

The New Testament For Dummies Series

# ACTS

Wednesday Evening, March 29, 2006

I cannot begin to tell you the importance of this precious Book of Acts.

- It is the *pattern book* for the church.
- It is the story of Pentecost (the Harvest)
- It is the history of the early church, without which we would know precious little about Paul or why he wrote the epistles, or the outreach to the Gentiles, or the work of Peter - and so much more. Someone has said that ACTS is the bridge between the four Gospels and the Epistles.
- It is an *incomplete* book as there is no finish to it. The lesson from the Holy Spirit is that you and are living in the unwritten and unfinished 29<sup>th</sup> chapter of Acts
- It is the church's introduction to WORLD MISSIONS.

The Book of Acts is the story of TWO CITIES:

- Jerusalem
- Antioch

The Book of Acts is called "the Acts of the Apostles" which is a man-made title and a misnomer. The book is really the story of Peter and Paul.

**The theme or key to the Book of Acts is:**

**Acts 1:8**

**But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.**

Chapters 1-7 have to do with the church in Jerusalem (certainly not a model)

Chapters 8-12 tell of the Harvest in Judea and Samaria

Chapters 13-28 tell of the work of the Holy Spirit unto the *uttermost part of the earth*

1. The writer of the book of Acts is Luke. We have only a small handful of references to this great man in the scriptures. They are:

**Col. 4:14**

**Luke, the beloved physician, and Demas, greet you.**

**Philemon 1:24**

**Marcus, Aristarchus, Demas, Lucas, my fellowlabourers.**

**2 Tim. 4:11**

**Only Luke is with me.**

### WHY DID LUKE WRITE THE BOOK OF ACTS?

1. The early church people were suspected of attempting to bring a new world order and designing the downfall of Rome. Such was not true for Christ's kingdom was never of this world. Luke wrote a number of stories that showed early Christians had no interest in the overthrow of Rome.

\* Acts 13:12 Sergius Paulus, the governor of Cyprus, becomes a Christian

\* Acts 18:12 Gallio is impartial in his judgment of Corinthian believers

\* Acts 16:35 Philippian magistrates apologize to Paul

Luke took pains to show that Christians were loyal citizens.

\* Acts 18:14 Gallio declares there is no question of Christians' loyalty

\* Acts 19:37 Ephesian magistrate gives good report about Christians

2. Luke wanted to show that faith in Christ was for all people of the world, not just the Jews of Jerusalem.

3. But Luke's main concern was to show how the early believers fulfilled the Great Commission by taking the Gospel to their known world.

### C. H. TURNER'S OUTLINE OF ACTS

1. Acts 1:1 - 6:7 tells of the church in Jerusalem and the preaching of Peter. "The word of God increased and the number of disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem."

2. Acts 6:8 - 9:31 describes the spread of Christianity through Israel and the martyrdom of Stephen, followed by the preaching in Samaria. "So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was built up, and, walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it was multiplied.

3. Acts 9:32-12:24 includes the conversion of Paul, the extension of the church to

Antioch and the reception of Cornelius, the Gentile, into the church by Peter. “The word of God grew and multiplied.”

4. Acts 12:25 - 16:5 tells of the extension of the church through Asia Minor (Turkey). “So the churches were strengthened in the faith and they increased in numbers daily.”

5. Acts 16:6 - 19:20 relates the extension of the church to Europe and the work of Paul in great Gentile cities such as Corinth and Ephesus. “So the word of the Lord grew and prevailed mightily.”

6. Acts 19:21 - 28:31 tells of the arrival of Paul and his imprisonment there.

**It is frustrating that the Book of Acts does not end. So we don't know from scripture about Paul's days just before his execution. Luke stopped the story apparently because his purpose was accomplished which was to show how CHRISTIANITY BEGAN IN JERUSALEM AND SWEEPED ACROSS THE WORLD UNTIL IT REACHED ROME.**

## HIGH POINTS IN ACTS

### 1. The Ascension

#### **Acts 1:9-11**

**And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. [10] And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; [11] Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.**

1. This event marked the end of Jesus' earthly ministry - from Bethlehem to the Mount of Olives

2. The ascension is the “prototype” in reverse of the Second Coming of Christ.

### 2. Pentecost

#### **Acts 2:1-4**

**And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. [2] And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. [3] And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. [4] And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.**

1. This was the launching of the rocket that would be global missions.

3. The Supernatural in the Ministry of the Apostles

#### **Acts 5:12-16**

**And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people; (and they were all with one accord in Solomon's porch. [13] And of the rest durst no man join himself to them: but the people magnified them. [14] And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women.) [15] Insomuch that they brought forth the sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and couches, that at the least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them. [16] There came also a multitude out of the cities round about unto Jerusalem, bringing sick folks, and them which were vexed with unclean spirits: and they were healed every one.**

1. The Supernatural separated the early church from other “sects” that were present in that day. Multitudes came from everywhere.

