

## Books of the Bible Series

# Book of Acts

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We are in Year 4 of a series on the books of the Bible: Today we will talk about the book of Acts or the Acts of the Apostles. This book chronicles the earliest followers of Jesus and is about the things they did.

The number one thing I desire to convince you of today is to **READ the book of Acts!** This is my Reading Rainbow pitch: don't take my word for it, ***go read the book yourself!*** If you need a teaser like Lavar Barton would do, here you go:

Do you like

- ***Courtroom Dramas:*** are you a Law and Order fan? There are many of these dramas in the book of Acts.
- ***Political Intrigue:*** are you a House of Cards or West Wing fan? There is a ton of political intrigue in this book; you will love it!
- ***Action:*** If you like Arnold Schwarzenager-style movies, there are jailbreaks, murders, close escapes, natural disasters, famines, and even a shipwreck (along with lots of captivating ship-sailing details, which surprised me!). (However, there are no pirates because they didn't have gunpowder yet.) *Disaster:* Natural disasters (Plane crash investigates)
- ***Travel Logs:*** I started yesterday to slowly read this book until I finished it and I kept looking at Google maps and google earth to find the locations of what I was reading about. I highly recommend this if you like to see the places! If you are a fan of travel shows, you will like this book. Follow along in Greece, turkey, israel, Malta (shipwreck). You can see the ancient ruins on your phone. This took me about 9 hours (with breaks); I think you could do it in 7.
- ***Loving Friendships:*** Not a romance but many good relationships develop in this book with Paul and Peter. Sometimes after they stay in a place for a long time, they break down in tears when they have to leave.

**If you like these kinds of genres, you should read this!**

**Author:** Luke; scholarly types like to call it "Luke-Acts"...but we just say Matthew Mark Luke and John...and Acts. We think Luke wrote both Luke and Acts...Luke was a companion of Paul, a main character in the book. We know that Luke was there from Paul's other letters which we will get to next year. We also know Luke was there because he had a sneaky way of inserting

himself into the story (like John, “the disciple that Jesus loved” did in last week’s sermon). Here is less obvious but you will notice Luke’s pronoun shift from “they” to “we” (in Acts 16)...and then goes back to “they.” This way, we know Luke was part of the travels with Paul. He was even at the shipwreck during the journey to Rome.

Luke was doctor: we don’t know a lot about this but we hear about it in in Colossians. Maybe Luke was with Paul because he needed a doctor?

**Colossians 4:14** Our dear friend Luke, the doctor, and Demas send greetings.

Compare the intro of Luke with Acts; they are similar and addressed to the same person. Let’s go over this again:

Second-century sources (from the 100s AD) also talk about Luke:

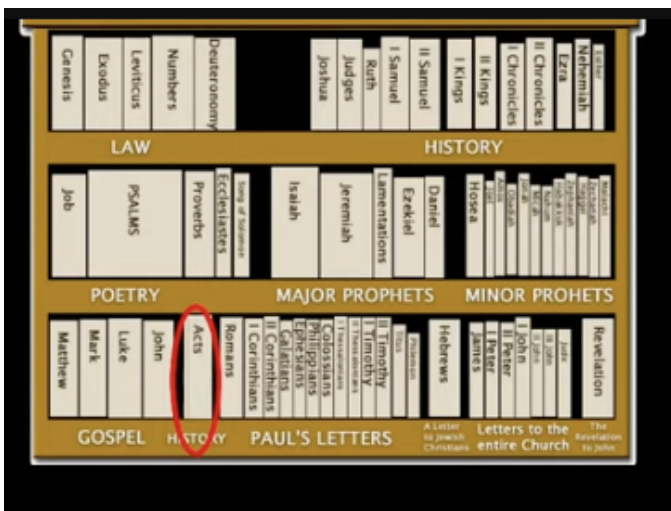
**The Author, Luke, from outside sources**

- Confirmed by several 2<sup>nd</sup> Century sources
- The “Anti-Marcion” Prologue of Luke

Luke is a Syrian of Antioch, a doctor by profession, who was a disciple of apostles, and later followed Paul until his martyrdom. He served the Lord without distraction, unmarried, childless, and fell asleep at the age of 84 . . . full of the Holy Spirit.

