

# Missions – Acts and Onward

## Week 1 – The Church and its Mission

**Introduction:** When talking about mission, few things could be more important than addressing the history of the early church. To understand and carry out mission effectively, there can be no confusion about what mission is, how it has been carried out, what was and should be expected, and how God ordained missions through his Apostles.

### I. The Overview of Acts

#### 1. Who?

- A. The author of the book of Acts is Luke **PTQ**
  - i. “A companion of the apostle Paul (Philem. 24; Acts 16:9–10; 20:1, 4–5).
  - ii. By profession he was a physician (Col. 4:14).
  - iii. Many believe he was a Gentile because he was not listed with those “of the circumcision” in Colossians 4:11, but is mentioned in verse 14. However, this may be a more technical term for Jews, and Luke may have been a Gentile proselyte to Judaism.”<sup>1</sup>
- B. The Book has been written to Theophilus, who is exactly who Luke wrote to previously. **PTQ**
  - † **Luke 1:1-4** – *Inasmuch as many have taken in hand to set in order a narrative of those things which <sup>[a]</sup>have been fulfilled among us, <sup>2</sup>just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word delivered them to us, <sup>3</sup>it seemed good to me also, having <sup>[b]</sup>had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write to you an orderly account, most excellent Theophilus, <sup>4</sup>that you may know the certainty of those things in which you were instructed.*
  - † **Acts 1:1** – *The former account I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach,*
    - i. “It is most likely that Theophilus is the benefactor who provided the support for the publication of this double work.”<sup>2</sup>
- C. The book primarily focus on...
  - i. Humanly
    - 1) Peter because of main human character focused in Acts 2-12 **PTQ**
    - 2) Paul becomes the main human character in Acts 13-28 **PTQ**
  - ii. Spiritually
    - 1) The Acts of The Spirit **PTQ**
    - 2) The Acts of Christ through his body.

#### 2. What and Why?

<sup>1</sup> Norman L. Geisler, *A Popular Survey of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2014), 109.

<sup>2</sup> David E. Garland, *Acts*, ed. Mark L. Strauss and John H. Walton, Teach the Text Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books: A Division of Baker Publishing Group, 2017), 4.

**A. What is the book of Acts?**

- i. “If one believes that Luke-Acts is a unified whole, then it follows that Luke considered the story of Jesus to be incomplete without the story of his church.”<sup>3</sup>
- ii. “The promise of the extension of the gospel from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth (1:8) suggests that Luke is concerned with the geographical progress of the gospel.”<sup>4</sup>
- iii. “Luke may be trying to make the case that Christianity should have legal protection from Roman authorities. In Paul’s various trial scenes he is found innocent of all the charges brought against him by his malicious opponents (25:8, 18–20, 25; 26:30–32).”<sup>5</sup> **PTQ**
- iv. The book provides a continuity between the mission of God in the Old Testament and the New Testament. Luke provides an account of the kingdom’s expansion grounded on the foundation established in Torah, Prophets, Writings, and his Gospel (Acts 1:1).<sup>6</sup>

**B. What is the Theme Verse?**

- † **Acts 1:8** – *But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be [ ] witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”* **PTQ**

**3. When?****A. When was the book written?**

- i. “It was probably written no later than the early 60s, when Paul was under house arrest in Rome awaiting trial. **PTQ**
- ii. This is the time when Acts concludes (see Acts 28:30). The most likely reason why it ends here is that at the very time he was writing, Luke came to the end of the history he could recount.”<sup>7</sup>

**B. What timeframe does it cover?**

- i. It covers nearly the first 30 years of the church.
- ii. From the ascension of Jesus to Paul’s imprisonment in Rome.

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<sup>3</sup> Garland, *Acts*, 3.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> J. D. Payne, *Theology of Mission: A Concise Biblical Theology* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2021), 97.

