

The book of Acts was written by a Greek doctor named Luke, an associate of the Apostle Paul. The majority of scholars believe it was written in the mid to late sixties. Of all the New Testament books it is the most historically verifiable. It is filled with names and locations which can be attested to by archeology. This fact, along with the introduction, puts the book in historical biography category. Luke's gospel tells us that it was compiled from eyewitness accounts (Acts 1:1-4). One theory suggests that Luke was writing to Paul's Roman defense attorney to prepare him for his defense before Caesar. Without this book, we would know little about the growth of the first century church.

The book can be divided into three sections as outlined by the eighth verse of this chapter. Chapters 1 to 7 tell of the spread of the gospel in Jerusalem. Chapters 8 to 12 tell of the advance of the kingdom in Judea and Samaria. Chapters 13 to 28 tell of the witness to the ends of the earth.

¹ In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach, ² until the day when he was taken up, after he had given commands through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. Acts 1:1-2 Luke had written to Theophilus to tell him of the life of Christ (Luke 1:1-3) and the spread of the early church. The gospel named after Luke was volume one. Acts is volume two. Luke reminds Theophilus that the previous book was about all that Jesus *began* to do and teach. In other words, the life, death, and resurrection of Christ was just the beginning. Luke would go on to share in this volume, the ascension and headship of Christ as He works in His body, the church. Jesus began to do and teach during His three years of ministry, but now He continues to do and teach through the His body, the church (Isaiah 43:10).

The gospel of Luke points out that Jesus' life was a fulfillment of the Scriptures. In fact, Luke tells us that Jesus showed the two disciples on the road to Emmaus things concerning Himself from all the Scriptures (Luke 24:27). Shortly after that Jesus entered the room where the disciples were hiding. *⁴⁴ Then he said to them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled."*⁴⁵ Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, Luke 24:44-45 We read in Hebrews that things of the Old Testament were types and shadows of what was coming in the Messiah (Hebrews 10:1). All through the book of Acts we will see that Christ is preached from the Scriptures, which is to say the Old Testament (Acts 17:2-3).

Luke's two books explain that history hinged upon the life of Christ and the pouring out of the Spirit. God had worked through the Jewish nation in times past, through their kings and prophets, and through the example the nation set when it was obedient (Hebrews 1:1-2). The laws given to Moses were the most advanced the world had ever seen. Some laws gave instructions for sanitation and prevention of infectious disease. Justice took a great leap forward. But most importantly, there was the realization that rebellion against God is serious, so serious that blood must be shed. Along with that

Commented [PW1]: Luke 1:1-4 (ESV)

¹ Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us, ² just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have delivered them to us, ³ it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, ⁴ that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught.

Commented [PW2]: Acts 1:8 (ESV)

⁸ But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

Commented [PW3]: Luke 1:1-3 (ESV)

¹ Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us, ² just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have delivered them to us, ³ it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus,

Commented [PW4]: Isaiah 43:10 (ESV)

¹⁰ "You are my witnesses," declares the LORD, "and my servant whom I have chosen, that you may know and believe me and understand that I am he. Before me no god was formed, nor shall there be any after me.

Commented [PW5]: Luke 24:27 (ESV)

²⁷ And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.

Commented [PW6]: Hebrews 10:1 (ESV)

¹ For since the law has but a shadow of the good things to come instead of the true form of these realities, it can never, by the same sacrifices that are continually offered every year, make perfect those who draw near.

Commented [PW7]: Acts 17:2-3 (ESV)

² And Paul went in, as was his custom, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, ³ explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead, and saying, "This Jesus, whom I proclaim to you, is the Christ."

Commented [PW8]: Hebrews 1:1-2 (ESV)

¹ Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, ² but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.

came the realization that it was impossible to keep all God's laws. Over and over the cycle of blessing, prosperity, turning away from God, judgment, and repentance repeated itself throughout their history. But there were glimmers of hope. A future king was promised in the line of David (Isaiah 9:7). A blessing to the whole world was coming (Genesis 12:3). He would reign in righteousness forever. Rabbis predicted that when He came to establish His kingdom, there would be an abundant outpouring of the Spirit. The prophets predicted that day a was coming when the Spirit would be poured out on men and women (Acts 2:16-18).