He, . . . impelled by the Holy Spirit, wrote this whole gospel . . . and afterwards the same Luke wrote the Acts of the Apostles.

<https://www.religion-online.org/book-chapter/chapter-9-the-gospel-of-luke/>



You can also think of the Bible like a bookshelf of various volumes; notice how thick Psalms is and how Acts compares to it. It’s about the same size as the other gospels and larger than many of the letters.

Acts and Luke together actually make up a huge chunk of the New Testament!



This graphic shows who wrote most of the Bible. Only five authors actually wrote most of the Bible. Moses leads the way but Ezra and Luke come in second, even ahead of Paul.

Comparative Lengths of the Gospels

Book	Chapters	Verses	Words
Matthew	28	1,071	23,343
Mark	16	678	14,949
<b>Luke</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>1,151</b>	<b>25,640</b>
John	21	879	18,658
<b>Acts</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>1,007</b>	<b>24,229</b>

Why did Paul write this book?

**Luke's Purpose, from Acts**  
 Acts 1:1-3  
 In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen. After his suffering, he presented himself to them and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God.

Compare this with the gospel of Luke:

**Luke's Purpose, from Luke**  
 Luke 1:1-4  
 Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. With this in mind, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, I too decided to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught.

These eyewitnesses mentioned here could have been the other disciples, Jesus's mother Mary.

Theophilus was the sponsor for his writing.

Look at the last lines above: **So you might know the certainty of these things you have been taught.** This fulfills the **same purpose** for us today: it teaches us and gives us certainty of what we are being taught. You, too, can have certainty of these things!

I want to do epistemology (study of knowledge) as one who has studied philosophy formally for about seven years.

**So what is knowledge?** (oversimplified):

- TRUE: If you know something, you know something TRUE. (There is no such thing as false knowledge or knowing something as false).
- JUSTIFIED: Knowledge must be justified; there must be some reasons, some trustworthy way you get the knowledge.
- BELIEF: You believe it!

So knowledge is true and justified belief.

One way we achieve knowledge is through **testimony**. Maybe this is obvious but starting with Descartes in the late 1500s-1700s, the period of enlightenment **deemphasized** testimony. They preferred to get reasoning through your senses, which are good sources. But think about all the ways you get information or knowledge through testimony:

- Who was the last person in this building today; someone who was late? What was the weather like? Trizia says it's warm and sunny outside because she testifies to it. Because she testified to this, we believe it.
- What is the weather like today in NYC? Philip testifies that the weather app created by Apple tells him that it's 80 degrees and cloudy in NYC now; we know this information on the basis of testimony.

In the same way, we know so many things through testimony. In fact, the majority of things we know actually come from testimony! Even science is like this:

- What do you know about atoms and molecules? Did you do the oil drop experiments yourself and magnetize the oil or put the pieces of metal and bend them around and create electricity? Most likely, you were told it and you believed it because it came from a trustworthy source and you know it.
- What do you know or think you know about the galaxy? Did you look through the telescopes? I'm relying on people who looked through them and told me about it.

- I didn't do the math and am not that good at calculus and I rely on people who can do this to tell me what is true
- I didn't dissect cadavers to find out what is true about the human body; I rely on the doctors who did, who actually maybe didn't do all the things that they think they know. They went to school for a very long time and were told things via testimony and that's how they can communicate to me the things about what is good for me and my body. They relied on testimony.