<sup>7</sup> Walter A. Elwell and Robert W. Yarbrough, *Encountering the New Testament: A Historical and Theological Survey*, ed. Walter A. Elwell, Fourth Edition, *Encountering Biblical Studies* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2022), 196–197.

- iii. According to 1<sup>st</sup> Clement, it is believed that Paul actually was released from Rome and made his way to Spain or in his own words, “the limits of the West”<sup>8</sup> **PTQ**

#### 4. Where?

##### A. Internal locations

- i. Begins at Jerusalem and expands outwards, ending with Paul in Rome awaiting trial.
- ii. The focus of the church seems to go from Jerusalem to Antioch as the focus on the different people groups in the church expanded.

##### B. May well have been written to people in Antioch.<sup>9</sup>

#### 5. Outlines for the book

##### A. Tim Mackie from The Bible Project

- i. Introduction: Acts 1
- ii. Jerusalem: Acts 2-7
- iii. Judea and Samaria: Acts 8-12
- iv. The Gentile Missionary Journeys: Acts 13-20
- v. Paul's Witness Spreads to Rome: Acts 21-28

##### B. Elwell and Yarbrough

- i. **The Witness to Christ in and around Jerusalem (1:1–7:60)**
  - 1) Introduction and Instructions (1:1–8)
  - 2) The Ascension (1:9–11)
  - 3) The Selection of Judas's Replacement (1:12–26)
  - 4) Pentecost: Emergence of the Church (2:1–47)
  - 5) First Encounter of the Church with the Religious Leaders (3:1–4:35)
  - 6) Ananias and Sapphira: A Case of Discipline (4:36–5:16)
  - 7) Second Encounter of the Church with the Religious Leaders (5:17–42)
  - 8) The Seven Servants: An Example of Problem Solving (6:1–7)
  - 9) Stephen: Fatal Clash with Judaism (6:8–7:60)<sup>10</sup>
- ii. **The Witness to Christ in Judea and Samaria (8:1–12:25)**
  - 1) Saul the Persecutor and Philip the Evangelist (8:1–40)
  - 2) The Conversion of Saul (9:1–31)
  - 3) Peter's Ministry in Judea (9:32–11:18)
  - 4) The Antioch Church: Barnabas's Ministry (11:19–30)
  - 5) Peter's Miraculous Deliverance (12:1–25)<sup>11</sup>
- iii. **The Witness to Christ to the Ends of the Earth (13:1–28:31)**

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<sup>8</sup> Eckhard J. Schnabel, “Paul in Spain and Crete (Romans 15:23–29; Acts 21–28),” in *Lexham Geographic Commentary on Acts through Revelation*, ed. Barry J. Beitzel, Jessica Parks, and Doug Mangum, Lexham Geographic Commentary (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2019), 451.

<sup>9</sup> Geisler, *A Popular Survey of the New Testament*, 111.

<sup>10</sup> Elwell and Yarbrough, *Encountering the New Testament*, 199.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 210.

- 1) Paul's First Missionary Journey (13:1–14:28)
- 2) The Jerusalem Council (15:1–35)
- 3) Paul's Second Missionary Journey (15:36–18:22)
- 4) Paul's Third Missionary Journey (18:23–21:15)
- 5) Paul's Arrest in Jerusalem and Imprisonment in Caesarea (21:16–26:32)
- 6) Paul's Voyage to Rome (27:1–28:10)
- 7) Paul's Ministry at Rome (28:11–31)<sup>12</sup>