Israel had come out of captivity and was independent for a time. Then other powers occupied the land, trying to make the Jews be like the Greeks around them. A revolt made Israel independent again for a short time, but then Rome occupied the land and imposed taxation while controlling the temple grounds and choosing the high priest. The people were looking for the Messiah that was to come, but Jesus was a great disappointment to many. He offered salvation for their souls, but they wanted salvation from Rome. He offered a kingdom that was spiritual and eternal. They wanted an earthly kingdom that would conquer the surrounding nations. The physical examples of the past pointed to a spiritual reality that was coming, but the people would not let go of the desire of that physical hope. We see this struggle throughout the gospel of John. Over and over again Jesus' words are misinterpreted as physical when He is speaking of the eternal spiritual realm (John 4:14-15; 3:3-4).

Isn't that our problem too? We want physical healing, right conditions, and prosperity in the physical realm when all those things will quickly pass. The eternal spiritual blessings are ours to receive in Christ, but we are hung up on physical desires (Ephesians 1:3). The Messiah had come. History was turning its focus from a nation of physical descendants of Abraham to spiritual descendants of Abraham, from flesh to Spirit, from carnal to faith. A much greater and lasting kingdom had come. God isn't done with the Jews, but a new age had arrived, one that the prophets had predicted. The Messiah became a light to the nations (Isaiah 49:6).

While tiny Israel was important and the center of the crossroads of the world, God's kingdom was about to invade the whole earth. Israel at its most glorious days was still just a tiny nation on the surface of the globe. In Acts, a worldwide invasion begins. We saw the beginnings of it when Jesus went to Samaria (John 4:41-42) and the Decapolis region (Mark 5:20). Now through the body of believers the whole world would hear of salvation in Jesus.

Adam and Eve gave up their authority over the earth to Satan when they rebelled against God (Genesis 1:26). That is why Satan is referred to as the ruler of this world (John 11:31). Now a man had come and taken back the right to the world through complete obedience to God. He had faced Satan on the cross and won. The world is being reclaimed, but not for all men, but for those who are of the body of the Victor, Christ Jesus. This is the basis of the book of Acts. Jesus is taking back the land that was lost to the enemy, the souls of men and women who will hear His voice and open their

Commented [PW9]: Isaiah 9:7 (ESV)

⁷ Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

Commented [PW10]: Genesis 12:3 (ESV)

³ I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

Commented [PW11]: Acts 2:16-18 (ESV)

¹⁶ But this is what was uttered through the prophet Joel:
¹⁷ "And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams;
¹⁸ even on my male servants and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy.

Commented [PW12]: John 4:14-15 (ESV)

¹⁴ but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."
¹⁵ The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, so that I will not be thirsty or have to come here to draw water."

Commented [PW13]: John 3:3-4 (ESV)

³ Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."
⁴ Nicodemus said to him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?"

Commented [PW14]: Ephesians 1:3 (ESV)

³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places,

Commented [PW15]: Isaiah 49:6 (ESV)

⁶ he says: "It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel; I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth." ... [1]

Commented [PW16]: John 4:41-42 (ESV)

⁴¹ And many more believed because of his word.
⁴² They said to the woman, "It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard ... [2]

Commented [PW17]: Mark 5:20 (ESV)

²⁰ And he went away and began to proclaim in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him, and everyone marveled.

Commented [PW18]: Genesis 1:26 (ESV)

²⁶ Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock ... [3]

Commented [PW19]: John 12:31 (ESV)

³¹ Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out.

hearts to Him. The Laws to Moses were being misrepresented as legalistic burdens of a demanding God who was ready to clobber you if you didn't keep them and thousands of other rules made by man (Matthew 23:4). But around Jesus there was the refreshing breeze of freedom and love, of joy and peace. That is why the crowds flocked to Him. No one ever spoke like this man (John 7:46). Now that breeze was about to become a wind that would sweep the entire world.

³ He presented himself alive to them after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God. Acts 1:3 We've already spoken of the proofs shown to the two on the road to Emmaus and one of the meetings with the disciples. Paul sums up these many proofs in the opening of the 15th chapter of 1 Corinthians. *³ For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, ⁴ that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, ⁵ and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. ⁶ Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. ⁷ Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. ⁸ Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me.* 1 Corinthians 15:3-8 Verses 3 to 7 are thought to be the earliest recorded doctrinal statement of the church, probably written shortly after the ascension. Some scholars believe it was made into a song. As we will see later in the chapter, the witness of Jesus' victory over death was essential to the faith (Acts 1:22).

Greek mythology taught that some men died and become a god, but that resurrection was not physical but spiritual. Jesus' physical resurrection was the fulfillment of prophecy. Isaiah predicted the Messiah would be put in the grave, yet His days would be prolonged and He would see the fruit of bearing the sins of many (Isaiah 53:9-11). The psalmist declared that the body of the Holy One would not see decay (Psalm 16:10). The physical resurrection was the assurance that God had accepted the sacrifice of Jesus for our sins. This is what the disciples were to proclaim to the world (Acts 5:32).

