

# Acts of the Apostles: Study Outline

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## OVERVIEW OUTLINE

- I. **Introduction to the Book (Acts 1:1-26)**
  - A. Prologue (1:1-3)
  - B. Jesus' Final Promise of the Holy Spirit to the Apostles (1:4-8)
  - C. Ascension of Jesus • From Mount Olivet • Ad 30<sup>1</sup> (1:9-11)
  - D. Disciples Wait and Pray • In Jerusalem (1:12-14)
  - E. Replacement for Judas: Matthias (1:15-26)
- II. **"In Jerusalem" • AD 30-36 (Acts 2:1 to 8:4)<sup>2</sup>**
  - A. Church Established • In Jerusalem • On the Day of Pentecost • AD 30 (2:1-47)
  - B. Further Progress of the Church; First Persecution (3:1 to 4:31)
  - C. More Progress of the Church; Second Persecution (4:32 to 5:42)
  - D. Additional Progress of the Church; Third Persecution; Dispersion (6:1 to 8:4)
- III. **"In all Judea and Samaria" • AD 36-46 (Acts 8:5 to 12:25)**
  - A. Philip, Peter, and John: Labors • AD 36 to 39 (8:5-40)
  - B. Saul of Tarsus: Conversion and Early Labors • AD 36-39 (9:1-30)
  - C. Peter Preaches in Judea; Sent to Uncircumcised Gentiles (9:31 to 11:18)
  - D. Church Planted in Antioch of Syria; Persecution in Jerusalem (11:19 to 12:25)
- IV. **"To the End of the Earth" • AD 46-63 (Acts 13:1 to 28:31)**
  - A. First Missionary Journey • Sometime between AD 44 and AD 50 (13:1 to 14:28)
  - B. Controversy over Circumcision • AD 50 (15:1-35)
  - C. Second Missionary Journey • AD 50-53 (15:36 to 18:22)
  - D. Third Missionary Journey • AD 53-58 (18:23 to 21:25)
  - E. Paul's Long Imprisonment • AD 58-63 (Acts 21:26 to 28:31)

**Author of the book of Acts:** Luke, an inspired physician (Colossians 4:14; Acts 1:1-2; Luke 1:11-4)  
For more details, see Coffman, cited in Sources.

**Jesus' Great Commission:**

- Matthew 28:19 "Go therefore and **make disciples of all the nations...**"
- Mark 16:15 "And He said to them, '**Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.**' "

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<sup>1</sup> All dates are approximate (but generally judged to be within a one or two-year margin of error). See explanation by McGarvey, listed in Sources. McGarvey sets this date at AD 34; all others consulted were either AD 30 or AD 33.

<sup>2</sup> Outline based on 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**" (emphasis added).

## DETAILED OUTLINE

- I. Introduction to the Book (Acts 1:1-26) [Approximate reading time: 6 minutes<sup>3</sup>]**
  - A. Prologue (1:1-3)
  - B. Jesus' Final Promise of the Holy Spirit to the Apostles (1:4-8)
  - C. Ascension of Jesus • From Mount Olivet • Ad 30<sup>4</sup> (1:9-11)
  - D. Disciples Wait and Pray • In Jerusalem<sup>5</sup> (1:12-14)
  - E. Replacement for Judas: Matthias (1:15-26)
  
- II. "In Jerusalem" (Acts 2:1 to 8:4)**
  - A. Church Established • In Jerusalem • Day of Pentecost • AD 30 (2:1-47) [9 minutes]**
    - 1. Apostles Empowered with the Holy Spirit (2:1-4)
    - 2. A Multitude Assembles: Amazed, Perplexed, and Marveling! (2:5-13)
    - 3. Peter's Courageous Sermon; Conversion of 3,000 Persons (2:14-41)
    - 4. Lives Are Changed by God's Word; Early Progress of the Church (2:42-47)
  
  - B. Further Progress of the Church; First Persecution (3:1 to 4:31) [11 minutes]**
    - 1. Lame Man Healed (3:1-11); Conversion of 2,000 More People (3:12-26)
    - 2. Peter and John Arrested; Number in the Church Increased to "about 5,000" (4:1-4)
    - 3. Peter's Defense before the Council (4:5-12); Apostles' Refusal To Not Preach (4:13-22)
    - 4. Report by Peter and John; Prayer for Boldness (4:23-31)
  
  - C. More Progress of the Church; Second Persecution (4:32 to 5:42) [9 minutes]**
    - 1. Unity, Caring, and Sharing within the Church (4:32-37)
    - 2. A Case for Integrity: Ananias and Sapphira Struck Dead for Lying (5:1-11)
    - 3. The Church Increased (5:12-16); Apostles Imprisoned and Miraculously Released (5:17-21)
    - 4. Apostles on Trial Again for Preaching in the Name of Jesus (5:22-32)
    - 5. Gamaliel's Advice Persuades the Council; Apostles Emboldened (5:33-42)
  
