

# acts

PART 1

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deep roots

BIBLE STUDIES

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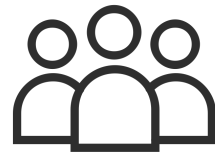
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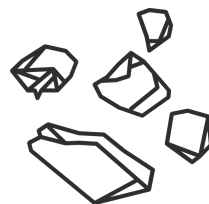
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# INTRODUCTION

I remember the first time I ever saw what appeared to be an exorcism. I was visiting Biola University for a preview weekend for High School seniors. During an hour long worship service (called Singspiration, or “Singspo”), a girl fell down on the gym floor and began yelling hysterically. The band continued to play, but something was definitely amiss. Suddenly, the Biola students around the girl laid hands on her, obviously praying over her. Soon, there was several rings of students surrounding her, with hands upon each other as they lifted the hysterical girl in prayer. I remember there was a guy in the center, closest to her, who lifted his other hand into the air and was praying loudly on her behalf. Finally, the screams ceased, the praying students cheered, and the service went back to normal again.

My friends and I, all in High School, stood in awe and even confusion. We had never seen something like that before. I was also incredibly surprised that students just a few years older than me had the discernment to realize spiritual warfare was at play here. When the service was over, all my friends and I could talk about was the girl on the gym floor. I looked at my friends in the eyes and said bluntly, “See? The Book of Acts is for today!”

I still believe that. I believe wholeheartedly that what we see in the pages of Scripture concerning the early church is just as possible today as it was then. Why? The Holy Spirit, of course. He never changes. He is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow, because simply, He is God. We have the Holy Spirit just like the early church did. May you be filled with the same boldness, unity, and peace as them, as you study this incredible book of the Bible.



This study comes in four parts, covering seven chapters in each. One thing I am incredibly excited about in this particular study series is this is the first time we are using all of our own photography. Not only that, but the photos you will see in these pages are modern interpretations of the main events of Acts. We did this to show, again, what we see in Acts is just as possible today as it was then. So you will see people in modern clothes, and interpreting scenes the way it would occur in our modern day. For example, instead of showing people stoning Stephen, our modern interpretation was to show two 'thugs' brutally beating Stephen up as he looks up into the sky and sees Jesus. We took these photos on a beautiful day at the Getty Villa in Malibu, California. If you are not familiar with the Getty Villa, it is a museum of Roman artifacts and history, with beautiful Roman architecture. I hope you enjoy looking at the photos as much as we enjoyed shooting them.

This was also our first study that goes through an entire book of the Bible. It was definitely a labor love, so we truly hope you will be blessed and blown away by what the Holy Spirit has in store for you in this amazing book. You got this, hustler.

May the Lord bless you,

Felicity Lorenz

*Deep Roots Owner*



# ACTS CHART

CHAPTER	DESCRIPTION
Chapter 1	
Chapter 2	
Chapter 3	
Chapter 4	

30 A.D.

- Jesus ascends into Heaven.
- Pentecost occurs

31 A.D.

- Peter and John perform first miracle of the early church
- Persecution of early church begins
- Stephen becomes the first martyr for the Christian faith

61 - 64 A.D.

- Luke writes the book of Acts

(It is nearly impossible to know the exact dates and even years of the events in Acts, so these are approximate times determined by Bible scholars.)



# & TIMELINE

CHAPTER	DESCRIPTION
Chapter 5	
Chapter 6	
Chapter 7	



**Peter, Apostle**  
Spokesperson of early church



**Barnabas, Christian**  
Later partners with Paul



**Stephen, Overseer**  
First martyr of Christianity



# Chapter 1

## THE BOOK OF ACTS

### Goals For This Week:

- Understand the context and background of the book of Acts.
- Apply the Great Commission, no matter our unique spiritual gifts.
- Look to God in all of our major decisions.

"The book [of Acts] offers three vital ingredients in the way God works. In the book of Acts, we see *the Spirit of God* working through *the Word of God* in the hearts of *the people of God*. All three of those elements are crucial." - Greg Laurie

## DAY ONE: THE BACKGROUND OF ACTS

Before we begin our study of Acts, let's look at some context.

