

THE STORY OF THE EARLY CHURCH

# BOOK *of* ACTS



ROSE  
PUBLISHING

# THE BEGINNING OF CHRISTIANITY

Jesus' disciples were riding a roller coaster of emotions and insights. First there was the hope and expectation raised by Jesus' life and ministry. Then it all seemed to go so wrong with his horrible death, only to turn right

## PENTECOST

Pentecost, also known as the Feast of Weeks or *Shavuot* in Hebrew, marked the high point of events that began with the Passover. This Old Testament feast commemorates the giving of the Law at Mount Sinai. In the wilderness, the Law (*Torah*) gave God's people guidance, identity, strength, instruction, comfort, and light. On that same feast day (50 days after Jesus' death and 10 days after his ascension) the disciples received the Holy Spirit who would teach, guide, comfort, strengthen, and give light to God's people, the church.

side up once and for all with the resurrection! But their new joy lasted only a few days when they gathered to see their Lord ascend to heaven and leave them behind. Yet the Lord had promised a Comforter, one who would come to the disciples, and to all believers, who would guide them "into all the truth" (John 16:13).

This small and confused group of disciples gathered to pray and seek the Lord's guidance. But when the Holy Spirit overpowered that room with the sound like a roaring windstorm and what seemed like tongues of fire, history changed forever! People from many nations were beside themselves with wonder at hearing of God's

amazing acts in their own languages. The Spirit set Jerusalem ablaze, and the good news spread like wildfire.

## Back to the Beginning

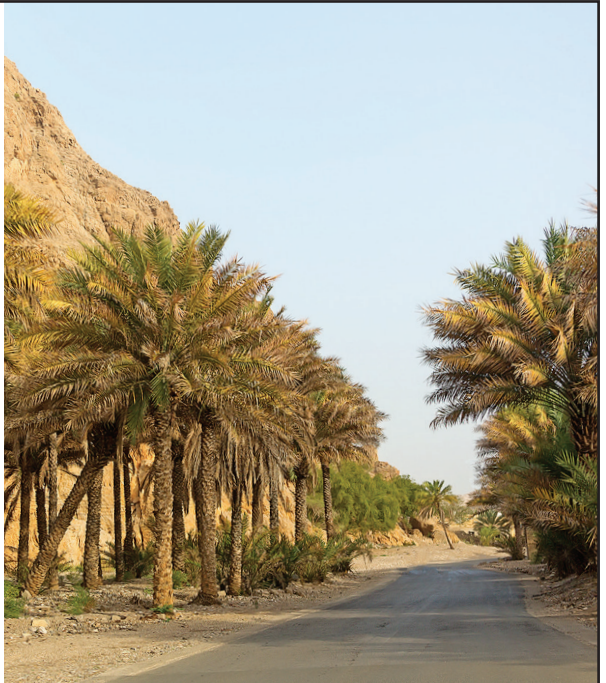
When Adam and Eve rebelled in the garden of Eden, God began a rescue mission. God wanted to restore his world and creatures so they would fulfill his original intentions for them: to enjoy him and praise him forever.

Throughout history, God has shaped events to bring about his plans of renewal. While God is the force, mind, and will behind the mission, he has chosen humans to work alongside him. The stories in the book of Acts show us how God is moving his mission forward.

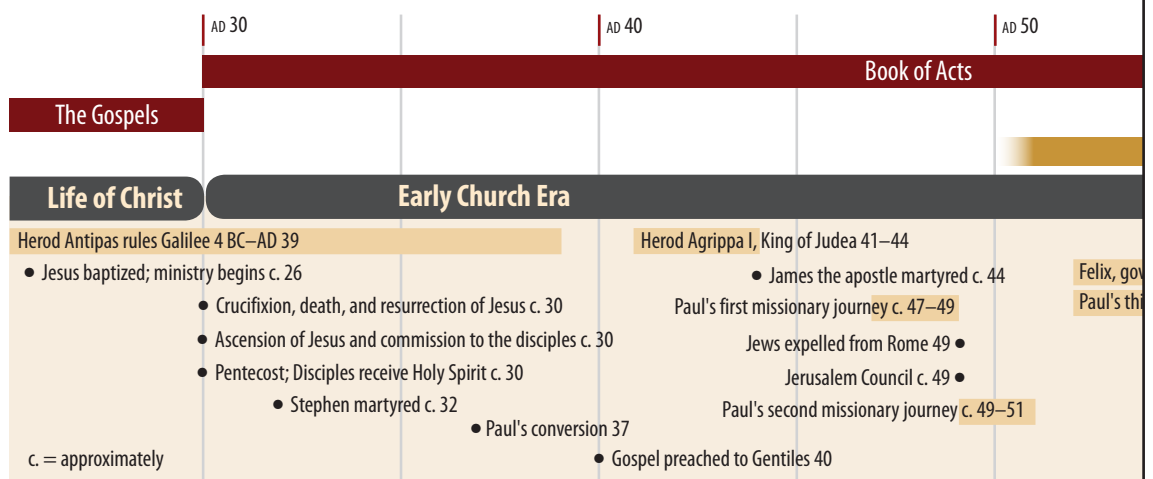
The book of Acts shows God's actions in fulfilling his plan. This is picked up from the ending of the Gospel of Luke, where the apostles are commissioned to be part of that fulfillment: "You are witnesses of these things" (Luke 24:48). Empowered by the Holy Spirit, Jesus' disciples become an extension of God's plans to reach the whole world. The story of the church becomes the story of the fulfillment of God's mission to make all things new.

