

Acts: To The Ends of The Earth

Spring and Summer Sermon Series

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The Book of Acts

The book of Acts was written by Luke. The early church father Eusebius (c. 325) gives numerous sources to identify the author of this book as Luke. Also, both Luke and Acts have a similar feel and flow that they are thought to be two volumes.

Acts or “Acts of All the Apostles” appears to have been written around A. D. 63, soon after the last event recorded in the book. One of the major clues is that Acts ends in a cliff hanger. Paul is standing on trial in Rome. If Luke had known of the outcome of the trial then he probably would have included it in the book.

The pages of Acts are dripping with distinct details that delight historians and readers alike. Covering a time period of 30 years, Acts begins in Jerusalem and

ends in Rome. In between we see the church fulfilling Jesus’ prophecy “you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8). We see all kinds of different people and cultures; from Caesarea to Antioch, Ephesus to Corinth and Athens to Rome. The book takes us to what would culturally be considered the ends of the earth for God’s people; Rome.

All this time we can see the influences and historical encounters that Paul has with the early Christians particularly in his letters to those Christians. In a sense we can get a better picture of the early church by reading those letters of Paul as he encounters the Christians he addresses the letters.



Ministry Continues...

We see that the ministry of Jesus Christ continues well after His ascension. In fact, this is the birth of the Church. Though the Apostles were saddened to see their Lord go; they knew that He would return. They also knew that Jesus was always with them.

Acts describes the growth of the Church and how it spread throughout the world. Each Apostle and disciple proclaimed the Crucified and Risen Jesus Christ in foreign lands and their own communities.

How can we do the same? How can you proclaim Jesus Christ in your community? In the world?

We continue with the work that the Apostles laid out for all of us; to proclaim Jesus Christ.

In this issue:

| | |
|------------------|---|
| The book of Acts | 1 |
| Study Questions | 2 |
| Luther on Acts | 2 |

Study Questions

Read Acts 1.

1. Since the author of Acts is Luke, and Luke already recorded the ascension. Why is Jesus' ascension also recorded in Acts?
2. What does Acts 1:8 suggest to us about the contents of this second volume? Acts 1:8 is a key verse. What does it reveal about Jesus' continuing work on this earth?
3. What qualifications were required of those nominated to fill the office left vacant by Judas?
4. This is one of the first speeches by Peter after Christ's ascension. What are the differences between the 'old' Peter and this 'new' Peter?

Luther on Acts

Contrary to what has sometimes been the practice, this book should not be read or regarded as though St. Luke had written about the personal work or history of the apostles simply as an example of good works or good life. Even St. Augustine and many others have looked upon the fact that the apostles had all things in common with Christians. Yet this practice did not last long and in time had to stop. Rather it should be noted that by this book, St. Luke teaches the whole of Christendom, even to the end of the world, that the true and chief article of Christian doctrine is this: We must all be justified alone by faith in Jesus Christ, without any contribution from the law or help from our works.

This doctrine is the chief intention of the book and the author's principal reason for writing it. Therefore he emphasizes so powerfully not only the preaching of the apostles about faith in Christ, how both Gentiles and Jews must thereby be justified without

any merits or works, but also the examples and the instances of this teaching, how the Gentiles as well as Jews were justified through the gospel alone, without the law.

This book might well be called a commentary on the epistles of St. Paul. For what Paul teaches and insists upon with words and passages of Scripture, St. Luke here points out and proves with examples and instances to show that it has happened and must happen in the way St. Paul teaches, namely, that no law, no work justifies men, but only faith in Christ. Here, then, in this book you find a beautiful mirror in which you can see that this is true: *Sola fides justificat*, "faith alone justifies". For all the examples and incidents contained in this book are sure and comforting testimonies to this doctrine, they neither deceive nor lie to you. (AE 35:363-64)