C. Norman Geisler notes

- i. The Formation of the Church—Jews (chaps. 1–7)
  - 1) First days (chaps. 1–3)
    - a) Ascension of the Christ (chap. 1)
    - b) Descension of the Spirit (chap. 2)
    - c) Expansion of the church (2:43–4:4)
  - 2) First deliverance of the church (chap. 4)
  - 3) First discipline in the church (5:1–11)
  - 4) First deacons in the church (6:1–6)
  - 5) First death (or martyr) in the church (7:54–60)
- ii. The Transition of the Church—Greeks (chaps. 8–12)
  - 1) The three conversions (8:1–11:18)
    - a) Eunuch, an Ethiopian (8:26–39)—a son of Ham
    - b) Saul, a Tarsian (9:1–19)—a son of Shem
    - c) Cornelius, an Italian (chap. 10)—a son of Japheth
  - 2) The two persecutions (11:19–12:25)
    - a) Because of Stephen (11:19–30)
    - b) Because of Peter (chap. 12)
- iii. The Expansion of the Church—Romans (chaps. 13–28)
  - 1) First missionary journey—to distribute the church's ministry (chaps. 13–14)
  - 2) First church summit—to defend the church's catholicity (chap. 15)
  - 3) Second missionary journey—to deepen the church's charity (16:1–18:17)
  - 4) Third missionary journey—to disseminate the church's ministry (18:18–28:16)
  - 5) First imprisonment—to define the church's mystery (28:17–31)
  - 6) Second imprisonment—to describe the church's polity (in 1 Timothy, Titus, 2 Timothy).<sup>13</sup>

II. The Opening Chapters

1. Jesus' Resurrection and Ascension **Acts 1:1–11**

- A. After addressing Theophilus Luke records the history of Jesus ascension.
- B. It addresses the showing of Christ post Resurrection. V. 3
  - i. See passages like John 20–21, Luke 24, Matthew 28, and 1 Cor. 15:5–11

<sup>12</sup> Elwell and Yarbrough, *Encountering the New Testament*, 225.

<sup>13</sup> Geisler, *A Popular Survey of the New Testament*, 114–115.

- C. The Disciples are told to wait at Jerusalem for the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. V.5-6
    - i. This is interesting because they apparently went up to Galilee and then had to come back down in order to be there for the feast of Pentecost.
      - † **Matthew 28:10** – *Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid: go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me.*
  - D. The disciples fail to understand that the physical coming of the kingdom for Israel is not yet. V.6-7
    - i. “Luke notes that Jesus told the parable of the minas to correct the mistaken belief that the kingdom of God was to appear immediately (Luke 19:11 [cf. 17:20–21; 21:8].”<sup>14</sup>
  - E. Instead, Jesus in the theme verse for the book informs them that they will first be his witnesses at Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and unto the uttermost. V. 8
  - F. Then Jesus ascends up, and the angels tell the disciples to stop staring at the sky but remember that Jesus will come back again. V. 9-11
    - i. The ascension happens at Olivet, which is right by Jerusalem.
    - ii. “a sabbath day’s journey,” which was two thousand cubits (sometimes estimated at roughly 2, 880 feet)<sup>15</sup> **PTQ**
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2. Replacing Judas Among the Twelve **Acts 1:12-26**
- A. After getting back into Jerusalem, they went into an upper room and gathered together, waiting to be empowered by the Spirit. V.12-14
    - † **Acts 1:14** – *These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren.*
  - B. Peter noted amongst this group, which was 120 strong, that the position of Judas needed filling. He realized this reflecting on David in the Psalms. V. 16-20
    - † **Psalms 69:25** – *Let their habitation be desolate; and let none dwell in their tents.*
    - † **Psalms 109:8** – *Let his days be few; and let another take his office.*
  - C. The key in defining who would be a potential for this ministry was who had been there since the beginning. **PTQ**
    - † **Acts 1:21-22** – *Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us,<sup>22</sup> Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection.*
  - D. They accomplished the choosing through narrowing the options, praying, and casting lots. V. 22-25
    - i. The two potential Apostles they narrowed it down to were Joseph / Barsabas Justus or Matthias **PTQ**
    - ii. What is a lot? “Lots could be stones or pottery fragments, sometimes with markings, placed in containers (vessels or bags); one designating a person

<sup>14</sup> Garland, *Acts*, 5.

