



GULF SHORES CHURCH OF CHRIST

Sunday Morning Bible Class Study Guide

by Ray Reynolds

WITNESS: A Study on the Acts of the Apostles

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WITNESS: A Study on the Acts of the Apostles

Introduction

Author:

The Acts of the Apostles, and the gospel of Luke, are written anonymously in a third person style, but traditionally ascribed to the "beloved physician" Luke (**Colossians 4:10**). Outside of the "we sections" in Acts (**Acts 16, 20-21, 27-28**), Luke is mentioned three times in the New Testament (**Colossians 4:14, Philemon 24, II Timothy 4:11**). Luke, no doubt, accompanied Paul as a traveling physician to aid him because of poor health. There were others, according to the prison epistles that joined them: Timothy, Aristarchus, Jesus (Justus), Epaphras, John Mark, Demas, Tychicus, Epaphroditus, etc.

Luke is the most polished writer of the New Testament as he uses a wide vocabulary (nearly 800 words found nowhere else in the New Testament). His works comprise 25% of the New Testament, more than all of Paul's letters combined. In the book of Acts he allows his medical knowledge, and seafaring terminology, to bleed through allowing the reader to see his education and interests.

Date:

This book was probably written from Rome in the late 50's or early 60's AD. There are some scholars that speculate a date of about 62 AD, which means it was written shortly after Luke's gospel (as a second part). It would have been written after Paul's two year Roman imprisonment (**Acts 28:30-31**), but before Paul's trial, otherwise that information would have been included in the book.

Theme:

The theme of the book of Acts is the work of the church. The book is the main source of history concerning the first generation of Christians. It is the only "orderly account" we have of the establishment of the church, corporate organization, the rise of Christianity, and the evangelism of the world from a Christian point of view.

The title of the book suggests that it was meant to be a historical record of the events of the apostles and a textbook for future generations. It is interesting that while the twelve apostles are listed in **Acts 1:13-26**, as the book begins, it only mentions Peter, James (who dies in chapter 12), John, and Paul (who would not be added to the church until chapter nine) from that point forward.

In fitting with the theme and agenda of the book it will cover more than three decades of church history (30's to 60's AD). The book also chronicles the work of the Holy Spirit within the church with over seventy references. Most of those references occur in the first eleven chapters. The purpose of God sending the Holy Spirit was to continue the work of Jesus.

Luke hopes to reveal that Christianity was politically harmless. Despite the early persecution by the Jews, Christians were peaceful and no threat to the Romans. Luke reveals the impartiality of the Roman officials like Gallio (**Acts 18:12-17**), Sergius Paulus (**Acts 13:7-12**), and the secretary at Ephesus (**Acts 19:30-41**). Instead, the Jews are viewed as the instigators. However, the Roman authorities never seem to take sides.

Audience:

The book of Acts, like Luke's gospel, undoubtedly targets a Gentile audience. The name Theophilus (meaning "lover of God") is given as the designated recipient. When the term "most excellent" is used elsewhere in the book it is a reference to someone in a government position (**Acts 23:26, 24:3, 26:25**), therefore he must have been a real person that held an important office, maybe even in Rome. This helps us to understand why Luke spends some much time discussing the peaceful and harmless nature of the church.

As we have studied many times before, the work of the church moved from Jerusalem to spread throughout the world. One "hub" of activity was the city of Antioch. This is evident in the book of Acts. Many of the strong congregations discussed in the book are cities with large Roman populations and synagogues that were influenced by Hellenistic culture. The narrative moves from Jerusalem to Antioch to Rome. This emphasizes Christianity from a Gentile perspective and allows Paul to have the limelight.

Luke seems to emphasize that Paul is as much of an apostle as Peter and the others. His writings give Paul's apostleship and letters more credence. Roughly 2/5 of the book deals with the acts of Peter (**Acts 1-12**), and 3/5 records the acts of Paul (**Acts 8-9, 13-28**). He shows the similarities between the two: both heal cripples (**Acts 3:28, 14:8-12**), both have encounters with sorcerers (**Acts 8:18, 13:6**), both raise the dead (**Acts 9:36, 20:9**), both are miraculously released from prison (**12:7, 16:26**), both become the objects of worship (**10:25, 14:11**), both are beaten for the name of Jesus (**5:40, 16:22**), etc.