  - D. Additional Progress of the Church; Persecution; Dispersion (6:1 to 8:4) [15 minutes]**
    - 1. Seven Men Chosen to Serve, Especially the Needy Widows (6:1-7)
    - 2. Stephen Arrested and Falsely Accused (6:8-15); Stephen's Discourse<sup>6</sup> (7:1-53)
    - 3. Stephen Is Stoned to Death; A Great Persecution; Church Is Dispersed (7:54-8:4)

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<sup>3</sup> Approximate reading time for a section is shown in [brackets]. The whole book of Acts can be read in about 3 hours, 15 minutes.

<sup>4</sup> All dates are approximate (but generally judged to be within a one or two-year margin of error). See explanation by McGarvey, listed in Sources. McGarvey sets this date at AD 34; all others consulted were either AD 30 or AD 33.

<sup>5</sup> **Maps**—sources of Bible maps to aid study of Acts: <http://www.bible.ca/maps/> (Accessed July 21, 2016), scroll down for many choices; <http://www.studythebibleyourself.com/maps.html> (Accessed July 21, 2016).

<sup>6</sup> Includes an outstanding brief biblical history from Abraham to Jesus.

### III. “In all Judea and Samaria” • AD 36-46 (Acts 8:5 to 12:25)

#### A. The Labors of Philip, Peter, and John • AD 36<sup>7</sup> to 39 (8:5-40) [6 minutes]

1. Conversion of Samaritans; “Great joy in that city.” (8:5-8)
2. Conversion of Simon, the Sorcerer (8:9-13)
3. Mission of Peter and John to Samaria (8:14-17)
4. Simon the Sorcerer Sins; How To Get Forgiveness for Sins Committed after Baptism (8:18-24)
5. Other Labors of Peter and John; Their Return to Jerusalem (8:25)
6. Philip Sent to the Ethiopian Nobleman (8:26-29)
7. Conversion of the Ethiopian Nobleman; Philip in Philistia (8:30-40)

#### B. Saul of Tarsus: Conversion and Early Labors • AD 36-39 (9:1-30) [6 minutes]

1. Journey to Damascus; Saul’s<sup>8</sup> Conversion • AD 36<sup>9</sup> (9:1-19; Also 22:1-16; 26:12-20)
2. Saul—Completely Changed—Preaches Christ in Damascus (9:20-25)
3. Paul (formerly called Saul<sup>8</sup>) in Arabia, Not Mentioned in Acts (Galatians 1:17-18<sup>10</sup>)
4. Saul Returns to Jerusalem a New Man; Sent to Tarsus • AD 39 (9:26-30)

#### C. Peter Preaches in Judea; Sent to the Gentiles (9:31 to 11:18) [14 minutes]

1. The Church Enjoys Peace, Edification, and Growth in Number (9:31)
2. Peter Evangelizing; Comes to Lydda; Aeneas Healed (9:32-35)
3. Peter Is Called to Joppa; Dorcas Raised from the Dead (9:36-43)
4. Conversion of Cornelius and His Household • AD 41 (Acts 10:1-48)
5. Peter’s Defense of Preaching to Gentiles (11:1-18)

#### D. Church Planted in Antioch; Persecution in Jerusalem (11:19 to 12:25) [7 minutes]

1. Conversions of “a great number” in Antioch of Syria • AD 42?<sup>11</sup> (11:19-21)
2. Barnabas Is Sent to Antioch (11:22-24)
3. Barnabas Brings Saul to Antioch; For One Year; Disciples First Called Christians (11:25-26)
4. Barnabas and Saul Take Relief to Famine-struck Brethren in Judea • AD 44 (11:27-30)
5. Apostle James Killed; Peter Is Imprisoned and Miraculously Freed from Prison (12:1-19)
6. Death of Herod; Barnabas and Saul Return to Antioch (12:20-25)

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<sup>7</sup> Timeline. Bible Hub (<http://biblehub.com/timeline/new.htm>, Accessed June 4, 2016) estimates to be AD 31.

<sup>8</sup> “Saul, who also is called Paul...” (Acts 13:9), the apostle.

<sup>9</sup> F. F. Bruce (in Bromiley, 1979, 43) estimates Saul’s conversion to be in AD 33 and his return to Jerusalem in AD 35.