Who is Luke (the author)? Look up these verses and write down what you learn about him and his writing method:

- Colossians 4:14





- Luke 1:1-4

During which event does Acts begin? Take a look at Luke 24:36-53, and write the general idea of what happens:

Now observe Acts 1:1-11, and write down anything new that was not mentioned in Luke 24:

Who was Acts written to? (Verse 1)

Today in your prayer journal, write down what you hope to get out of your study on Acts. Do you want to learn how to be full of the Holy Spirit? Do you want a better understanding of early Church history? Or are you just interested in studying another book of the Bible? Be honest in your list.

Then, ask the Lord to illuminate your mind and fill you with the Holy Spirit as you study Acts.



Who was Theophilus? Bible scholars have many theories. Here are a few:

1. Theophilus means “friend of God”, so this book was actually addressed to all Christians, not any particular person.
2. Theophilus was a Roman official, since Luke refers to him as “the most excellent Theophilus” (Luke 1:3), which was also used for Felix (Acts 23:26) and Festus (Acts 26:25).
3. Theophilus was a wealthy and influential man in the city of Antioch. There are second-century references to a man named Theophilus who was “a great lord” and a leader in the city of Antioch during the time of Luke.
4. Theophilus was the Jewish high priest named Theophilus ben Ananus. Theophilus ben Ananus was high priest in Jerusalem in A.D. 37-41.
5. Theophilus was a later high priest named Mattathias ben Theophilus, who served in Jerusalem in A.D. 65-66.
6. Theophilus was a Roman lawyer who defended Paul during his trial in Rome.

Does it matter who Theophilus was? ...Not really. We can still study the book of Acts and appreciate it, without having to know who it was addressed to.



## THE ORIGINS OF ACTS

**Why was the book called “the Acts of the Apostles”?** It is difficult to pinpoint the exact time and origin of this title. However, we do know that other names were used before “the Acts of the Apostles,” including “the Gospel of the Holy Ghost” and “the Gospel of the Resurrection.” Some Bible scholars argue that a better title would have been “the Acts of *Some* of the Apostles,” since not every apostle is examined in the book.

It’s important to note that Luke himself did not name the book, because it was originally a letter. Although this book’s formal title is “the Acts of the Apostles,” Christians today have nicknamed it “Acts” instead. The original Greek word for “acts” is *práxeis*, also meaning: to do, perform, action, deed, or practice.

**Why was Acts included into the biblical canon?** First, Luke thoroughly researched this time period to be as accurate as humanly possible. Thankfully, at the time Luke was writing the Acts account, most of the original eyewitnesses were still alive and could attest accurately to what transpired. Later on in the book of Acts, we will see that Luke himself was present or involved in certain events, thus making Acts a first-hand account in some parts. Thus, Acts’ biblical genre is considered historical, because it is mainly a play-by-play of major events in the Church’s early history.

Bible scholars agree that without the book of Acts, the New Testament would be largely incomplete. F.F. Bruce, in his book *the Canon of Scripture*, explains that the book of Acts ties “the gospel collection” with “the Pauline collection,” as in Paul’s epistles, perfectly (p.133). The book of Acts completes Jesus’ ministry here on earth, and describes the early church’s functions and oppositions. It provides context to the epistles, which



make up the second half of the New Testament. Adolph von Harnack, in his book *the History of Dogma*, states, "A canon which comprised only the four Gospels and the Pauline Epistles would have been at best an edifice of two wings without the central structure, and therefore incomplete and uninhabitable" (p. 48).

**When was Acts written?** Scholars note how major events, like Paul's death and the fall of Jerusalem, were not included in Acts. Thus, most agree that Acts must have been written some time between 61 and 64 A.D. If Luke intentionally left out these events, Acts could have been written even up to 70 A.D. Furthermore, since early Christian writers like Clement of Rome and Polycarp quote from Acts, the book could not have been written any later than 96 A.D., when their own works were written.