The beginning of the book emphasizes the fulfillment of the vision of Jesus and the reinforcement of the Great Commission. By the books end the gospel has reached the Jews in Jerusalem, those of the Diaspora, the Samaritans, the Gentiles, the Romans, and many "God-fearers" in between. The abrupt ending may be meant to give the impression that the work was ongoing. The ministry of the church will never end!

Key Verses:

Acts 1:8-9, 1:29, 2:4, 2:38, 4:12, 4:19-20, 5:41-42, 6:4-6, 7:59-60, 8:4, 8:35, 9:3-6, 9:20, 9:27, 11:20, 12:5, 12:12, 13:3, 14:7, 16:25, 16:31-32, 17:11, 18:28, 20:7, 20:20-36, 28:31

Outline:

- I. *The Preface (1:1-3)*
- II. *Preparation For Ministry (1:4-2:13)*
- III. *Witnessing in Jerusalem (2:14-5:42)*
- IV. *Witnessing to the Council (6:1-7:60)*
- V. *Witnessing Beyond Jerusalem (8:1-9:42)*
- VI. *Witnessing to Gentiles (10:1-12:25)*
- VII. *Witnessing in Cyprus and Southern Galatia (13:1-14:28)*
- VIII. *The Council in Jerusalem (15:1-35)*
- IX. *Witnessing in Greece (15:36-18:22)*
- X. *Witnessing in Ephesus (18:23-21:16)*
- XI. *The Arrest in Jerusalem (21:17-23:35)*
- XII. *Witnessing in Caesarea (24:1-26:32)*
- XIII. *Witnessing in Rome (27:1-28:31)*

WITNESS: A Study on the Acts of the Apostles

Lesson 1 = The Preface (1:1-3)

How do we know Luke is the author of Acts (**Acts 1:1-3, 2:1-2, Luke 1:1-4, 24:44-53**)?

Why did he write this book? Why do it in two parts?

What did Christ do during the forty days after his resurrection? What significance does that have in the book of Acts?

What charge did Jesus give the apostles just prior to His ascension? What significance does that have in the book of Acts?

Why did He give this charge? What significance does that have in the book of Acts?

In what way did Jesus give commands prior to His ascension? What significance does that have in the book of Acts?

Was Theophilus a Gentile believer? What significance does that have in the book of Acts?

Why does Luke emphasize the personal, private instruction of Jesus to the twelve?

What are the “infallible” proofs of the resurrection (**I Corinthians 15:4-8**)?

What are the benefits to such hard evidence?

Luke also emphasizes the “kingdom of God,” which seems to be a theme throughout Jesus’s ministry. What significance does that have in the book of Acts (**Mathew 17:21, Luke 21:31**)?

Why do you think Luke accentuates the inclusive nature of the rule of God? How is that different from other nations on the earth?

In what ways can Christians hinder this vision of God for His kingdom?

Are the kingdom and the church synonymous? What evidence do we have?

WITNESS: A Study on the Acts of the Apostles

Lesson 2 = Preparation For Ministry (1:4-2:13)

What was the last question the disciples posed to Jesus before He ascended? Why? What was Jesus' answer to their question?

When were the apostles to receive power? Where would they receive it? How?

What would come into existence when this power came (**Mark.9:1**)?

Where would they be "witnesses" and what would be given through this "witness"?

What are the two things that the angels told the disciples after the ascension of Christ? Why?

What did the disciples do during the time between the ascension and Pentecost?

What does **Acts 1:14** tell us about how the brothers of Jesus had changed (**John 7:3- 5**)?

Why did they choose a replacement for Judas? How did they choose him?

Pentecost followed what other annual feast of the Jews? What other names are given for this holy day (**Leviticus 23:4-21, 39-44, Deuteronomy 16:1-17**)?

