

# 1: Intro ▷ *Acts, the unfinished story*

Wouldn't it be wonderful to see baptisms every week, young followers developed into mature disciples, believers united in purpose and prayer, and God using us to take the message of Jesus locally & globally! Today we begin a journey through Acts to discover how God's Spirit has and will use God's people to be a part of the unfinished story.

## **Title, Time, & Type**

**Title.** This early 1st century writing didn't originally come with a title, but by the end of the 2nd century it became widely known as "**Acts of Apostles**" (Πράξεις Ἀποστόλων).<sup>1</sup> The spotlight is on the Holy Spirit of God - empowering the followers of Jesus to accomplish the mission.

**Time.** **Acts** is the sequel to what we call the **Gospel of Luke**. Luke ends with the resurrection of Jesus (many scholars date to around A.D. 30). Acts picks up where Luke left off and spans about 30 years (A.D. 30-62),<sup>2</sup> ending with Paul awaiting trial in Rome around A.D. 62.

The fact that this story begins in Jerusalem makes it even more significant. Jerusalem is where Jesus had been tried, convicted, crucified, & buried! The first century followers of Jesus in Jerusalem were in a tight spot, even hiding for their own lives...that is, until the risen Jesus shows Himself to them!

**Type.** Acts is a **Historical Narrative**, factual accounts of what really happened at certain times and places, involving real people, nations, and events. While there are principles to apply, the reader must be careful to determine what is Prescriptive or Descriptive.

- **Descriptive:** What they DID do: (i.e. Apostles cast lots for the apostle to replace Judas. We are never told to replace leaders that way.)
- **Prescriptive:** What we SHOULD do. (i.e. Just as they did, we ARE to live pure & take the message of Jesus to others.)

**Acts 1:1–2 (NET)** <sup>1</sup> I wrote the former account, Theophilus, about all that Jesus began to do and teach <sup>2</sup> until the day he was taken up to heaven, after he had given orders by the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen.

The **former account** is what we call **The Gospel of Luke**, where Luke addresses the same person (Luke 1:3) - *Theophilus* ("Lover of God"). In this sequel, Luke reminds the reader where volume 1 left off (Luke 24).

**The Role of the Holy Spirit** The Holy Spirit is NOT the 'Cousin Eddie' of the Trinity - the one who leads people to say & do crazy things.

- The Spirit, like the Father & Son, is fully God. (Tri-unity = One God in 3 Persons)
- The Spirit of God is not an "it", a non-personal power like electricity. The Holy Spirit is one of the PERSONS of the Trinity.

<sup>1</sup> Craig S. Keener, Acts: An Exegetical Commentary & 2: Introduction and 1:1–14:28, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012–2013), 645.

<sup>2</sup> Ben Witherington III, The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998), 7.

**Acts 1:3** (NET) <sup>3</sup> To the same apostles also, after his suffering, **he presented himself alive with many convincing proofs**. He was seen by them over a forty-day period and spoke about matters concerning the kingdom of God.

This is the FOUNDATION of our Faith - the physical resurrection from the dead. The physical resurrection of Jesus is the Cornerstone of Christianity.

*He presented himself alive with many convincing proofs.* Read Luke 24 and focus on the claim that Jesus ate a piece of broiled fish, demonstrating he had flesh & bones (see vv. 39-43).

Luke gives no more details (in Acts), but that the apostles were convinced Jesus was resurrected after spending 40 more days with them & preparing them for their mission.

**Acts 1:4-5** (NET) <sup>4</sup> While he was with them, he declared, “Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait there for what my Father promised, which you heard about from me.<sup>5</sup> For John baptized with water, but **you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit** not many days from now.”

The apostles were already Jesus’ followers and had seen the power of the Spirit work both in Jesus’ life and in their lives. Remember when Jesus sent them out to cast out demons, heal the sick, and tell others that the kingdom of God was here?<sup>2</sup> (Sending out 72 • Luke 10:1-9; Sending out 12 • Matthew 10:5-8). In Luke’s writing, *baptism of the Holy Spirit* was more than **individual conversion** - it was **missional empowerment**. The Spirit wasn’t coming to convert them, but to empower them for the mission.

**Acts 1:6-8** (NET) <sup>6</sup> So when they had gathered together, they began to ask him, “Lord, is this the time when you are restoring the kingdom to Israel?” <sup>7</sup> He told them, “You are not permitted to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority. <sup>8</sup> 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 farthest parts of the earth.**”

The apostles were hoping this was the end of the race, when Jesus sets up the kingdom on earth. Instead, Jesus clarifies that this isn’t the finish line, but the starting point. The Spirit’s empowerment would help them broaden their scope from Israel to the world.

*you will be my witnesses* was more than just the 12 apostles. It applied to all the believers. The 1st and 21st century followers of Jesus were to...

**BIG TRUTH: Take the Gospel to the Planet in the power of the Spirit.**

This wasn’t something they would or could do in their own power, and neither can we.

In Luke’s first volume we learned what Jesus taught the apostles after He resurrected.

**Luke 24:44-49** (NET)

<sup>45</sup> Then he [Jesus] opened their minds so they could understand the scriptures,<sup>46</sup> and said to them, “Thus it stands written that the Christ would suffer and would rise from the dead on the third day, <sup>47</sup> and repentance for the forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.<sup>48</sup> **You are witnesses** of these things. <sup>49</sup> And look, I am sending you what my Father promised. But stay in the city until you have been **clothed with power from on high.**”

Jesus was sending the Holy Spirit to clothe them with God’s power. In fact, that’s what we see throughout Acts.

<sup>8</sup> But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and **you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem** [1:1-6:7], and in **all Judea and Samaria** [6:8-9:31], and to **the farthest parts of the earth**. [9:32-28:31]”

- **Jerusalem** (1:1-6:7) ► the city they were tasked to start in
- **Judea**, Galilee, and **Samaria** (6:8-9:31); Judea ► their state, Samaria ► racial divide
- **farthest parts of the earth** ► Syria and Cyprus (9:32-12:24); Pisidia, Pamphylia, Lycaonia, and Cilicia (12:25-16:5); Asia and Greece (16:6-19:20); Rome (19:21-28:31).

If they weren't empowered & obedient to fulfill that mission, YOU would not be here today. YOU would never had heard the life-changing message of Jesus. Thankfully, followers of Jesus have been faithful to **take the Gospel to the planet in the power of the Spirit**.

## **FEET2FAITH**

1. Ask Jesus to give you HIS HEART for the lost of OUR Jerusalem ► our town, OUR Judea ► our STATE, OUR Samaria ► crossing racial divide, & the farthest parts of the earth.
2. Start praying for a near neighbor (Jerusalem), another person in your state (Judea), another racial background (Samaria), and someone across the nation/ocean (Clint & Crysti Handfield in Ethiopia; Tige & Renee Smith in Cambodia; FOLKS in Alaska)
3. Ask the Spirit to empower & guide you to share the story of Jesus this week.

**Take the Gospel to the Planet in the power of the Spirit.**