\* - Biblical canon: the chosen Scriptures included into the Bible we have today

"The translation of this title, 'the Acts of the Apostles,' is not too easy to reproduce in a number of languages. 'Acts' must be rendered as a verb since it refers to events, for example, 'What the Apostles Did.' In other instances, one can use an expression such as 'work' either in the verbal form 'How the Apostles Worked,' or 'the Work of the Apostles.' In such instances, 'work' must include the general concept of 'doing, accomplishing, performing.'"

A TRANSLATOR'S HANDBOOK ON THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES



## DAY TWO: THE GREAT COMMISSION

Let's break apart today what Jesus told His disciples in Acts 1:1-11.

- In verse 4, Jesus gives His disciples an instruction and a foreshadowing of things to come. What do you think Jesus is talking about here? (Hint: Look at chapter 2 of Acts!)

- In verse 8, Jesus says that His disciples will be His "witnesses."  
What does being a witness entail?

"WITNESS" (VERSE 8)

μάρτυς, *mártus* (mar'-toos)

One who information or knowledge of something, and hence, one who can give information, bring to light, or confirm something

- Will the Holy Spirit provide the answers you need in order to share your faith?  
Look at Luke 12:8-12, and record what you learn here about the Holy Spirit:



- How can *you* be a witness for Christ? Write your ideas below.
  
- What is your Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria? As in, what communities has God placed you so you can be a witness for Christ? (Work, school, church, family, friends, neighborhood, etc.) Be specific.

Verse 7: This passage is significant beyond its original context. Here, Jesus is telling His disciples that it is not for them to know when God will send the Holy Spirit upon them. However, we can also understand this verse to mean that it is not for us to know the exact date and time

a promise of God will be fulfilled. Is that frustrating? Absolutely! In our culture today, we like things quick and organized. Instead, take comfort in the fact that God's promises will be fulfilled, and that you can rest easy since everything is in His hands.



## DAY THREE: THE ASCENSION

In Acts 1:9-11, the angels tell the on-looking disciples that Jesus will return the same way He left. Here, we see another prophecy, like the one in verse 8. Yet, this one has yet to be fulfilled. Look at the following verses, and record what you learn about Jesus' Second Coming:

- Matthew 24:30
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- Revelation 1:7
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- Revelation 19:11-16

Would the promise of Jesus's return be a comfort to the disciples? Why or why not?

"On the Mount of Olives, there is a church called the Church of Ascension. If you go there today, guides will show you a footprint that is supposedly the place from which Jesus took off when He ascended to heaven. But we see ...in Luke chapter 24 that Jesus traveled with His disciples past the Mount of Olives to Bethany before He ascended. When people don't read the Word, they are vulnerable to traditions and myths which have no Biblical base at all."

JON COURSON

Is Jesus' return a comfort to you? Why or why not?



# JESUS' ASCENSION

Why is it significant that Jesus was taken up in a cloud? First, clouds in the Bible symbolize God's physical presence. For example, 1 Kings 8:10 says: "As the priests came out of the inner sanctuary, a cloud filled the Temple of the LORD."

In Exodus chapter 19, God's glory covered Mount Sinai in a cloud when He came to meet Moses. Furthermore, the Israelites were led through the wilderness by a cloud by day, and a pillar of fire by night. This is also called the *Shekinah Glory*, as in the physical manifestation of God.

Thus, it is fitting that Jesus, the fleshly manifestation of God, would return in what was often the way He came.

Jesus ascending back into Heaven was significant for a couple of reasons:

1. It confirmed that Jesus was truly God.
2. It let the apostles know where Jesus now was (i.e. Heaven).
3. Jesus' ministry was finally complete, but it was important He did not die twice. Otherwise, He would appear to be a regular man, at most a magician or charlatan.
4. Just as Jesus was taken up, the Holy Spirit would later come down. Jesus was the living *Shekinah Glory* during His time on earth. He needed to leave so that the Holy Spirit could come and be in all of God's children.
5. Jesus had work to do in Heaven. He now intercedes on our behalf, and prepares our place in Heaven before our arrival.



