

Intro to ACTS

Author: The writer of the book of Acts is Luke. Acts is the second part of a two part journal of the life and ministry of Jesus Christ that Luke sent to his friend, Theophilus. Luke was a Greek physician by profession, and was converted to Christianity by the Apostle Paul. Luke accompanied Paul on some of his missionary travels and was likely with Paul until Paul was martyred.

Purpose of the Book of Acts: The book of Acts is a historical account of the birth of the early church. In it, Luke, in his own words, provides a detailed account of all the things that God has done in the lives of the believers since Jesus went back to heaven. It starts with the disciples and the birth of the church at Pentecost, and transitions into the conversion and the ministry of the Apostle Paul

Chapter by Chapter Synopsis:

Chapter 1. In the beginning verses of the book, Luke relates the ascension of Jesus and the command that He gave to His disciples. Luke also underscores the fact that “this same Jesus” will return in like fashion. In the latter part of the chapter, Matthias is chosen to be the 12th Apostle, a position vacated by the death of Judas.

Chapter 2: On the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit was poured out, the disciples were given the gift to proclaim the Gospel in other languages, Peter preached a Gospel sermon, and 3,000 were converted to Christ in one day.

Chapter 3: Peter heals a crippled beggar and uses the miracle as a platform to preach the Gospel again.

Chapter 4: While still preaching, Peter and John were taken to prison, but not before the number of Christian converts grew to 5,000. The Sanhedrin were conflicted as to how to handle Peter and John, and chose to censure them, instructing them to no longer to preach the name of Jesus. The reply of Peter and John was that they cannot help but speak about what they had seen and heard.

Chapter 5: We read the story of Ananias and Sapphira, a couple who sold a piece of property, then withheld what they had vowed to give God. When confronted, both were struck dead. The chapter also conveys that the Apostles healed many people and were again persecuted by the Sanhedrin for their preaching. Their response was that they must obey God rather than men.

Chapter 6: As the church grew, so did the responsibility for taking care of such a great number of people. The church leaders decided to appoint seven “deacons,” or servants, to assist in taking care of the needs of the congregation. One of these new deacons, Stephen, was very bold in his faith and was arrested by the Jewish authorities for violating their ban on preaching.

Chapter 7: Contains the entire sermon that Stephen boldly preached before the people and the Jewish leaders. Infuriated by it, the people dragged Stephen outside the city walls and stoned him to death.

Chapter 8: It is in chapter 8 that we are introduced to Saul, later to be known as Paul. Saul gave his approval to the stoning of Stephen. After his stoning, Saul went on a rampage, going from house to house, dragging off followers of Christ, and putting them into prison. In the meantime, Luke tells us of the ministry of Phillip, who went to Samaria to preach the Gospel there. When they heard that the people were receptive to the Gospel, Peter and John went there, also.

