans “purposed in Spirit (or spirit)”/”must”
- Paul's helpers—Timothy and Erastus

Gospel encounters idolatrous paganism 19:23-41

- Determined Opponent—Demetrius
3 threats posed by the Christian faith 23-27
 - Economic
 - Patriotic
 - Religious
- Demonstration—by an excited crowd 28-34
Paul restrained from speaking by disciples and Asiarchs
- Dismissal—by the city clerk 35-41
3 reasons for dismissing the assembly
 - Artemis' power and position secure
 - Defendants guilty of no crime
 - Danger of being accused of riot by the Romans

PAUL'S 3rd MISSIONARY JOURNEY: MACEDONIA, GREECE, TROAS, EPHESUS

Chapter 20

Paul visits Macedonia and Greece 20:1-6

- Macedonia—wrote 2 Corinthians (ca AD 56); evangelized as far as Illyricum (Rom 15:19)
- Greece for three months (winter AD 56-57); wrote Romans from Corinth
- Gentile collection representatives listed

Paul at Troas 20:7-12

- First day of the week—Sunday night (1 Cor 16:1-3)
- Breaking of bread—probably meal plus Lord's Supper
- Eutychus raised from the dead

From Troas to Miletus 20:13-16

Paul's farewell speech to the Ephesian elders 20:17-35

- Two elements—apologetic and hortatory
- Structure
 - Paul's defense of his conduct 18-21
 - Paul's prospects for the future 22-27
 - Paul's charge and financial example 28-35
- Insight into local leadership 28-32
 - Three terms for local leaders—elders (17), shepherds & overseers (28)
 - Function—shepherd/guard yourselves and the flock against 2 dangers
 - Ministry given by the Holy Spirit
 - Ministry dependent upon God and the word of His grace

Farewell 20:36-38

PAUL—A MODEL MINISTRY

1. A Christ-centered ministry 19, 21, 24, 28, 35
2. A transparent ministry 18
3. A ministry of humility and deep sincerity 19
4. A ministry of perseverance in the face of persecution 19
5. A ministry of faithful and full proclamation of the Word of God 20-21, 26-27
6. A Spirit-guided ministry 22-23
7. A ministry dedicated to finishing the task the Lord had given him 24
8. A torch-bearing and torch-passing ministry 25-32
9. A ministry of financial integrity and generosity 33-35
10. A ministry of prayer 36
11. A ministry of love 37-38

WITNESS TO THE RIOTING CROWD ACTS 21-22

From Miletus to Tyre 21:1-6

- Fellowship at Tyre
- Warning not to go to Jerusalem

From Tyre to Caesarea 21:7-14

- Philip—20 years later (8:40)
 - Four daughters who prophesied—Joel 2/Acts 2/1 Cor. 11
- Agabus' prophecy

Caesarea to Jerusalem 21:15-16

- Paul & 8 companions stayed with Mnason, Hellenistic Jew, early disciple

Meeting with James and elders 21:17-26

- Reception: warm/probably presented offering for the poor—24:17
- Recitation of Gentile ministry
- Rumor:
 - Content—teaching Hellenistic Jews to disregard the law
 - Leaders' attitude
 - Suggested course of action
 - Assurance of Gentile freedom
 - Paul's compliance (another case of concession—1 Cor. 9:19-23)

Riot in the temple 21:27-36

- Instigators—Jews from Asia
- Charges:
 - Teaching against the law and temple
 - Taking Gentiles into temple
- Attack and rescue

Paul permitted to speak to the rioters 21:37-22:1

- Identity crisis—speak Greek? the Egyptian?
- The assassins—Sicarii (sica=dagger); appeared under Felix (AD 52-59)
- Hebrew language—Aramaic or Hebrew?

