

ACTS

Introduction

1. While in prison, Paul wrote to Timothy asking that he “make every effort to come to me soon” noting that all but Luke had left him (II Tim.4:9-11). Luke was Paul’s faithful companion until the end of Paul’s life about c.e. 64. Luke being the only Gentile author of the NT, was not one of the 12 disciples and did not have first hand exposure to Jesus (Lk.1:2). His connection with the faith was through Paul and this gave him great authority in the early church. Luke wrote both the Gospel of Luke and the book of Acts.
2. Luke begins the Book of Acts where he left off in his gospel. Acts records the initial fulfillment of the Great Commission of Matthew 28:19-20 as it traces the beginning and growth of the New Testament church. The text follows the ministry of Peter (ch.1-12) and Paul (ch.13-28) with lesser attention given to Philip, John, James, and Stephen.
3. The parallels between Jesus’ ministry and the ministry of the Apostles are remarkable. Both start with the coming of the Spirit, both involve miracles, and teaching, both receive opposition from religious authorities, and both experience similar fates.
4. A conspicuous parallel of events in the ministry of Peter (1-12) & Paul (13-28) can be seen in Acts.

	PETER	PAUL
Heals a lame man	3:2-	14:8
His shadow heals	5:15	19:12
Exorcized demons	5:16	16:18
Victory over Sorcerer	8:18-	13:6-
Raise the dead	9:36-	20:9
Gentile vision	10:9	22:17-
Deliverance from prison	12:7-	16:25-

5. Christ’s last words before His ascension were so perfectly realized in the Book of Acts that they effectively and concisely outline its contents: *“You shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem (ch.1-7), and in all Judea (ch.8-12), and to the end of the earth (ch.13-28)”* - Acts 1:8. Thus, Acts traces the rapid expansion of the gospel, beginning in Jerusalem and spreading throughout the Roman Empire.

Ch 1	7 8	1 13	28	
“Jerusalem”	“Judea & Samaria”	“the uttermost part of the earth”		
Peter		Paul		
Ch13	14 15 16	19	22	
	18	21	28	
Mission #1	Mission #2	Mission #3	Prison #1	Prison #2
Galatians	I & II Thessalonians	I & II Corinthians	Ephesians Colossians	I & II Timothy

Titus

Romans

Philemon
Philippians

Some literary considerations in reading Acts.

- It was customary for NT writers to paraphrase as they “quoted” from the OT. Sometimes they were reflecting the sense of the LXX (an early Greek translation of the OT) more than the original Hebrew text. This was not uncommon.
- It was customary for NT writers to insert speeches that helped explain the character and meaning of events. These speeches were again, paraphrases and greatly abbreviated versions of the original sermons.
- There are controversies surrounding the historical accuracy of the chronology of certain events in Acts. Ancient historians were more sensitive to the reporting of the character and spirit of the events than the technicalities of the events themselves. We should not expect the Biblical record to meet a modern criterion for historical recording. Nonetheless, we can assume that the material was based on actual historical events.
- Much of Acts is descriptive (recording what happened in the past), not prescriptive (exhorting us to expect certain events to happen in our present). For example, the Apostles were commanded to wait for the coming of the Spirit in the upper room. This does not suggest that we should receive the Spirit by waiting in the upper room.
- A literary pattern in Acts punctuates the various sections with summary statements.

INTRODUCTION

Section 1 Events that launch the Christian mission. 1:1-2:47

Summary statement 2:41 “So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and there were added that day about three thousand souls.”

PART I - The Mission to the Jewish world through Peter. 3:1-12:24

Section 2 The earliest days of the Church at Jerusalem. 3:1-6:7

Summary statement 6:7 “And the word of God kept on spreading; and the number of the disciples continued to increase greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were becoming obedient to the faith.”

Section 3 Critical events in the lives of three pivotal figures. 6:8-9:31

Summary statement 9:31 “So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria enjoyed peace, being built up; and, going on in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it continued to increase.”

Section 4 Advances of the Gospel in Palestine - Syria. 9:32-12:24

Summary statement 12:24 “But the word of the Lord continued to grow and to be multiplied.”

PART II - The Mission to the Gentile world through Paul. 12:25-28:31

Section 5 The first missionary journey and the Jerusalem council. 12:25-16:5

Summary statement 16:5 “So the churches were being strengthened in the faith, and were increasing in number daily.”

Section 6 Wide outreach through two missionary journeys. 16:6-19:20

Summary statement 19:20 “So the word of the Lord was growing mightily and prevailing.”