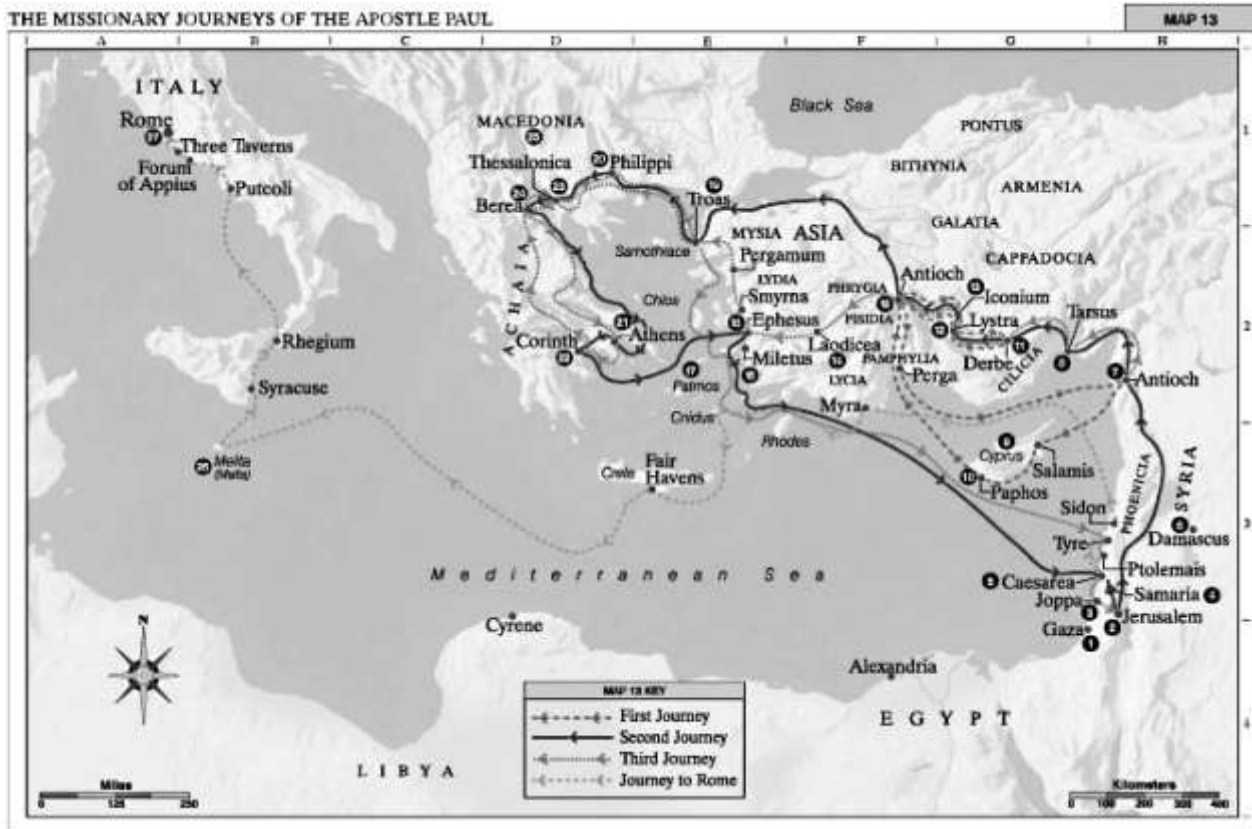
Chapter 9: As Saul was on his way to Damascus to continue his persecution of Christians, he was blinded on the road by a vivid vision of the Savior. It is here that Christ reveals himself to Saul and commissions him to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles. He also gives him instructions to go to Damascus and meet up with Ananias, who gives Saul further instructions. Saul was baptized, and whenever the Jews in Damascus learned of this, they conspired to kill Saul. He managed to escape and go to Jerusalem, where Barnabas befriended him and introduced him to the skeptical Apostles.

Chapter 10: Luke turns the story back to Peter and his encounter with Cornelius, a Roman Centurion. God reveals to Peter through a vision of His intention to fully include the Gentiles in this new faith in Christ. At the close of the vision, he is summoned by Cornelius for a visit. At that visit, Peter shares the gospel and the household is converted and baptized.

Chapter 11: Upon returning to Jerusalem, Peter was chastised by the Jewish brothers for having associated with a non Jew. Peter explains his actions and the explanation satisfies the brothers. The widespread persecution sent believers throughout the region, and word of a new work in Antioch prompted the disciples to send Barnabas to attend to the ministry. Barnabas took Saul with him, and together they met with the people in Antioch and instructed them in the faith.

Chapter 12: Persecution continued with the killing of James, the brother of John, and the imprisonment of Peter. With the help of an angel, Peter was miraculously released from prison. Luke ends the chapter with “But the word of God continued to increase and spread.”

Chapter 13: While at Antioch, the Holy Spirit sets apart Barnabas and Saul, now called Paul, and anoints them to take the Gospel abroad. They take John Mark as a helper and embark on the first of three major missionary journeys.



Chapters 13 and 14 chronicle the first missionary journey, with visits to Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe. **Chapter 15** tells of the council that had to take place in Jerusalem concerning the status of these new Greek converts, and whether or not they would be required to adhere to the Jewish tradition. Meanwhile, Paul and Barnabas were planning a second missionary trip, when they parted company due to a disagreement over whether or not to take John Mark with them again.

Chapters 16, 17, and 18 chronicle the second journey, with stops in Derbe, Lystra, and Philippi. Chapter 16 tells the famous story of Paul and Silas’ miraculous release from prison. The journey continues through Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, and Corinth.

Chapters 19—21 recall the third journey, with Paul establishing the church at Ephesus. The third journey has him arriving at Jerusalem, where he is arrested by the Jewish authorities. **Chapters 22-26** recalls the proceedings of Paul’s trial, first before the Sanhedrin, then after an appeal as a Roman Citizen, he appears before Felix, Festus, and King Agrippa. Ultimately, Paul is sent to Rome for his appeal to Caesar.

Chapters 27 and 28 chronicle Paul’s trip to Rome, upon which, he and the crew were shipwrecked and washed ashore on the island of Malta. After three months there, Paul was finally taken to Rome and put under house arrest. He was able to have visitors, and to even preach and teach under Roman guard.

Luke ends the book of Acts with a final statement, originally quoted in Isaiah 6:9: “Go to the people and say, you may be ever hearing but never understanding, you will be ever seeing, but not perceiving. For people’s hearts have become calloused, they hardly hear with their ears and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise, they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, and turn and I would heal them. Therefore I want you to know that God’s salvation has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will listen!”