Paul's address to the rioters 22:2-21

Critical issues:

- Nature: autobiographical and apologetic—to demonstrate the compatibility of Paul's Jewish piety and Gentile mission (See Larkin, p. 318). The speech should be understood in the context of the charges of teaching against the law and the temple and taking Gentiles into the temple.
- Strong emphasis on Paul's and Ananias' impeccable Jewish credentials
- Good example of adapting one's testimony/witness to one's audience

Speech:

- Paul's heritage, education, and zeal for the law 22:2-5
- Paul's conversion and commission 22:6-16
 - The Lord Jesus confronts Paul 6-11
 - Commission delayed until Damascus
 - Ananias heals and instructs Paul 12-16
 - Chosen to be a witness of the resurrected Jesus—I Cor. 9:1
 - Chosen to be a witness to "all men"
 - Be baptized/wash away sins
- Paul's vision of the Lord in Jerusalem 17-21
 - Vision during first visit after conversion—see Acts 9:26-30
 - Witness not welcome in Jerusalem
 - Commanded to witness to the Gentiles

Reactions by the rioters and the Romans 22:22-30

- Crowd's reaction
- Interrogation – Roman style
- Citizenship/alarm

WITNESS TO THE SANHEDRIN

Acts 23

Paul's witness to the Sanhedrin 23:1-10

- Paul's opening remark/high priest Ananias' objection v1-2
- Paul's sharp condemnation, then apology—both based on the law (Lev. 19:15; Ex 22:28) v3-5
- Paul's focus on the resurrection of the dead—results in an uproar v6-9
- Paul's removal to safety v10

Paul's Roman witness assured by the Lord 23:11

- Paul *must* (dei `) testify in Rome as in Jerusalem (see 19:21—"purposed in the Spirit")
- One of five appearances of the Lord to Paul at a critical time reported in Acts
 - Damascus road—9:4
 - Corinth—18:9-10
 - Jerusalem (first visit after conversion)—22:17
 - Jerusalem—23:11
 - Voyage to Rome (angel)—27:23-24

Plot against Paul revealed to the commander 23:12-24

- Plot hatched v12-15
- Plot exposed v16-22
- Plot foiled v23-24
- God's providential working in events

Letter from the commander Lysias to Felix 23:25-30

- Manipulation of events v27
- Lysias' view--accusation is theological, not political v29

Paul taken to Caesarea 23:31-35

- Heavy military escort to Antipatris, then on to Caesarea v31-33
- The governor agrees to hear his case v34-35

WITNESS TO FELIX

Acts 24

Paul accused before Felix 24:1-9

- Tertullus' unjustifiable flattery v2-4
- Three charges against Paul v5-6a
 - Political insurrection
 - Religious heresy
 - Temple desecration
- Twisting of facts
- Addition in Western Text—more twisting v6b-8a

Paul's defense before Felix 24:10-21

- Paul's sound remarks about Felix v10
- Paul answers the charges
 - No political insurrection v11-13
 - No religious heresy v14-16
 - The Way (Isa. 40:3; Lk 3:3-6) agrees with the teaching of the Law and Prophets regarding the resurrection
 - Resurrection of wicked and righteous
 - Only explicit mention by Paul
 - See Dan. 12:2; Jn. 5:28-29; Rev. 20:12 ff
 - No desecration of the temple v17-19
- The only charge is no charge at all—belief in the resurrection of the dead v20-21

Felix adjourns the proceedings 24:22-23

- Felix' knowledge of the Way v22a
- Deferment of decision v22b
- Privileges granted to Paul v23

Paul's interviews with Felix 24:24-27

- Drusilla—sister of Agrippa II and Bernice v24
 - Not yet 20 in AD 57
 - Felix her 2nd husband, she his 3rd wife
- First interview/strong ethical emphasis- righteousness, self-control, judgment v25
- Monetary motive behind further interviews v26
- Recall of Felix in AD 59
 - Conflict in Caesarea
- Paul left in prison to appease the Jews v27

WITNESS TO FESTUS AND KING AGRIPPA

Acts 25-26

Festus' refusal of the Jewish leaders' request for Paul to be tried in Jerusalem 25:1-5

- A get-acquainted visit
- Renewal of the plot on Paul's life

Festus' trial of Paul 25:6-12

- Jewish accusations unsubstantiated
- Paul's defense—not guilty of religious and political charges
- Festus' proposal—stand trial in Jerusalem
- Paul appeals to Caesar

Festus' request for Agrippa's advice 25:13-22

- King Agrippa II and his sister Bernice
- A courtesy call
- Festus' view of the case—no crimes, instead religious matters and the resurrection of Jesus