<sup>15</sup> Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament*, Second Edition (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic: An Imprint of InterVarsity Press, 2014), 320.

could fall out during shaking, or people could draw lots designating different outcomes.”<sup>16</sup> **PTQ**

- iii. Why did they use lots to choose? Lots were commonly used by Jews and pagans in an attempt to quickly determine the will or direction a Divine would choose.

† **Proverbs 16:33** – *The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord.*

### 3. The Coming of the Spirit **Acts 2:1-13**

#### A. The Spirit fell at Pentecost, baptizing and filling them with the Holy Ghost. V. 1-4

- i. “Pentecost (“fiftieth [day]”) is the name given by Greek-speaking Jews to the festival celebrated fifty days after Passover.”<sup>17</sup> It is the celebration of the feast of Weeks.
- ii. “Rabbinic texts associate Pentecost with the gift of the law on Sinai.<sup>3</sup> Philo mentions the noise created by God’s breath or wind at the giving of the law and also says the voice of God was visible as flames.<sup>4</sup> Luke’s account suggests that he “was aware of the association of Pentecost with the renewal of that covenant.”<sup>18</sup> **PTQ**
- iii. Why doesn’t God send out cloven tongues of fire today when someone gets saved? Because he is not reestablishing his covenant.

#### B. Spirit empowered believers to speak in different tongues V. 5-11

- i. Note the language was understandable, and different tongues heard the wondrous works of God.  
† **Acts 2:11** – *...we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God.*
- ii. This amazed the people because these first believers were clearly from Galilee and would not be expected to be speaking all these other languages.

#### C. The reviews of what was said were mixed V.12-13

### 4. The Spirit Inspires Bold Proclamation **Acts 2:14-36**

#### A. Peter hears the critique, gets up, and answers it, explaining this is a fulfillment of God’s prophecy. Acts 2:16-21

- i. This prophetic idea is an outpouring of God’s Spirit on all flesh followed by God’s judgment. Joel 2:28-32
- ii. This is a big deal because in the Old Testament the Spirit would come upon people for a time and only specific people who were set apart for particular tasks. Kings, priests, prophets, judges, etc. **PTQ**

<sup>16</sup> Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary*, 321.

<sup>17</sup> Garland, *Acts*, 25.

<sup>3</sup> *b. Shabb. 88a; b. Pesah. 68b; Exod. Rab. 31.*

<sup>4</sup> Philo, *Decal. 33, 46.*

<sup>18</sup> Garland, *Acts*, 25–26.

- iii. As Christians, we are assigned particular tasks that never disappear this side of heaven. Namely, to be like and proclaim Christ.
  - B. Peter connects the reasons for this reestablishment of the covenant and miracles in the person and work of Christ, which followed God's plan V. 21- 24.
    - i. Note that it being a part of God's plan did not remove the sinful motive or actions of those involved with Jesus' murder.
  - C. Peter uses the resurrection of Christ as a qualifier that God again had kept his word.
    - i. Peter notes that David spoke in Psalm 16:8-11 about the coming death and resurrection of the Messiah.
    - ii. Christ's resurrection showed him to be God's Holy One. **PTQ**
  - D. Peter foresees the retort and shows this cannot be about David himself because David is still in the ground, and therefore he was speaking prophetically of someone who would be a king on the throne of David, namely the Christ. 25-28
  - E. Peter here proclaims not only the resurrection but the ascension and the falling of the Spirit and Jesus' clear connection to the Christ figure. V. 30-35.
    - i. Here Peter claims Jesus to be a fulfillment of Psalm 110:1 **PTQ**
  - F. Peter, in his preaching, told them who Christ was and addressed the sin of the people to a degree that they had no recourse other than to say What shall we do?  
**Acts 2:36-37**
- 5. The Initial Response and Continued Faithfulness **Acts 2:37-48**
  - A. Peter's response to the people has confused us but would not have confused them. V. 38
    - i. "Peter instructs the people how to call on the Lord's name (2:21): be baptized in Jesus' name. Because baptism was a sign of conversion to Judaism normally reserved for pagans, Peter's demand would offend his Jewish hearers and cost them respectability.
    - ii. He calls for a public, radical testimony of conversion, not a private, noncommittal request for salvation with no conditions. "In the name of Jesus Christ" distinguishes this sort of baptism, requiring faith in Christ, from other ancient baptisms; this phrase simply means that the person being baptized confesses Christ. (Acts always uses this phrase with "be baptized"—the passive, never the active; presumably it thus does not denote a formula said over the person being baptized, but rather indicates the confession of faith of the person receiving baptism; see 2:21 and 22:16.)"<sup>19</sup>
    - iii. In short, Peter was not claiming the act of baptism was saving; he was claiming the public calling upon the Lord proclaimed through baptism in Christ's name was saving. (This was choosing to be a disciple of Christ over all and confessing one's faith to all, Luke 14:26-27, Matthew 10:32-33) **PTQ**
  - B. It is also important to know this is not a full transcript of the Sermon but a snippet to show the vital information and overarching points made about Jesus. V. 39-40.
  - C. The final section notes that nearly 3,000 were saved and added unto the church.