What people had gathered together in Jerusalem to keep the feast? Why were they together?

How did the Holy Spirit come upon the apostles? Why is this significant (**Acts 1:5, 1:29, 2:1-4, 2:6-7, 2:14, John 14:26, 16:7-14**)?

What caused the multitude to come together? What were their accusations? Why?

What prophecies did Peter refer to and why (**Psalms 16:8-11, Joel 2:28-32, Isaiah 2:1-4, Micah 4:1-4**)? Did others agree (**Hebrews 1:2, I Timothy 4:1-3, II Timothy 3:1-5**)?

How did people respond? What did they do? Why is that significant?

WITNESS: A Study on the Acts of the Apostles

Lesson 3 = Witnessing in Jerusalem (2:14-5:42)

How does the miracle, performed by Peter at the Beautiful Gate of the temple, substantiate the witness of Peter and the other apostles?

What seems to have been the primary purpose of the miracle?

What does Peter say in his sermon? Why?

What interpretation does Peter give concerning the prophecy of Moses?

Who arrested Peter and John? Why? How did they respond to the arrest?

What questions did the council ask Peter and John? How did they respond?

What did the council say about the miracle of Peter?

How did Peter and John react after being charged not to speak the "name of Jesus"?

Why didn't the council punish them further? What does that reveal about the Jews?

Why did the disciples quote from the second Psalm in their prayer to God? What happened immediately after the prayer? What is significant about this event?

Were the disciples in Jerusalem commanded to sell their possessions? Why did they do it?

What did they do with the money? Does that set a precedent for the church today?

Why did the apostles change the name of Joseph to Barnabas? What does that tell us about him? How would he become a force for good in the church?

What was the sin of Ananias and Sapphira? What happened? How did the church react?

What happens to the apostles after this event? How were they rescued? Why?

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Lesson 4 = Witnessing to the Council (6:1-7:60)

What complaint did the Grecian Jews make against the Hebrews? What does that mean?

What do we know about the consistency of God on this issue? Why is that important?

What did the apostles tell their brethren to do about the complaint? What kind of men were they to choose? Why?

What could we learn from the statement of the apostles in **Acts 6:2**?

What kind of Jews were chosen? Why? How many?

Why did the apostles lay their hands on them (**Acts 6:8, 8: 5-8, 8: 14-18, I Corinthians 1:7, 12:4-11, II Timothy 1:6**)?

Were any signs and wonders done by any except the apostles before the appointment of the seven? What does this indicate?

What charges did the false witnesses make against Stephen? Did he answer their charges? What did he do in his speech to the council?

How did Stephen conclude his speech? How was his conclusion similar to Christ's speech to the scribes and Pharisees (**Matthew 23:29-36**)?

What was the reaction of the council? How did they respond?

What request did Stephen make as they were stoning him to death?

What did Stephen see before he died? What is the significance of this event?

How did Stephen's death affect the church? How did it affect the growth of the church?

What do we learn about Saul of Tarsus (**Acts 7:58, 8:1-3**)?

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Lesson 5 = Witnessing Beyond Jerusalem (8:1-9:42)

What happened when the disciples were scattered abroad? Why?

What signs and wonders were done by Philip at Samaria?

Why did the apostles send Peter and John to Samaria? What was the purpose of visiting?

Why didn't Philip impart gifts of the Spirit to the Samaritans? What does that mean?

Simon tried to buy the power of the Holy Spirit from the apostles? Does this show that he had never been converted or that he was just weak? Explain.

What did Peter tell Simon to do? Why is this his command?

Why did Philip leave Samaria and go toward Gaza? Who led him into the desert?

Who told Philip to go and to the chariot?

What was the Ethiopian eunuch doing when Philip ran to him? Explain.

How do we know there was sufficient water in this desert to immerse the eunuch?

What happened to Philip after the conversion of the eunuch? The eunuch? Why?

Why was Saul going to Damascus? What was the purpose of this visit?