Section 7 To Jerusalem and then to Rome. 19:21-28:31

Summary statement 28:31 “And he stayed two full years in his own rented quarters, and was welcoming all who came to him, preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all openness, unhindered.”

Time line of events in Acts

NOTE: This is a **possible** chronology and date reference to the events in Acts.

Acts	Event	Date
2	Pentecost	30
		31
		32
		33
		34
9	Saul's conversion	35
		36
		37
		38
		39
		40
		41
		42
		43
12	Peter in prison – Herod dies	44
		45
		46
13	First Mission	47
	“	48
14	“	49
15	Jerusalem Council	50
16	Second Mission	51
17	“	52
	“	53
18	“	54
19	Third Mission	55
	“	56
21	“	57
22	Paul arrested in Jerusalem	58
	Paul in prison in Jerusalem and Caesarea	59
26	“	60
27	Paul's voyage to Rome and prison	61
28	Paul in prison in Rome	62
	“	63

Tradition and the missing disciples

NOTE: There is no valid historical record of what happened to the disciples not accounted for in the book of Acts but traditions developed in the early church to satisfy the curiosity about their fate.

Thomas - martyred in India

Andrew - crucified in Greece on an X shaped cross. His arm bone was taken to Scotland, where he became the patron saint and his cross the national flag.

Thaddaeus - ministered in Africa

Philip & Bartholomew - martyred in Asia

Matthew - ministered in North Africa

James the son of Alphaeus - associated with Spain
Simon the Zealot - traveled to England

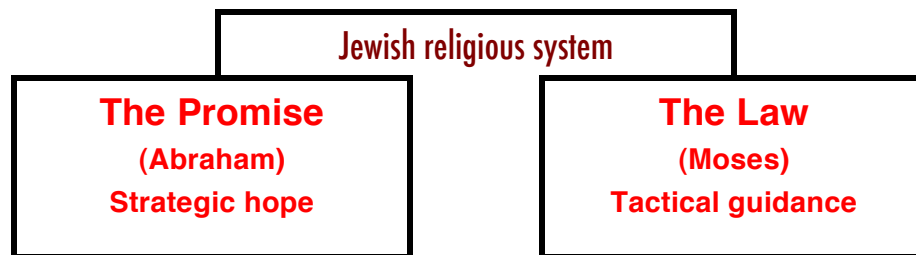
“The Promise of My Father”

Acts is the story of the coming of the Spirit to fulfill the “Promise of My Father.”

A. Luke’s Gospel ends with a promise.

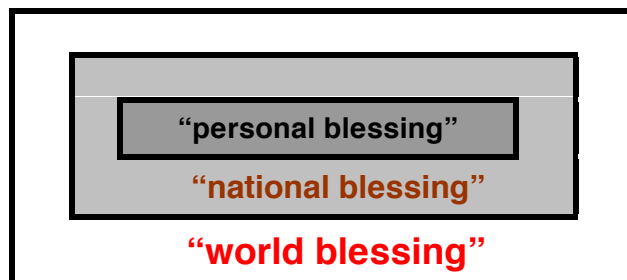
Acts 1 “1 The first account I composed, Theophilus, about all that Jesus began to do and teach,”
Lk.24:46-49 “46 - - - Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and rise again from the dead the third day; 47 and that repentance for forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. 48 you are witnesses of these things. 49 And behold, I am sending forth **the promise of My Father** upon you; but you are to stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.”

1. To understand the Jewish religious system we must **appreciate two great themes.**



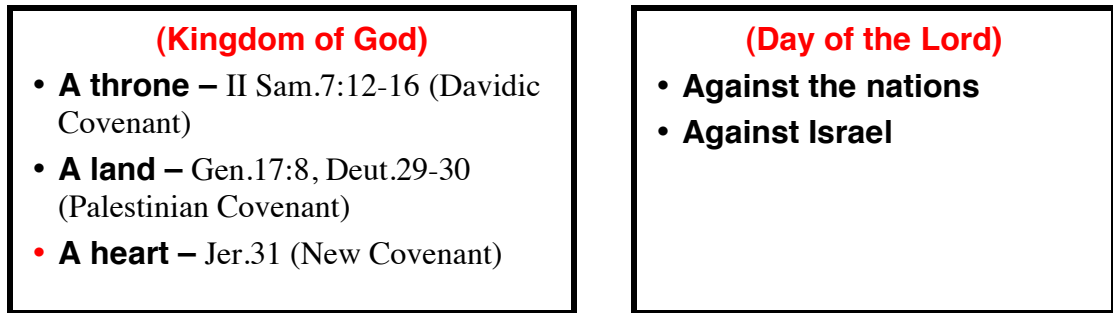
2. The Promise to Abraham found **expression in three areas.**

Gen.12:2-3 “And I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, and so you shall be a blessing; and I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse, and in you all the families of he earth shall be blessed.”