<sup>19</sup> Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary*, 324–325.

- i. Note they received the word and were baptized.
- ii. This is the necessary order
- D. The early church activities were listed V.42-47
  - † *Acts 2:42-47 – And they continued stedfastly in the **apostles' doctrine** and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.<sup>43</sup> And fear came upon every soul: and many **wonders and signs were done by the apostles.**<sup>44</sup> And all that believed were together, and had all things common;<sup>45</sup> **And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need.**<sup>46</sup> And they, **continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart,**<sup>47</sup> **Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.***
  - i. Apostles ' doctrine is the teaching of the apostles, which we have no reason to believe is anything other than what is written down in the New Testament.
  - PTQ**
  - ii. Note: signs and wonders were done specifically by the Apostles.
  - iii. They were together at church and out of church and were together regularly, daily even.
  - iv. They saw it as their job to love and take care of other Christians, as they would have no other means of having that done. (No kind of welfare state existed)
  - v. They gave glory to the proper place and had good relations with the people outside as well.
  - vi. This caused God to add to the church daily; the end of that verse is a variant, not a proclamation.
  - vii. If we focus on God's word, love God's people, fellowship together, pray unto the Lord, give him all the glory, keep good relations with those without, and proclaim the truth, people will be saved.

### III. Concluding Thoughts

1. The Christians recognized what was occurring as the true and natural outpouring of God's plan historically.
  - A. The disciples quote and recognize the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy.
  - B. Acts fits the pattern of God sending people on Mission.
    - i. "The entirety of Scripture's story is about mission. This hermeneutic should be granted significant priority because it derives from the unity of the entire canon of Scripture"<sup>20</sup>
    - ii. From Genesis to Malachi, the Bible either gives details of the coming one, establishes the need for him, or details God's faithfulness to do and complete what he says.

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<sup>20</sup> Payne, *Theology of Mission*, 1.

- iii. “Mission began with God, is sustained by God, and will culminate with God. Mission is not an activity developed by the church; rather, the church participates in God’s mission. Mission belongs to him.”<sup>21</sup>
2. This is not to say that the Disciples didn’t misunderstand when pieces of it were to fully and finally occur, for example, the return and establishment of Christ’s kingdom.
3. The Holy Ghost is absolutely central to all this being accomplished, and we, like the early church, should come together as God’s church for the sake of God’s mission. We should be saved, baptized, and live as His disciples.



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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>22</sup> Locations represented at Pentecost, Logos Maps.

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- Elwell, Walter A., and Robert W. Yarbrough. *Encountering the New Testament: A Historical and Theological Survey*. ed. Walter A. Elwell, Fourth Edition, *Encountering Biblical Studies*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2022.
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