Up until a week before Pentecost, Jesus continued to appear and teach the disciples. Some of the convincing proofs include letting them touch His wounds (John 20:27), eating in their midst, and speaking to them of their futures. They had a lot of preconceived ideas from their culture that needed to be overcome. While the rabbis got many things right, they were wrong about much more. All those misconceptions had to be corrected. Wouldn't it have been wonderful to have been there during that time, wondering when Jesus would appear and teach you more about the kingdom and the deep meanings of the Scriptures, correcting our misunderstandings, and encouraging us about what was to come? But then, **that happens now if you are walking with the Lord close enough to hear the whispers of the Spirit.** As you read the Word, the Teacher, the Holy Spirit, opens our minds even today to understand the Scriptures. We don't have to wait for Him to appear. He is with us wherever we go (John 13:13; Matthew 28:20).

⁴ And while staying with them he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, "you heard from me; ⁵ for John

Commented [PW20]: Matthew 23:4 (ESV)

⁴ They tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on people's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to move them with their finger.

Commented [PW21]: John 7:46 (ESV)

⁴⁶ The officers answered, "No one ever spoke like this man!"

Commented [PW22]: Acts 1:22 (ESV)

²² beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us—one of these men must become with us a witness to his resurrection."

Commented [PW23]: Isaiah 53:9-11 (ESV)

⁹ And they made his grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth.

¹⁰ Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him; he has put him to grief; when his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days; the will of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.

¹¹ Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities.

Commented [PW24]: Psalm 16:10 (ESV)

¹⁰ For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol, or let your holy one see corruption.

Commented [PW25]: Acts 5:32 (ESV)

³² And we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him."

Commented [PW26]: John 20:27 (ESV)

²⁷ Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe."

Commented [PW27]: John 13:13 (ESV)

¹³ You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am.

Commented [PW28]: Matthew 28:20 (ESV)

²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now. Acts 1:4-5 Jesus had visited them first in Jerusalem and then in Galilee, but this visitation, one of the final ones, was back in Jerusalem. They may have come down in preparation for Pentecost, a feast all male Jews are required to attend. This was reiterating what Luke reported Jesus saying in Luke 24:49. *49 And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.* Luke 24:49 In the next chapter Peter will explain that the promise was proclaimed through the prophets. *3 For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit upon your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants.* Isaiah 44:3 *28 "And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions. 29 Even on the male and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit.* Joel 2:28-29 (also see [Isaiah 32:15](#); [Ezekiel 36:26-27](#); [37:14](#); [39:29](#)) What promises! Spiritual refreshment like water on a dry ground! Clothed with power from on high! Without the power, without the refreshment, enduring spiritual battles and walking in victory is impossible.

There is much controversy over the baptism of the Spirit. Some call it a second work of grace. Others call it entire sanctification. Others refer to it as entire surrender. Some say it is a one-time event, but we will see that what happened in chapter two is repeated in chapter four with the same people ([Acts 4:31](#)). Denominations differ on their interpretation of being filled or baptized in the Spirit. Whatever your conviction, we can agree that we need refreshment and the power to live as a witness of the resurrected life of Christ in us. Amen?

The testimony of a great many men and women of God point to a time of realization that they needed more strength than they could muster. They needed the supernatural power of God to enable them to be fruitful and to persevere. They cried out to God and God refreshed them, empowered them, with the Holy Spirit. That is what Jesus said would happen in Luke 11:13. *13 If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!* It's a matter of recognizing the need and asking, knowing that God wants to give you that blessing.

Two weeks ago I shared with you from the book *In His Likeness* by Yancey and Brand. We learned all sensory input to the brain only takes up one tenth of one percent of our brain cells. All motor expressive functions, movement, balance, speech, etc. only takes up two tenths of one percent. So most of what we think of as brain function only takes up three tenths of one percent of our brain. The rest is memory, free will, emotion, values, judgment, reason, etc. We are made in the image of the triune God. We are comprised of body, soul, and spirit ([1 Thessalonians 5:23](#)). The bodily input and output is less than half of one percent of the brain. It led me to the thought that the soul (thoughts, will, emotion, judgment, desires) take up most of the rest of the brain, 99+%. But the foundation of it all is the non-physical spirit. The core from which we make our decisions is the bedrock that affects all the soul and actions resulting from its

Commented [PW29]: Isaiah 32:15 (ESV)

¹⁵ until the Spirit is poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness becomes a fruitful field, and the fruitful field is deemed a forest.