Why did the Lord appear to him? What did the Lord tell him to do? Why did God send Ananias to Saul? What did he tell Saul to do (**Acts 22:16**)?

Why did the Jews in Damascus take counsel to kill Saul? How did he escape? Where did Saul go before he went to Jerusalem (**Galatians 1:15-17**)?

What kind of work was Peter doing at this time?

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Lesson 6 = Witnessing to Gentiles (10:1-12:25)

Does God hear the prayers of sinners (**Acts 9:6-11,10:3-5,10:25-33,16:8-15,18:8-9**)? Explain.

Why didn't the angel of the Lord tell Cornelius what to do to be saved? What did he tell him?

Why did Peter receive the vision of the sheet and the animals?

What had Cornelius done by the time Peter arrived at his house? What did he do when Peter came to his house? What did Peter tell him at first?

What question did Peter ask Cornelius? What was his reply?

When did the Holy Spirit fall on Cornelius and those gathered at his house? Why?

Were they baptized with the Holy Spirit? Did this save them or precede salvation? Explain.

What seems to have been the primary purpose of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on these Gentile people?

What did Peter command them to do after this event? Why?

How did the Jews react when they heard about what Peter had done? What was their attitude after Peter told them the full story? Why did Peter seek to defend himself so quickly?

Where were the disciples first called Christians? Why (**Isaiah 56:4-5, 62:1-2, Hosea 2:23**)?

Whom did the apostles send to Antioch? Why? What did he do when he got there?

Who assisted Barnabas in his work at Antioch? Why chose him?

What did the disciples do after they heard the prophecy of Agabus? Was it true?

What happened to James? What was Herod going to do with Peter? Why?

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Lesson 7 = Witnessing in Cyprus and Southern Galatia (13:1-14:28)

Why did the church choose to do mission work?

Where did Barnabas and Saul choose to go on the first missionary journey? Why?

Who accompanied them on the first journey?

What two places did they visit on the island of Cyprus? What did they do at each place?

Where did they stop after leaving Cyprus? What happened there?

Where did they go to do missionary work when they arrived at Antioch of Pisidia? Why?

What request did the people make of Paul and Barnabas?

Why did the Jews contradict the things spoken by Paul the next Sabbath? What did Paul say to them? How did they react?

What was the attitude of the Gentiles? Why did Paul and Barnabas leave Antioch so soon?

What was the result of their teaching in the synagogue at Iconium? Why did they leave?

Why did the people attempt to sacrifice to them as gods? What did this mean?

How did they later treat Paul in this city? Where did they go after leaving Lystra?

What places did they revisit on this first journey? What did they do at each church?

Why did they appoint elders so soon after the churches was established? Explain.

What did they do when they got back to Antioch of Syria? Why?

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Lesson 8 = The Council in Jerusalem (15:1-35)

What kind of false teachers came to the church at Antioch after Paul and Barnabas returned from their first journey, and what did they teach (**Acts 15:1-2, Galatians 1:6-8, 2:1-5**)?

Why was the conflict over circumcision such a difficult obstacle for the church?

What was the source of this conflict? What was the heart of the debate?

What did Paul and Barnabas do about the matter (**Acts 15:2, Galatians 2:1-5**)?

Who attended the Jerusalem Council? Why?

Does the Jerusalem conference give authority for church conferences and councils to decide doctrinal questions today? Explain.

What can we learn from Peter's address at the Jerusalem conference? What is the meaning of **Acts 15:10**?

What role does James, the Lord's brother fill in this meeting? What position does he hold?

What application did he make of **Amos 9:11-12**? What did he recommend?

What two things did the church at Jerusalem do to try to solve the problem about circumcision and the keeping of the law?

What can we learn about the consensus among the leadership? Was there unity? Explain.

Why did they choose to write a letter? Who delivered the letter? Why?

Did these actions solve the problem (**Galatians 1:6-7, 2:1-5, 4:17, 6:13, Philippians 3:2-6, 3:17-19, Colossians 2:8-12, 2:16-17, I Timothy 1:3-7, Titus 1:10-11, II Corinthians 11:10-15, 12:11-13, Romans 2:25-29, Romans 16:17-18**)?