Paul appears before Agrippa 25:23-27

- Audience
- A hearing not a trial
- Reason for holding the hearing

Paul's defense before Agrippa 26:1-23

- Paul's sincere statement of confidence in Agrippa 26:1-3
- Paul's devotion to Judaism and its promise of a Messiah 26:4-8
 - His Jewish upbringing v4
 - His strict devotion to Judaism—a Pharisee v5
 - His confidence in the hope of Messianic salvation v6-8
 - A hope promised by God to the fathers
 - A hope shared by the nation
 - A hope resulting in Jewish opposition to Paul because he believes that Jesus (crucified and resurrected) is the Messiah
- Paul's zealous persecution of Christians 26:9-11

- Persecution to the death v9-10
- Persecution even in foreign cities v11
- Paul's conversion and commission 26:12-18
 - The Lord encounters Paul v12-14
 - The Lord commissions Paul v15-18
 - Appointed as a servant/witness of the resurrected Lord v16b
 - Promised rescue from Jewish and Gentile enemies v17a
No promise, however, of immunity from suffering
 - Sent (ejgw; ajpostevllw se) on a mission of salvation, especially to the Gentiles v17b-18
- Paul's obedience to the vision 26:19-23
 - His testimony to Jews and Gentiles v20
 - His Gentile mission is the cause of violent Jewish opposition v21
 - His proclamation is in complete agreement with the predictions of the prophets and Moses v22-23 (See Isa 42:6; 49:6-7; 50:6-7; 52:13-53:12)

The rulers' reaction to Paul's testimony 26:24-32

- Festus/Paul v 24-26
- Paul/Agrippa/Paul v27-29
- Their conclusion—Paul is innocent v30-32

PAUL'S JOURNEY TO ROME: WITNESS AT SEA AND ON MALTA

Acts 27-28a

From Caesarea to Crete 27:1-12

- Paul's companions—Luke and Aristarchus v2 (see 20:4)
- Centurion Julius' kindness to Paul v3
- The Fast—the Day of Atonement—late Sept/early Oct v9
- Paul's warning ignored v9-12
Paul had undertaken 11 prior voyages and had already been shipwrecked 3 times by 56 AD (2 Cor. 11:25)

The storm 27:13-26

- The Northeaster (Euroquilo) v14
- Cauda—small island 23 miles from Fair Havens v16
- The sand bars of Syrtis—100 miles off the Libyan coast, 300 miles in circumference v17
- Hope lost v20
- Paul's first initiative based on angelic revelation—"keep up your courage" v21-26

The shipwreck 27:27-44

- The Adriatic Sea extended as far south as Sicily and Crete v27
- Paul's second initiative—"stay together with the ship" v27-32
- Paul's third initiative—"take some food" v33-38
- Centurion's concern for Paul prevents the execution of the prisoners v42-43
- God's promise fulfilled—all reached shore safely v44

Witness on Malta 28:1-10

- Kindness of the islanders v1-2
- Witness by divine protection against snake bite v3-6 (see Lk. 10:19)
- Paul's witness by miraculous healings v7-10

WITNESS IN ROME

Acts 28b

From Malta to Rome 28:11-16

- Spent a week with Christians in Puteoli
- Encouraged by Roman Christians who traveled 33/43 miles to meet him
- Placed under house arrest
- End of the “we” section but see Phm. 24 and Col. 4:14
- Paul’s knowledge of Roman Christians—see Rom. 16:3-16

Paul’s initial meeting with Roman Jews 28:17-22

- Paul explains his situation v17-20
 - Not guilty
 - In bonds because of the hope of Israel
- The Jews’ response v21-22
 - No bad reports about Paul
 - But people everywhere are speaking against this sect

Paul’s second (and decisive) meeting with the Roman Jews 28:23-28

- The focus and purpose of his teaching v23
 - To explain the nature of the kingdom (reign) of God
 - To convince them from the Law and Prophets that the reign of God with all its blessings was inseparably tied to Jesus—who is the Messiah
- The response—mixed (as so often before) v24
- Paul’s last word to the unbelieving Jews v25-28
 - They bear responsibility—Isa. 6:9-10 quoted by Jesus (Mt. 13:13-15) and now by Paul
 - Therefore, God’s salvation has been sent to the Gentiles, who will listen
 - For the same pronouncement, see Acts 13:46-48

Paul’s continued witness in Rome 28:30-31

- He witnessed over a two year period—almost certainly released
- He welcomed *all*
- He preached/taught about the kingdom of God and the Lord Jesus Christ
- He witnessed (1) *boldly* and (2) *without hindrance*