

Introduction to the Book of Acts:
“The Unstoppable Gospel”
Acts 1:1-3

Author

Clues that Luke is the writer:

- Refers to his “first account... about all that Jesus began to do and teach” (v. 1).
- Theophilus mentioned only one other time (Lk 1:1-4).
- Accepted viewpoint throughout church history.

Theophilus: the name means “lover of God.” Probably a real person – a Gentile convert who had questions about the Christian faith. The term “most excellent” was a title for Roman officials (Lk 1:3).

What we know about Luke:

- Beloved physician (Col 4:14)
- Fellow laborer in the gospel (Phil 24; 2Tim 4:11)
- Traveled with Paul on his second missionary journey (Acts 16:10)
- Wrote 27% of the New Testament (larger word count than the apostle Paul)

Title

The Acts of the Apostles? The Acts of the Holy Spirit? The Acts of the Risen Christ?

Verse 3 – *“He also presented Himself alive after His suffering, by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a period of forty days...”*

Luke = all that Jesus began to do and teach until he was taken up to heaven.

Acts = all that Jesus continued to do and teach through his disciples by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Context

Verse 3 – *“speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God.”*

- The word “kingdom” occurs only 8 times in Acts, but it appears at critical times when the gospel advances – e.g. the beginning and end of the book (1:3, 28:31).

7 Major Themes

1. The Holy Spirit

The outpouring of the Spirit in chapter 2 is the central passage in the whole book.

2. Evangelism & Missions

The key verse in the book is Acts 1:8 – *“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.”*

- It provides a geographical outline that shows the progression of the gospel from Jerusalem to Rome.

3. The Church

In many ways, the early church is a model and prototype for every church. What are the characteristics of a healthy church?

4. Peter and Paul

Acts can also be outlined biographically, with two main divisions:

- Chapters 1-12 = Peter (apostle to the Jews)
- Chapters 13-28 = Paul (apostle to the Gentiles; cf. Gal 2:7-9)

5. Jews and Gentiles

Acts 10:28 highlights the problem: *"You yourselves know how unlawful it is for a man who is a Jew to associate with a foreigner or to visit him; and yet God has shown me that I should not call any man unclean."*

The union of Jews and Gentiles in the church was a massive paradigm shift (Gal 3:28).

6. Persecution

Acts 14:22 – *"Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God."*

7. Signs and Wonders

Interpretive challenge: are the things we read in Acts descriptive or prescriptive?

- Descriptive: records what happened in the past without implying it is universally true.
- Prescriptive: reveals what is normative and binding for all believers.

FOR FURTHER REFLECTION:

1. What did you learn about Luke and his important role in the early church?
2. What did you learn about the Book of Acts that was helpful?
3. Which theme(s) are you most excited to learn about? Which ones do you find challenging or confusing?

ACTS

Christians transform the world by witnessing in the power of the Holy Spirit.