What lesson should we learn from this event? What application should we make?

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Lesson 9 = Witnessing in Greece (15:36-18:22)

What caused the separation between Paul and Barnabas? Who was right? Who was wrong?

Who did Paul choose for his second journey? What direction did they go?

Why did they seek to go to Syria and Cilicia?

What vision did Paul receive at Troas? How did this alter their journey?

Who joined the company of Paul, Silas, and Timothy at Troas (**Acts 13:4, 13:14, 14:1, 14:7, 14:27, 16:6-8, 16:10, 16:12, 16:13**)? Why is that significant?

What churches made up the churches of Galatia?

What were the results of the work in Philippi (**Acts 16:11-40**)?

What were the results of the work at Thessalonica (**Acts 17:1-9**)?

What were the results of the work in Berea (**Acts 17:10-14**)?

What were the results of the work in Athens (**Acts 17:15-34**)?

What were the results of the work in Corinth (**Acts 18:1-17**)?

Why did Paul leave the synagogue? Where did he teach after leaving the synagogue?

What epistles did Paul write during this stay at Corinth (**Acts 18:5, I Thessalonians 3:5-8, I Thessalonians 1:1, II Thessalonians 1:1**)?

What message did the Lord give Paul in the night by a vision?

What happened when the Jews carried Paul before Gallio? What happens as a result?

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Lesson 10 = Witnessing in Ephesus (18:23-21:16)

Whom did Paul encounter when he returned to Ephesus? What did he teach? What did he do?

Why were the disciples baptized again? Why didn't Apollos, Aquila, Priscilla, etc. do this before Paul returned?

Why did Paul lay his hands on the disciples at Ephesus? What happened?

How long did he teach in the synagogue at Ephesus? Why did he separate the disciples from the synagogue? What is the significance of this event?

What happened during the two years that Paul taught in the school of Tyrannus? How did this impact the growth of the church?

What churches were established during this period of time (**Acts 19:10, Revelation 1:19-3:22**)?

What plans did Paul have before he sent Timothy and Erastus into Macedonia?

What epistle did Paul write near the end of his long stay at Ephesus (**I Corinthians 16:7-8**)?

Why did Demetrius call a meeting of the silversmiths? What was the result of the meeting?

Was there a danger for Paul and his companions in their travels during these missionary journeys (**Acts 19:29-31, II Corinthians 1:8-11**)?

When did Paul leave Ephesus? Where did he go? Where was he when he wrote II Corinthians (**Acts 20:1-2, II Corinthians 2:12-13, 7:5-7, 9:3-4**)?

Why did Paul decide to return through Macedonia rather than sail to Syria? Who went with him?

Why did Paul ask the Ephesian elders to come to Miletus? What happened?

What did Agabus, from Judea, have to say to Paul at Caesarea? What did the brethren then do? What reply did Paul give?

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Lesson 11 = The Arrest in Jerusalem (21:17-23:35)

How was Paul and the messengers of the churches received by James and the elders at Jerusalem? What did they advise Paul to do? Why?

What does this tell us about the relationship between Paul and these leaders?

What happened when the seven days of purification were almost completed?

What request did Paul make of the chief captain as they were bringing him into the castle?

What were the main points of Paul's defense before the Jews?

What did the chief captain intend to do to Paul after he was brought inside the castle?

What question did Paul ask him? How did Paul receive his citizenship?

Why was the chief captain afraid when he learned that Paul was a Roman citizen? Explain.

How did Paul divide the council? Why did his statement divide the council?

Who saved Paul from the council? Why?

How was Paul encouraged the following night? What happened?

What curse did about forty Jews bring upon themselves?

How did Paul and the chief captain learn about the plot?

What did the captain do with Paul? Why? What did he say about Paul in his letter to Felix?

Why does Luke include the formal letter inside this book? Explain.