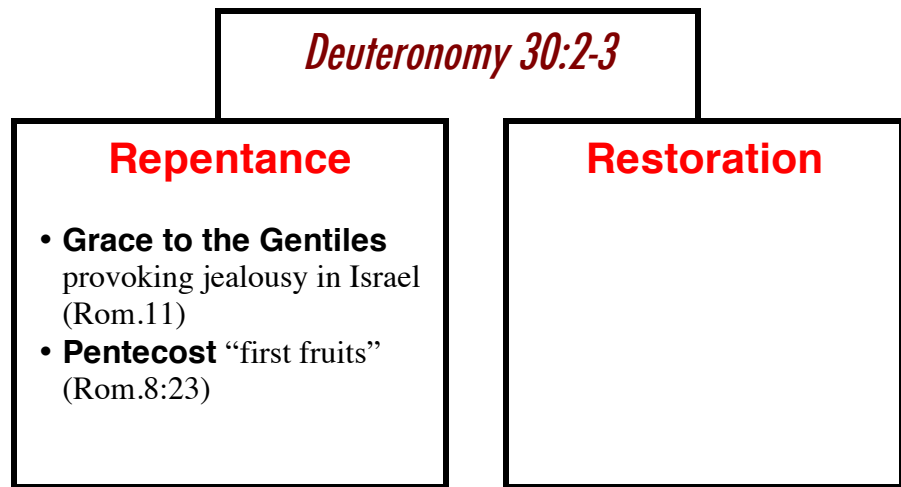
3. The Promise to Abraham had both a **positive and negative aspect.**





4. There is a **sequence** to the elements of the Promise.

Deut.30:1-3 “1 So it shall be when all of these things have come upon you, the blessing and the curse which I have set before you and you call them to mind in all nations where the Lord your God has banished you, 2 and you return to the Lord your God and obey Him with all your heart and soul according to all that I command you today, you and your sons, 3 **then** the Lord your God will restore you from captivity, and have compassion on you, and will gather you again from all the peoples where the Lord your God has scattered you.”



5. **The Kingdom of God.**

a. **The Kingdom is a puzzle.**

1. It is a present reality - Rom.14:17, Matt.12:28; yet it is to follow Christ’s second coming - Matt.25:34, I Cor.15:50.
2. It is physical - Matt.13:41,43; Rev.11:15; yet it is spiritual - Lk.17:20-21.

- 3. It is something we have now entered - Matt.21:31, Col.1:13, Lk.16:16; yet it is something we will enter at Christ's return - Matt.8:11, II Pet.1:11.
- 4. It is at work in the world today - Matt.13; yet it is not of this world - Jn.18:36.
- 5. It is God's reign - Ps.145:11; yet it is God's realm - Lk.16:16.

b. A solution.

- 1. **Two ages are mentioned** ("this age" and "the age to come") Matt.12:32, Eph.1:21, Mk.10:29-30.
- 2. **These ages are separated by:**
 - a. The second coming of Christ - Matt.24:3. Christ's second coming is preceded by a period of "great tribulation" - Matt.24:15-28.
 - b. The resurrection from the dead - Lk.20:34-36.
- 3. **"This age" is:**
 - a. Characterized by evil from which we must be delivered - Gal.1:4, Eph.2:1-2, Matt.13:22.
 - b. The domain of Satan, "the god of this age." II Cor.4:3-4.
- 4. **"The age to come" is:**
 - a.Characterized by eternal life - Matt.19:16-24.
 - b. Free from sin - Matt.13:49-50.
 - c.To follow the resurrection - I Cor.15:50.
- 5. **Two stages to the transition from "this age" to "the age to come."**
 - a.First resurrection - Rev.20:4-5.
 - b. Second resurrection - Rev.20:12-13.
- 6 **The first resurrection of Rev.20:4-5 has two parts (I Cor.15:22-26).**
 - a.Christ's resurrection - "first fruits" - I Cor.15:23a.
 - b. Christians at Christ's second coming - I Cor.15:23b.
- 7. **The three forms of the Kingdom in relation to the two ages.**

<i>The mystery form</i>	<i>The Millennial form</i>	<i>The New Heaven & Earth</i>
"The age to come"		
<i>The Church age</i>	<i>1000 years</i>	<i>Eternity</i>
<i>Incarnation Crucifixion Resurrection Pentecost</i>	<i>Parousia (second coming)</i>	

"This age"
7 year Tribulation

- 6. To understand the book of Acts we must appreciate its place in describing the **"first fruits"** in the fulfillment of "the promise."