Commented [PW30]: Ezekiel 36:26-27 (ESV)

²⁶ And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.

²⁷ And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.

Commented [PW31]: Ezekiel 37:14 (ESV)

¹⁴ And I will put my Spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I am the LORD; I have spoken, and I will do it, declares the LORD."

Commented [PW32]: Ezekiel 39:29 (ESV)

²⁹ And I will not hide my face anymore from them, when I pour out my Spirit upon the house of Israel, declares the Lord GOD."

Commented [PW33]: Acts 4:31 (ESV)

³¹ And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness.

Commented [PW34]: 1 Thessalonians 5:23 (ESV)

²³ Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

decisions made in the soul. Without my spirit be born in Christ, I am essentially selfish, and my soul then desires, chooses, and plans accordingly.

The renewing of our mind is the transformation of the fundamental purpose from which all else is decided in the soul (Romans 12:2). The animal like person is led by the body. All choices are made to please the body. The soulish person functions from selfishness or some mantra that usually is selfishness in disguise. For example, the philanthropist who is making a name for himself via his "generosity." It is about his reputation and wanting the respect and praise of man. Religion can be a goal but the motivation of one's religion can be for the praise of man as well. A person can desire respect from men as a "deeply religious" person (Matthew 23:5-6). Only the one who is born-again can have a truly unselfish nature in their spirit, which is the foundation of their soul.

That change of the source from selfishness to being born of the Spirit of God is what renews the mind so that choices and plans and desires are rooted in the love of God and desire to do His will out of that love at the leading of the Spirit (Hebrews 13:20-21). This is the battle of flesh and spirit (Galatians 5:17). Our spirit is alive in Christ and gives us desires that contradict the old soulish behavior. We then choose based on our current connection and cooperation with our renewed spirit. If I am walking with the Lord, in communion with Him, in fellowship, and in the Word, the Spirit prevails. If not, the flesh will often win out even though my spirit is alive in Christ. Then comes conviction. To be filled with the Spirit is to have the Spirit freely reigning over my soul. I desire His will. I react to outside input at His direction instead of my old self-preservation instincts and preferences.

It's an ongoing process as we will see with the believers who needed to be filled again with the Spirit. Conflict stirs our old nature. We cry out to God for help and are again filled and empowered to act from an eternal perspective at the leading of the Spirit.

The disciples were about to get their first bath in the Holy Spirit so that they could go out and let their lives be an example of the living Christ in them (2 Corinthians 4:11). They were about to be commissioned, and the world would never be the same. As we go through these opening chapters of Acts, I'm going to be challenging you to ask God to give you the Promise of the Father, the fullness of the Holy Spirit. We need Him to be fruitful. We need Him to help us renew our minds. We need Him as a church to be a witness to our families and this town. Will you pray from now through the coming weeks to be filled, or perhaps filled anew, with the power of the Holy Spirit? Will you begin the exciting adventure of allowing Christ to reign in your heart?

Questions:

- 1 Review the basics of this letter.
- 2 What is the significance of "began" in verse 1?
- 3 What was the historical hinge? Why?
- 4 Why is Jesus disappointing to many?
- 5 What was Jesus restoring?

- 6 Why was the physical resurrection so important?
- 7 What is the promise of the Father?
- 8 Review the O.T. references of the promise.
- 9 Why do we need the Holy Spirit?
- 10 How do we receive the Holy Spirit?

Commented [PW35]: Romans 12:2 (ESV)

² Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

Commented [PW36]: Matthew 23:5-6 (ESV)

⁵ They do all their deeds to be seen by others. For they make their phylacteries broad and their fringes long, ⁶ and they love the place of honor at feasts and the best seats in the synagogues

Commented [PW37]: Hebrews 13:20-21 (ESV)

²⁰ Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, ²¹ equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

Commented [PW38]: Galatians 5:17 (ESV)

¹⁷ For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do.

Commented [PW39]: 2 Corinthians 4:11 (ESV)

¹¹ For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.

Page 2: [1] Commented [PW15] Paul 1/6/2017 12:46:00 PM

Isaiah 49:6 (ESV)

⁶ he says: “It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel; I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.”

Page 2: [2] Commented [PW16] Paul 1/14/2017 9:53:00 AM

John 4:41-42 (ESV)

⁴¹ And many more believed because of his word.

⁴² They said to the woman, “It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is indeed the Savior of the world.”

Page 2: [3] Commented [PW18] Paul 1/6/2017 12:48:00 PM

Genesis 1:26 (ESV)

²⁶ Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”