## DAY FOUR: THE 12TH APOSTLE

Read Acts 1:12-26. The apostles go to an upper room for discussion of the recent events. In an effort to obey Exodus 16:29, Jews decided that they should not walk more than 2,000 cubits (between 3,000 and 3,600 feet) on Sabbaths. Here, when it says a "Sabbath Day's journey," it means roughly  $\frac{5}{8}$  of a mile. (Some scholars believe that the upper room in this scene is the same place where the apostles had their last Passover meal with Jesus.) Since the apostles had just been in Bethany, and were now  $\frac{5}{8}$  of a mile back, the house they were in was on the east side of Jerusalem, just inside the city walls.

Is casting lots a kind of gambling? Look up the following verses, and record the reasons Israelites casted lots in each:

- Numbers 26:55
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- Joshua 18:6-10
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 1 Chronicles 24:5, 31
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- Proverbs 16:33



Do you think the Bible condemns casting lots? Why or why not?

Who is here during this scene (verses 13-14)? Name them. (If you need the names of Jesus' brothers, look at Mark 6:3.)

How many people were there during this scene? (Verse 15)

What were the requirements to become the 12th disciple? Look at verses 21-22, and list what was required:

Based on what you just wrote above, why do you think the apostles did not consider one of Jesus' brothers to become the 12th disciple? And why did they consider Barsabbas and Matthias only?



## Who did the apostles end up choosing?

This is the one and only time we ever read about Barsabbas and Matthias. So, we must wonder: Was Matthias truly God's chosen as the 12th apostle? Some scholars believe that Paul was God's actual choice as a replacement, and that the apostles decided too quickly in Acts 1.

However, there are a couple problems with this theory. First, nowhere in Scripture do we see God condemning the apostles' decision. Second, as we have already seen, the apostles used lots to make the decision, which was a way to determine God's will by trusting that He would have the lots land on the side He wanted.

Furthermore, most of the apostles are never mentioned again in the book of Acts. By this theory, those apostles must have not been God's chosen either! Matthias may have done miracles and been filled by the Holy Spirit. For whatever reason, Luke just decided not to record it, as He did with the other apostles.

Paul did become a prominent figure in the early Church, and his ministry takes up the second half of the book of Acts. However, he would have been disqualified, since He did not walk with Jesus during His ministry. He was taught by Jesus personally, yes, but He did not meet the criteria laid out in Acts 1:21-22.



## DAY FIVE: DWELLING ON CHAPTER 1

What stood out to you most about Acts 1? Why?

Write a one-line summary of chapter 1 in the chart on page 4.

In verse 14, it says that those who came together in the upper room “were continually devoting themselves to prayer.” It also says they did this with “one mind.” How can we apply this principle to our fellowship today?

Have you ever been in a church, ministry, small group, group of people, etc. that were able to be of “one mind”, and constantly prayed together? What was it like?

"ONE ACCORD" (VERSE 14)

ὁμοθυμαδόν, *homothymadón* (hom-oth-oo-mad-on')

Unanimous, of one mind, one and the same temperament or mind, all together



Here in chapter 1, we see the promise of the coming Holy Spirit. No doubt the disciples were confused and anxious to know more about this Holy Spirit and see how He would come. Do you ever feel anxious to feel the Holy Spirit's presence and leading in your life? Do you wish the Holy Spirit would speak to you? Write out your thoughts below.

The apostles had to make a decision on how to replace Judas. When you need to make a significant decision in your life, what are your steps in the process? How do you discern God's will in that situation?

Take a moment today to honestly tell the Lord where you would like more of His Holy Spirit in your life. Do you need more guidance in major decisions? Do you want to engage with your spiritual gifts? Do you need more fruit of the Spirit? Do you just want to know God is there with you? Talk to Him about this honestly and openly.