<sup>10</sup> The apostle Paul explains, “nor did I go up to Jerusalem [after his conversion, lgb], to those who were apostles before me; but I went to Arabia, and returned again to Damascus. Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem...” (Galatians 1:17-18).

<sup>11</sup> A question mark (?) following a date indicates more than typical uncertainty (e.g., AD 41?).

#### iv. “To the End of the Earth” (Acts 13:1 to 28:31)

##### A. First Missionary Journey • c. AD 44 and AD 50 (13:1 to 14:28) [16 minutes]

1. Barnabas and Saul Set Apart for the Mission (13:1-3)
2. Cyprus: Encounter with a Sorcerer; Conversion of Sergius Paulus, the Proconsul (13:4-12)
3. From Paphos > Perga in Pamphylia > Antioch in Pisidia (13:13-14)
4. Antioch in Pisidia: Preaching the Gospel and Conversions (13:15-52); Iconium (14:1-7)
5. Lystra: Idolatry Confronted; Paul Stoned, Left for Dead; Derbe (14:8-20)
6. Revisited Many Cities, Strengthening Converts; Appointed Elders in Every Church (14:21-26)
7. Antioch of Syria: Reported to the Church “all that God had done through them.” (14:27-28)

##### B. Controversy over Circumcision • AD 50 (15:1-35) [7 minutes]

1. Beginning of the Controversy: “Is It Necessary To Circumcise Gentile Converts?” (15:1-5)
2. Conferring in Jerusalem; Speech by Peter (15:6-11)
3. Speeches by Barnabas and Paul (15:12); Speech by James (15:13-21)
4. Decision of the Apostles and Elders; Letter to the Churches (15:22-29)
5. Peace Restored in Antioch (15:30-35)

##### C. Second Missionary Journey • AD 50-53 (15:36 to 18:22) [21 minutes]

1. Change of Travel Companions: Silas Instead of Barnabas and John Mark (15:36-41)
2. Revisited Churches of First Journey; Timothy Joins Paul and Fellow Laborers (16:1-5)
3. Phrygia > Galatia > Mysia > Troas; Call to Macedonia (16:6-10)
4. Philippi
  - a) Conversion of Lydia and Her Household (16:11-15)
  - b) Paul and Silas Scourged and Imprisoned (16:16-24)
  - c) Conversion of the Jailor and His Household (16:25-34)
  - d) Paul and Silas Released from Prison (16:35-40)
5. Thessalonica: Conversions; Trouble; Persecution (17:1-9)
6. Berea: “Fair-minded,” “Received the Word,” “Searched the Scriptures” (17:10-15)
7. Athens
  - a) Preaches in Synagogue; Paul Provoked by a City “given over to idols.” (17:16-21)
  - b) Paul’s Sermon on Mars Hill (17:22-31)
  - c) Conversion of Dionysius, Damaris, and others (17:32-34)
8. Corinth • Begun in late AD 51 or early AD 52; Lasted for 18 Months (18:11)
  - a) Paul Begins Work; Meets Aquila and Priscilla (18:1-4)

- b) *Arrival of Silas and Timothy; Conversions; Breach with the Jews (18:5-11)*
  - c) *Paul Brought before Gallio, the Proconsul (18:12-17)*
9. Cenchrea > Ephesus > Caesarea > Jerusalem > Antioch of Syria (18:18-22)

**D. Third Missionary Journey • AD 53-58 (18:23-21:25) [22 minutes]**

1. Galatia and Phrygia: Another Visit to “strengthen all the disciples” (18:23)
2. Apollos in Ephesus and Achaia<sup>12</sup>; A Couple Respectfully Corrects a Preacher’s Error (18:24-28)
3. Ephesus: Paul Preaches • for 2 years, 3 months (19:8, 10)
  - a) *Twelve Men Re-baptized (19:1-7)*
  - b) *Preaching in the Synagogue and School of Tyrannus, for two years (19:8-12)*
  - c) *Many Miracles; Exorcists Exposed; Books of Magic Burned (19:13-20)*
  - d) *Idolatrous Silversmiths Incite a Riot against Paul (19:21-41)*
4. Macedonia and Greece 3 months (20:3) > Macedonia, Again (20:1-6)
5. Troas: A Lord’s Day Meeting; A Congregation Eager to Learn (20:7-12)
6. Voyage from Troas to Miletus (20:13-16)
7. Miletus: An Important Meeting with the Elders from the Church at Ephesus (20:17-38)
8. Journey to Caesarea; Paul’s Courage in Light of a Prophecy and Pleadings (21:1-14)
9. Paul and Fellow Laborers Return to Jerusalem • AD 58 (21:15-25)