Let's come out of the abyss of skepticism! The testimony in the book of Acts is also how we know things. Let's do one more example of this:

Maker's Camp was an event for ages 4-11 held last week at this building; we could call this the *Acts of the Village Children*. How would you come to know what happened last week? Archeology would not be a good method. You could use video technology or go through the garbage. But the best source is from those who were here: you could talk to 4 year olds, you could talk to Jessica who led it or Mark who was leading music, you could talk to Jake who was in the box maze or you could find the kids who were inside the maze. I then could compile all my information together and write about what happened at Maker's Camp. I could organize it chronological or in some other way.

Luke did this as well: he arranged his testimonies somewhat chronologically but even more so, it was organized in a geographical way, as seen 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."**

To Luke in his **GOSPEL**, the "end of the earth" was Galilee and this is where he starts in the Gospel of Luke. He moves into Samaria, then Judea, and ends in Jerusalem, the center point of Jesus's ministry, death, and resurrection. In contrast, the book of **ACTS** moves inside out. The book starts just outside Jerusalem, then they get kicked out into Samaria, and eventually end up in Antioch where the Holy Spirit empowers people and they send out missionaries to the the end of the earth (to a Jewish person), Rome, the capital of the most important empire on earth at that time. Rome has connections to people from everywhere else and so In our end of the earth, we are the legacy to this.

**Outline to the book (this will go fast)** *Remember, you need to read this!*

## Book of Acts Part 1

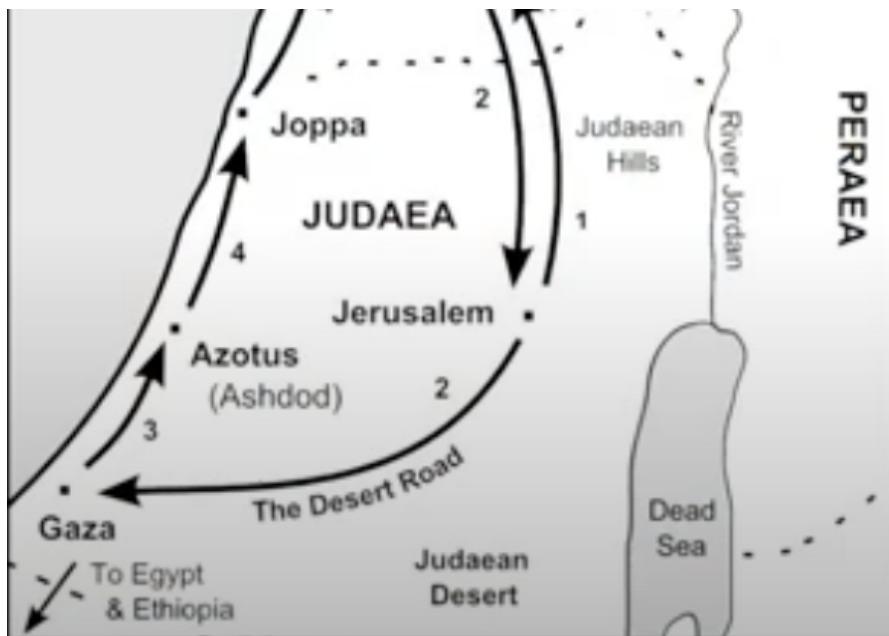
### 1:1-26 Preface

Transition and closing events of the gospel in Peter & Jewish church from Jerusalem to Antioch

### 2:1-12:25 Jerusalem is the focus

- 2:1-8:1 beginnings
- 8:2-40 church expands to Samaria and beyond
- 9:1-31 cut-away scene of Paul's conversion
- 9:32-12:12 conversion of Cornelius and the formation of the Antioch church: important in spreading Christianity beyond the Jews to the Gentiles (us!)

### Philip and Peter in Judea and Samaria:



In this map, You can see where Philip goes back to Samaria and is then prompted by the angel of the Lord to go on a journey from Jerusalem to Gaza where he meets an Ethiopian eunuch who happens to be reading the Bible and needs an explanation. Philip explains it and baptizes him. Then the Holy Spirit takes Philip

to Ashtod and then preaches up the coastline, ending in Samaria. By this time Philip has four prophesying daughters and gets a visit from Paul.

