

HARVEST ROCK CHURCH

INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF ACTS: ADVANCING GOD'S KINGDOM A YEAR OF ACTION: THE BOOK OF ACTS SERIES

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TEXT: Acts 1:1 The first account I composed, Theophilus, about all that Jesus began to *do* and teach, 2 until the day when He was taken up to heaven, after He had by the Holy Spirit given orders to the apostles whom He had chosen. 3 To these He also presented Himself alive after His suffering, by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a period of forty days and speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God. 4 Gathering them together, He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised, “Which,” He said, “you heard of from Me; 5 for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.”

Acts 1:6 So when they had come together, they were asking Him, saying, “Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?” 7 He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority; 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.” 9 And after He had said these things, He was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. 10 And as they were gazing intently into the sky while He was going, behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them. 11 They also said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven.”

I. INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF ACTS

A. AUTHOR: DR. LUKE

1. He was a Gentile believer in Jesus. The only Gentile to contribute to the Bible.
2. A Renaissance man. He was a scientist, a medical doctor.
3. He was a historian. Not only does he give the historical account of the early Church, but he also does it in the tradition of other historians of his time, like Josephus and Tacitus.



4. He was a scholar-writer. His Greek is the most sophisticated. His writings and language use are even more sophisticated than that of the brilliant Paul, the apostle.
5. He was a theologian. He retains the speeches of Peter and Paul, highlighting major doctrinal issues. My New Testament professor said that the book of Acts is not just a historical book but a deeply theological book.
6. He was, in my opinion, an apostle. Specifically, a marketplace apostle. He wrote more of the New Testament than any other apostle. All of the New Testament is attributed to a New Testament apostle. He was wealthy, like doctors today; he traveled with Paul at his expense. I believe that God wants to hitch apostles with prophets, but also apostles with marketplace apostles. When Paul connected with Priscilla and Aquila, two marketplace apostles in Corinth in Acts 18, then they traveled to Ephesus, where the greatest revival broke out in Acts 19.

B. AUDIENCE: THEOPHILUS – LOVER OF GOD. AUDIENCE: URBAN, GREEK. Person of influence. You wrote historical accounts to people of influence so that they could copy the accounts and spread the message to others.

C. DATE: After 70 A.D.

D. GENRE: HISTORIOGRAPHY

1. Combination of history and biography, primarily of Peter and Paul.
2. It is a misnomer to call this the “Acts of the Apostles”—it is the *Acts of the Holy Spirit!*
3. **The Acts of the Holy Spirit. It is an account of how the Holy Spirit through the early Church advanced God's Kingdom, starting in Jerusalem to Rome.**

E. THEME

1. **FOUNDATIONS OF NEW TESTAMENT CHRISTIANITY (Acts 2:38-42; Hebrews 6:1-3):** Baptism, repentance, and faith, but also principles of New Testament church life.
2. **HOLY SPIRIT:** One fourth of the Holy Spirit mentioned in the New Testament is found in the book of Acts (Acts 1:8). **John 16:7 “But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you. 8 And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment.”**
3. **REVIVAL AND REFORMATION: Acts is the Acts of the Holy Spirit advancing God's Kingdom through revival.** (Acts 3:19 “Therefore repent



and return, so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord; 20 and that He may send Jesus, the Christ appointed for you, 21 whom heaven must receive until the period of restoration of all things about which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from ancient time.”)

4. **APOLOGETIC AND APPEAL TO ROME.** Foundation for Christian religious freedom (Acts 24:1-26:32).
5. **GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM: Proclaiming the death, resurrection, and ascendancy of Jesus. (Matthew 24:14 “This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come.”)** I will close by talking more about the Kingdom of God.
- F. **OUTLINE OF ACTS: 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.”**
 1. **Jerusalem: Acts 1:1-Acts 8:3.**
 2. **Judea and Samaria: Acts 8:4-Acts 12:25.**
 3. **Remotest part of the earth: Acts 13:1-Acts 28:31.** Within one generation, the early Church through the power of the Holy Spirit would preach in every known nation of that time (Colossians 1:23).

II. ADVANCING GOD’S KINGDOM

- A. **Acts 1:3 To these He also presented Himself alive after His suffering, by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a period of forty days and speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God.**
 1. **Jesus begins His ministry by saying, “Repent, for the Kingdom of heaven/God is at hand” (Matthew 4:17; Mark 1:15).**
 2. The last words He speaks before His ascension are about the Kingdom of heaven. Just in Matthew alone, the word *kingdom* appears 55 times, the word *church* two times. In Mark, *kingdom* appears 20 times; in Luke, 45 times; in John, five times. A total of 125 times in the four Gospels. In Acts, eight times. 377 times in the Bible.
 3. The Jewish people believed that as soon as the Messiah came and would sit on His throne, the Kingdom age would begin and last forever.
 4. Jesus would ascend into heaven and sit at the right hand of the Father and fulfill the prophecy of Isaiah 9:6-7 and inaugurate His Messianic Kingdom.

5. But it would be a Kingdom that would be spiritual and moral, and not physical or geopolitical.
6. *Kingdom* means the rule and reign of God. He comes to rule and reign in the heart of those who give their hearts to Jesus as King.
- B. Isaiah 9:6 For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; and the government will rest on His shoulders; and His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. 7 There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, on the throne of David and over His kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness from then on and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will accomplish this.**
7. “Increase of His government”: the rule and reign of God as each person makes that commitment to Jesus as Lord.
8. Peace comes. Peace with God or reconciliation with God with your sins forgiven (Romans 5:1) and peace with/in/through the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22; Romans 14:17).
9. **Justice and Righteousness.** Reformation of society. Not just personal salvation. God wants people to do what is morally right—righteousness. And He wants justice on earth. E.g., slavery abolished. Abortion eradicated. The signs that society is being transformed is that there is more righteousness and justice in society. Justice and righteousness are the foundations of His throne. Heaven on earth is having more justice and righteousness on earth.
10. **Genesis 18:17 The LORD said, “Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do, 18 since Abraham will surely become a great and mighty nation, and in him all the nations of the earth will be blessed? 19 For I have chosen him, so that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing righteousness and justice, so that the LORD may bring upon Abraham what He has spoken about him.”**
11. **2 Samuel 8:15 So David reigned over all Israel; and David administered justice and righteousness for all his people.**
12. **2 Chronicles 9:7 “How blessed are your men, how blessed are these your servants who stand before you continually and hear your wisdom. 8 Blessed be the LORD your God who delighted in you, setting you on His throne as king for the LORD your God; because your God loved Israel establishing them forever, therefore He made you king over them, to do justice and righteousness.” 9 Then she gave the king one hundred**

and twenty talents of gold and a very great amount of spices and precious stones; there had never been spice like that which the queen of Sheba gave to King Solomon.

- 13. Psalm 89:14 Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Your throne; Lovingkindness and truth go before You.**
- 14. The greatest injustice in all of humanity has been the killing of innocent babies in the womb. I believe that our generation will see the overturning of *Roe v. Wade* and the ultimate illegalization of all abortions. This is the year for action! In this election year, we must elect pro-life officials into local, state, and national offices!**

CONCLUSION: But it begins with people giving their hearts to Jesus as Lord.