**E. Paul’s Long Imprisonment<sup>13</sup> • AD 58-63 (Acts 21:26 to 28:31)**

1. Imprisonment at Jerusalem • AD 58 (21:26 to 23:22) [14 minutes]
  - a) *Arrest in the Temple (21:26-36); Paul’s Defense to an Angry Mob (21:37 to 22:29)*
  - b) *Paul Earnestly Addresses the Unreceptive Council (22:30 to 23:10)*
  - c) *Discovered: A Plot to Have Paul Killed (23:11-22)*
2. Imprisonment at Caesarea; Appeal to Caesar • AD 58-60 (23:23 to 26:32) [20 minutes]
  - a) *Paul: before Governor Felix (23:23 to 24:27); before Festus; Appeal to Caesar (25:1-12)*
  - b) *Paul before King Agrippa—Almost Persuaded To Become a Christian (25:13 to 26:32)*
3. Voyage to Rome (Acts 27:1 to 28:31) [8 minutes]
  - a) *Beginning of the Voyage • Fall AD 60; Tempest on the Mediterranean (27:1-38)*
  - b) *Malta: Shipwreck (27:39-44) and Paul’s Ministry (28:1-10)*
  - c) *Completion of the Journey to Rome • Spring AD 61 (28:11-16)*
4. Imprisonment & Ministry at Rome • AD 61-63 (28:17-31) [4 minutes]

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<sup>12</sup> Achaia, a province of Rome in Greece.

<sup>13</sup> Paul imprisoned for over four years: time imprisoned in Jerusalem (24:11) + two years in Caesarea (24:26) + the voyage to Rome (27:12, 27; 28:11) + two years in Rome (28:30).

## As you read this wonderful book—in about three hours, fifteen minutes—be prepared...

- To be amazed, marvel, and experience great joy!
- To learn why thousands of people changed their lives completely—based on what they saw and heard.
  - Why might a young evangelist courageously challenge the powerful religious leaders of his day; then, be stoned to death rather than compromise his convictions about Jesus and the church?
  - Or, why would a promising rabbi give up all that it offered to “suffer as a Christian,” be beaten, falsely accused, and ultimately imprisoned for years?
  - What could make a powerful Roman jailor fall down trembling and implore, “what must I do to be saved?” Many people may be surprised by what the inspired apostle Paul told him.
- To find much taught by the inspired apostles and evangelists stands in sharp contrast to what is taught today by many who call themselves ministers, preachers, and churches, especially about authority in religion, sound doctrine, conversion, faith, repentance, baptism, the church, worship, leadership, mission work, caring for others, and courage in the face of severe persecution and hardship.
- To marvel further as you observe the fulfillment of (1) God’s promise made centuries before to Abraham: “in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed”(Genesis 12:3) and (2) Jesus’ promise: “I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it” (Mathew 16:18).

## Sources

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- Bromiley, Geoffrey William. *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*. Fully rev. ed. 4 vols. Vol. One (A-D), Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1979. 33-47. (Chronology and analysis of Acts.)
- Coffman, James Burton. "Commentary on Acts 1:1-4," *Coffman Commentaries on the Old and New Testament*. [www.studytheBibleYourself.com/commentaries/bcc/acts-1.html](http://www.studytheBibleYourself.com/commentaries/bcc/acts-1.html). Abilene Christian University Press, Abilene, Texas, USA. 1983-1999. (Accessed July 18, 2016).
- Lockyer, Sr. Herbert. *Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary*. Nashville • Camden • New York: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1986. 16-17. (Helpful in developing the outline’s structure and focus.)
- McGarvey, J. W. *New Commentary on Acts of Apostles*. Delight, AR: Gospel Light Publishing Company, n.d. Cincinnati: Standard Pub. Co, 1892. (Used in formulating the conceptual framework and for dates; see pages xxvi-xxxiv. His dates are generally consistent with other reputable sources (i.e., within one or two years of others, except for the day of Pentecost in Acts 2; most current sources set it at AD 30 or AD 33, McGarvey at AD 34). Even if not exact, these approximate dates still provide a very useful chronological frame of reference.)
- New Testament Timeline. [http://www.esvbible.org/resources/esv-global-study-bible/chart\\_40\\_00\\_nt\\_timeline/](http://www.esvbible.org/resources/esv-global-study-bible/chart_40_00_nt_timeline/). (Accessed May 26, 2016). (Compared dates.)
- The Holy Bible - New King James Version (NKJV)*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1982. (Electronic edition in Bible Study App for Mac, v 6.0.2, Olive Tree Bible Software, 1998-2016) (Source for analysis and of wording for some parts of the outline. All Scripture quotations in this study outline, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the NKJV. Used by permission. All rights reserved.)

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