Peter joins things near Joppa and brings back to life a seamstress widow named Dorcas who dies near Joppa. He also meets Cornelius there in Cesaria, the capital city of that province and the center of a lot of action in Acts.

## Book of Acts Part 2

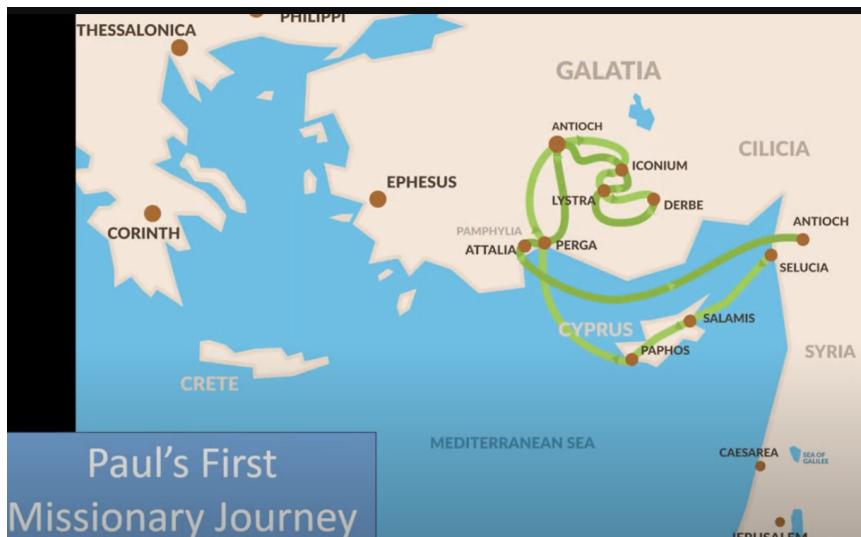
(Acts 13-28) Paul and the Gentile mission from Antioch to Rome; lots of things happened in Antioch, north of Israel, a very important city between the Old and New Testaments. Paul and other missionaries were sent out of Antioch; they had to figure out how to worship the Jewish messiah as gentiles. They had conferences with the believers in Jerusalem about this, an example of political intrigue and courtroom drama

**13:1-14:28** The Gentile mission is promoted from Antioch

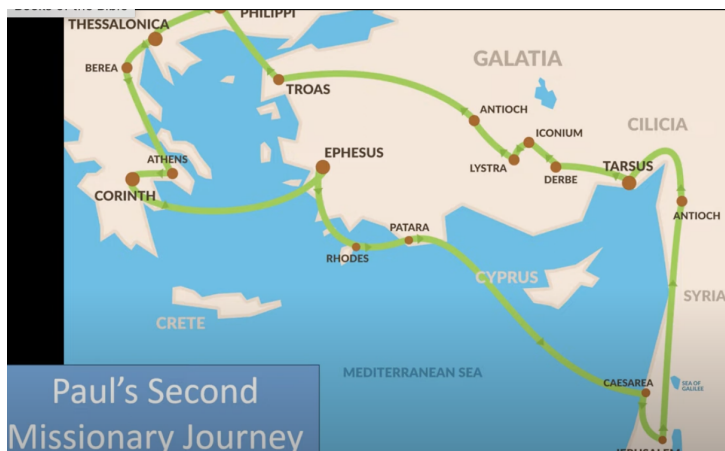
**15: 1-35** Gentile mission confirmed in Jerusalem

