

David W Fletcher

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ACTS OF APOSTLES OVERVIEW

Author: Luke the physician.

Origin: More than likely Rome, although we cannot know for sure. Note how the book ends (28.30-31).

Destination: Theophilus (see 1.1).

Date: AD 60-70.

Theme: Acts of Apostles tells how Christianity spread throughout the Roman empire by the power of the Holy Spirit. “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” (1.8, ESV; compare Luke 24.46f.).

Purpose: Luke writes Acts specifically for Theophilus in order to relate to him the early history of the Christian movement (e.g., the new age of the Spirit). Luke writes Acts generally to tell the story about “the age of the apostles in order to edify Christians and to woo the Gentiles” (so Ernst Haenchen). Acts can be viewed as both *proclamation* and *apologetic*.

The possibility of Luke-Acts as a “trial brief” for Paul in Rome is plausible. Note Paul’s defense (25.8; compare the Jewish charge against Paul, 17.6-7; 24.5). Note Luke’s indication of Roman official acknowledgment of the innocence of Christians, especially Paul (16.39; 18.15f.; 19.37; 23.29; 25.25; 26.32; compare 28.30f.).

Outline:

- I. Good News in Jerusalem, 1.1–8.3.
- II. Good News in Samaria and the Coastal Regions, 8.4–11.18.
- III. Good News in Antioch and Asia Minor, 11.19–15.35.
- IV. Good News in Lands Around the Aegean Sea, 15.36–19.20.
- V. Good News from Jerusalem to Rome, 19.21–28.31.

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- Facts:
1. Emphases in the book of Acts include: (1) the work of the Holy Spirit; (2) the work of Peter and Paul; and (3) the geographical spread of the Christian faith.
 2. Acts gives background information for nine of Paul's letters to churches: Romans, 1 & 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and 1 & 2 Thessalonians.
 3. Luke's historical and geographical references are accurate (e.g., titles given to officials in the Roman government, the sea voyage of Paul to Rome).
 4. Acts contains numerous speeches by Peter, Paul, Gamaliel, Stephen, James, Demetrius, the town clerk of Ephesus, Tertullus, etc.
 5. Note the "we-sections" of Luke in 16.10-17 (journey from Troas to Philippi), 20.5-15 (journey from Philippi to Miletus), 21.1-18 (journey from Miletus to Jerusalem), and 27.1-28.16 (journey from Caesarea to Rome).
 6. Note the summary statements about the early Christian community (2.42ff.; 4.32ff.; 5.12ff.).
 7. Note the twofold narration of Peter's vision (10.9ff.; 11.5ff.), and the threefold report of Paul's conversion (9.3ff.; 22.5ff.; 26.12ff.).