B. Luke's Gospel ends with a promise rooted in the Prophets.

1. A New Covenant (in contrast to the Old Covenant with Moses) will include a **heart transplant and forgiveness of sins**.

Jer.31:31-34 “³¹ Behold, days are coming,” declares the Lord, “when I will make a **new covenant** with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. ³² not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was husband to them,” declares the Lord. ³³ “But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,” declares the Lord, “**I will put My law within them, and on their heart I will write it**; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. ³⁴ And they shall not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lords,’ for they shall all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them,” declares the Lord, “for **I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.**”

2. God will take responsibility for **causing His people to obey** Him by giving them His Spirit.

Ezek.36:25-27 “²⁵ Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. ²⁶ Moreover, **I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you**; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷ And **I will put My Spirit within you** and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.”

3. The gift of God's Spirit will be **given to all mankind as they call on His name** with the result that signs and wonders will take place.

Acts 2:17-21 (Joel 2:28-32) “¹⁷ And it shall be in the last days, God says, **That I will pour forth of My Spirit upon all mankind**; And your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, And your young men shall see visions, And your old men shall dream dreams; ¹⁸ Even upon My bond-slaves, both men and women, I will in those days pour forth of My Spirit And they shall prophesy. ¹⁹ And **I will grant wonders in the sky above, and signs on the earth beneath**, Blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke. ²⁰ The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and glorious day of the Lord shall come. ²¹ And it shall be, that **everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be save.**”

C. Luke's Gospel ends with a promise rooted in the Prophets and reiterated by Jesus.

1. The **gospel of the kingdom** was the term used to describe Jesus' reiteration of the promise of the fathers.

Matt.4:23 “And Jesus was going about in all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming **the gospel of the kingdom**, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness among the people.”

2. Jesus had the authority to give the Spirit of God as a **Helper**. This Spirit was always with God's people but will be put in them.

John 14:16-17 “¹⁶ And I will ask the Father, and **He will give you another Helper**, that He may be with you forever; ¹⁷ that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not behold Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you, and will be in you.”

3. Another aspect of the Spirit’s ministry would be a power to **witness to Jesus**.
John 15:26-27 “When the Helper comes, whom **I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth**, who proceeds from the Father, He will bear witness of Me. And you will bear witness also, because you have been with Me from the beginning.”

D. Luke’s Gospel ends with a promise rooted in the Prophets, and reiterated by Jesus, that is to be fulfilled in Acts.

1. Jesus identifies the promise of the Father with the Spirit that would be given at **Pentecost**.

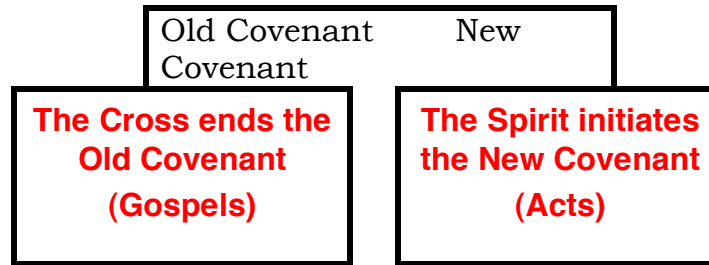
Acts 1:4-8 “And gathering them together, He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for **what the Father had promised**, "Which, {He said,} **you heard of from Me**; for John baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now." And so when they had come together, they were asking Him, saying, "Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?" He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority; but you shall 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.”

2. The Promise of the Old Testament finds its **fulfillment** in the New Testament **beginning with** Jesus’ advent, atonement, resurrection and gift of His Spirit.



3. The Promise is realized in **Jesus’ Death, Resurrection, & presence through His Spirit**.

Messiah's 1st coming



Lesson #1

We are to count ourselves privileged and challenged to live at this time in history.

1 Peter 1:10-12

“As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that {would come} to you made careful search and inquiry, seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow. It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, **but you**, in these things which now have been announced **to you** through those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven—**things into which angels long to look.**”

If we as Gentiles are to be the kind of salt and light that will excite a hunger for the King and His Kingdom in the nation of Israel we must –

- 1. Experience and express the grace of God.**
- 2. Demonstrate an instinctive wisdom and knowledge of the truth.**