WITNESS: A Study on the Acts of the Apostles

Lesson 12 = Witnessing in Caesarea (24:1-26:32)

What charges did the Jews bring against Paul in his trial by Felix? Why?

What was the substance of Paul's defense? What was the outcome of the trial?

What did Felix do after hearing Paul?

Why did Felix continue to commune with Paul?

Why did he leave him bound when he was succeeded by Festus?

How long had Paul been a prisoner when Festus became the next governor?

Why did the Jews ask Festus to send Paul back to Jerusalem? How did Festus answer?

What was the outcome of Paul's trial before Festus?

Why did Festus ask Paul if he would go to Jerusalem for trial? How did Paul answer him?

Why did Festus want King Agrippa carry out the trial against Paul? Why was Paul glad to defend himself before King Agrippa?

What was the substance of Paul's defense before King Agrippa?

What did Festus say to Paul as he was making his defense? How did Paul reply?

What question did Paul ask the King? How did he reply?

What was the reaction of all who heard Paul on this occasion?

What can we learn from Paul's willingness to share his story and give witness to anyone and everyone that he encountered? How can we apply this method of evangelism?

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Lesson 13 = Witnessing in Rome (27:1-28:31)

Who had charge of Paul on the voyage to Rome? Why is this important?

How do we know that Luke went to Rome with Paul?

How did Julius show kindness to Paul?

What advice did Paul give about the journey while they were at Fair Havens? Why did most of them want to coast along the island to Phoenix?

How bad was the storm that caught their ship? What did Paul tell them before the ship was wrecked? Why is that significant?

How long had they been fasting when Paul encouraged them to eat?

How many were on the ship? Why is that important?

Why didn't the soldiers kill the prisoners when the ship wrecked?

How did the people treat them? What did they say when Paul was bitten by a venomous viper?

How long did they stay at Melita? What miracles did Paul perform on this island?

What happened at Puteoli? Why is that significant?

What kindness was shown Paul when they reached Rome?

What was the substance of Paul's address to the chief Jews? How did they reply?

What were the results of his preaching to the Jews that came to his lodging?

How long did Paul remain in Rome? What did he do during this period of time (**Ephesians 3:1, 4:1, Colossians 4:7-11, Philemon 8-10, Philippians 1:12-15, 2:23-24**)?

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Conclusion

Questions For Further Examination on the book of Acts

What can we learn from the conversion stories in the book of Acts?

What can we learn from the work of the church in the book of Acts?

What can we learn from the power of the Holy Spirit in the book of Acts?

What can we learn from the influence of biblical witnessing in the book of Acts?

What can we learn from the missionary journeys in the book of Acts?

What can we learn from the following people?

Matthias

Ananias (Damascus)

Gamaliel

Herod

Candace

Agabus

Blastus

Bar-Jesus

Sergius Paulus

James, the Lord's brother

Barsabas

Ananias & Sapphira

Pricilla & Aquila

Silas

Timothy

Luke

Lydia

Gallio

Sosthenes

Erastus

Demetrius

Claudius Lysias

Druscilla

Felix

Festus

Agrippa

Publius

What significant events happened in the following cities?

Damascus

Lydda

Caesarea

Antioch of Syria

Salamis

Perga in Pamphylia

Antioch of Pisidia

Iconium

Lystra

Philippi

Athens

Berea

Corinth

Ephesus

Miletus

Malta

Rome

What are the meanings of the following terms?

The sixth hour

Centurion

Hellenists

Chamberlain

Appointed

Spirit of divination

Areopagus

Religious

Itinerant

Bound in the Spirit

Poured out

Baptism

Accompanied

Barracks

Goads/Pricks

Witness

What will you remember the most about the book of Acts? Why?

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The Acts of the Apostles – R.R. Williams
The International Bible Commentary – F.F. Bruce
The Living Word Commentary Series
The People's Notes - B.W. Johnson
The Pulpit Commentary
The Teacher's Bible Commentary - Paschall & Hobbs
Thru The Bible - J. Vernon McGee
World Bible Commentary