**15: 36 - 28-31:** The Gentile mission

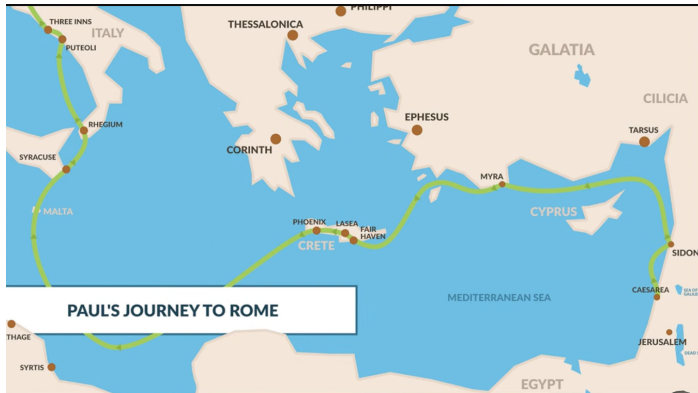
**21:17 - 28:31** Climaxes in Paul's journey to Rome



**Paul's First Missionary Journey:** Paul journeys to Cyprus, modern-day Turkey (Galacia...a region not a city), another Antioch,



**Paul's Second Missionary Journey:** Started at Antioch by land to Asia to Tarsus through Galacia and was interrupted by the Spirit who told him instead to go to Philippi. He goes to Macedonia and Greece: Many of the letters Paul writes are the cities he visits such as Thessalonica, Corinth, Ephesus, etc. You can figure out who these people are and get to know their stories.



**Paul's Third Missionary Journey:** Journey to Rome (which doesn't go well in many ways) after the shipwreck.

### Recurring Patterns:

**People Pray and Fast and the Holy Spirit Moves:** This happens several times! Wind rushes in, fire balls appear above people's heads.

**Miracles Occur:** In modern language: Believers' explain the crazy thing that just happened; People are saying "What the heck" and then the believers say the reason is because Jesus is the Messiah or the Lord...this gives them a reason to tell about the Messiah. You actually get a good summary of the entire Old Testament just from the sermons that Paul, Steve, and Philip give in Acts.

**Believers go where People Discuss Things:** Paul shows up at synagogues or places where the people are like a forum or a marketplace and he talks to them about Who Jesus is and what the scriptures. We see this over and over in Acts.

### Highlights for me:

Pentecost

Description of the earliest church (2:42-47): This has been personally important to me because of the way we do things here at the Village.

#### Description of the Earliest Church

Acts 2:46-47

Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.



### "The Believer's Prayer"

Acts 4:23-24

On their release, Peter and John went back to their own people and reported all that the chief priests and the elders had said to them. When they heard this, they raised their voices together in prayer to God. "Sovereign Lord," they said, "you made the heavens and the earth and the sea, and everything in them.

This was after Peter and John were Tortured, held captive and interrogated.

### "The Believer's Prayer"

Acts 4:25-26

You spoke by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of your servant, our father David:

Why do the nations rage  
and the peoples plot in vain?

The kings of the earth rise up  
and the rulers band together  
against the Lord

and against his anointed one. [Psalm 2:1-2]



I find the following inspirational; we could pray like this: that the Holy Spirit would enable us to speak the word boldly.

### "The Believer's Prayer"

Acts 4:27-30

Indeed, Herod and Pontius Pilate met together with the Gentiles and the people of Israel in this city to conspire against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed. They did what your power and will had decided beforehand should happen. Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness. Stretch out your hand to heal and perform signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus."

## "The Believer's Prayer"

Acts 4:31

After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.



How should we live as a response to this?

They prayed and fast together and gather together and focused on prayed: when they did this, the Holy Spirit showed up and often good things happened. But sometimes they were persecuted! But the Word of God goes out.

Be prepared to testify, this is how we KNOW stuff! Be prepared to say what you know and what you have witnessed, and when people say, "What the heck?," you might be the person to explain things and share with others. Peter says always be prepared to give an answer for the reason for your faith.

Read Acts: There are 28 chapters, so you could read 4 chapters/day for a week and you'll be all caught up! If you need encouragement about this, let me know!