4. The First Martyr and Major Persecution of the Church Starts

#### **Acts 7:54-60**

**When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth. [55] But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, [56] And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God. [57] Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord, [58] And cast him out of the city, and stoned him: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul. [59] And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. [60] And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.**

#### **Acts 8:1**

**And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles.**

1. This course of action against the church backfired dramatically. The persecution of the church did not stop believers at all, rather it scattered the seeds of the faith all over the known-world.

5. The Conversion of Saul.

**Acts 9:1-18**

**And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest, [2] And desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem. [3] And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven: [4] And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? [5] And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. [6] And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do. [7] And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man. [8] And Saul arose from the earth; and when his eyes were opened, he saw no man: but they led him by the hand, and brought him into Damascus. [9] And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink.**

**[10] And there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias; and to him said the Lord in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Behold, I am here, Lord. [11] And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and enquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth, [12] And hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in, and putting his hand on him, that he might receive his sight. [13] Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem: [14] And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name. [15] But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: [16] For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake. [17] And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with**

**the Holy Ghost. [18] And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized.**

1. Paul is one of those men either loved or hated by many. He is my hero. He was the first missionary, the conduit from God through whom so much of our Christian theology is based, and a man who gave all to Christ.

2. Nothing so epitomized Paul in life as the way he left it:

## **2 Tim. 4:6-8**

**For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. [7] I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: [8] Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.**

1. Paul made three missionary journeys (that we know of from Acts) and you will see them outlined on the accompanying map at the back of the syllabus. Carefully read the small box at the lower left of the map for description of the three journeys.

## 6. Peter takes the Gospel to the Gentiles

### **Acts 10:44-48**

**While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. [45] And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost. [46] For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter, [47] Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? [48] And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days.**

1. Peter had been in ministry at Joppa (Israel's seaport at the time) when he had a vision of the "unclean food." Shortly thereafter he was north of Joppa in Caesarea, ministering to the household of Cornelius.

## 7. The Wisdom of Barnabas

### **Acts 11:22-26**

**Then tidings of these things came unto the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem: and they sent forth Barnabas, that he should go as far as Antioch. [23]**

**Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord. [24] For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith: and much people was added unto the Lord. [25] Then departed Barnabas to Tarsus, for to seek Saul: [26] And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.**

1. Had it not been for Barnabas we (1) probably would never have heard of Paul again and (2) the mighty world-wide missions move might never have started in Antioch.

### **Acts 13:1-3**

**Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. [2] As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. [3] And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.**

#### THE FIRST MISSIONARY JOURNEY

(William Barclay / Acts) The 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> chapters of ACTS tell the story of the first missionary journey. Paul and Barnabas set out from Antioch. Antioch was 15 miles up the River Orontes so that they actually sailed from Seleucia, its port. From there they went across the sea to Cyprus where they preached at Salamis and Paphos. From Paphos they sailed to Perga in Pamphylia (Turkey). Pamphylia was a low-lying coastal province and they did not preach there because it did not suit Paul's health. They struck inland came to Antioch of Pisidia. When things grew too dangerous there they went 90 miles further on to Iconium. There again their lives were threatened and they moved on to Lystra, about 20 miles away. After suffering a very serious and dangerous attack there they passed to Derbe. From Derbe they set out home, going back to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch in Pisidia on the way. Having this time preached in Perga in Pamphylia, they took ship from Attalia, the principal port of Pamphylia, and sailed via Seleucia to Antioch. This whole journey occupied about three years.

## THE SECOND MISSIONARY JOURNEY

(Again from same Barclay volume on ACTS) The narrative of Paul's second missionary journey, which occupied about three years, is given in Acts 15:36 - 18:23. It began from Antioch. Paul first made a tour of the churches of Syria and Cilicia. Then he re-visited the churches in the regions of Derbe, Lystra, Iconium and Pisidian Antioch. (Having received a call to Greece from the Holy Spirit) from Troas, Paul crossed to Neapolis and thence to Philippi. From Philippi he moved on to Thessalonica and Berea. From there he went to Athens and then on to Corinth where he spent about eighteen months. From Corinth he traveled to Jerusalem by way of Ephesus and finally back to Antioch, his starting point. The great step forward is that with this journey, Paul's activity passed beyond Asia Minor and entered EUROPE.

## THE THIRD MISSIONARY JOURNEY

(Again from Barclay) The story of the third missionary journey begins at Acts 18:23. It began with a tour of Galatia and Phrygia to confirm the brethren there. Paul then moved on to Ephesus where he remained for nearly three years. From there he went to Macedonia; he then crossed over to Troas and proceeded by way of Miletus, Tyre and Caesarea to Jerusalem.

8. Paul's arrest in Jerusalem, his two year detention in Caesarea, and the long trek to Rome to stand before Nero – Acts 21 - 28.

# Paul's Missionary Journeys



The missionary voyages of the apostle Paul from Jerusalem to Rome.