# Outline

1. The Work of Jesus Continues with the Apostles (1:1–11)
2. The Mission in Jerusalem (1:12–8:3)
  - a. The ministry of Peter (1:12–5:42)
  - b. The ministry of Stephen (6:1–8:3)
3. The Mission in Samaria and Judea (8:4–11:18)
  - a. The ministry of Philip (8:4–40)
  - b. The conversion of Saul (Paul) (9:1–31)
  - c. The ministry of Peter continues (9:32–11:18)
4. The Mission to the Ends of the Earth (11:19–28:31)
  - a. The ministry of Barnabas (11:19–30)
  - b. The conclusion of Peter’s ministry (12:1–19a)
  - c. The death of Herod Agrippa I (12:19b–25)
  - d. The ministry of Paul and Barnabas: First missionary journey (13:1–14:28)
  - e. The Jerusalem Council (15:1–35)
  - f. The ministry of Paul and Silas: Second missionary journey (15:36–18:22)
  - g. The ministry of Paul: Third missionary journey (18:23–21:14)
  - h. Paul in Jerusalem (21:15–23:10)
  - i. Paul in Caesarea (23:11–26:32)
  - j. Paul taken to Rome (27:1–28:29)
  - k. Conclusion: The gospel preached throughout the world (28:30–31)



## TIME LINE OF THE BOOK OF ACTS



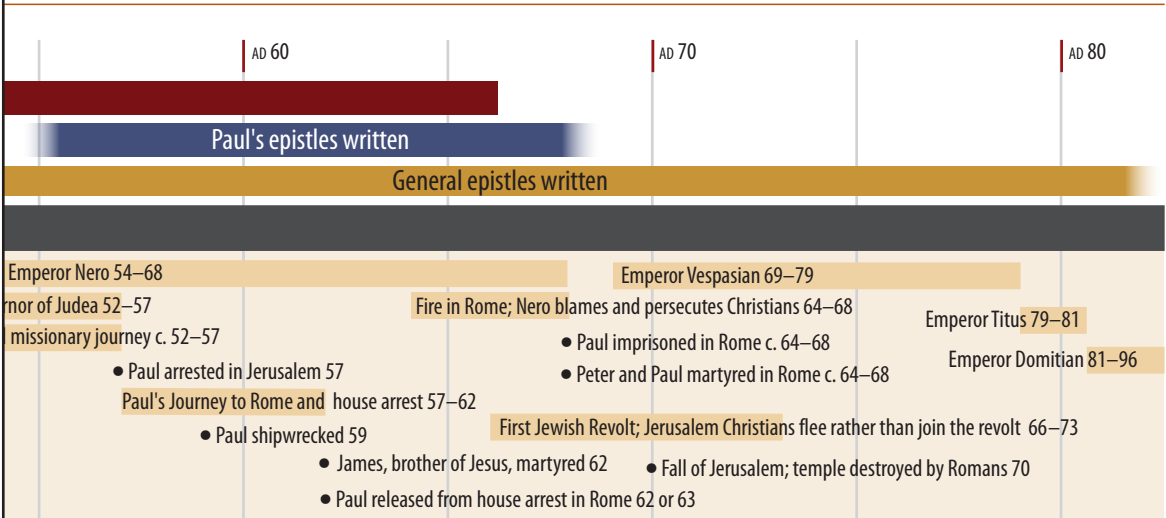
# The Gospel in the Book of Acts

This basic outline was helpful for Christians then and is helpful for Christians today.

1. God’s promises to Israel are now fulfilled with the coming of Jesus, the Messiah (2:30; 3:19, 24; 10:43; 26:6–7, 22).
2. God anointed Jesus as the Messiah during his baptism (10:38).
3. Jesus began his ministry in Galilee after his baptism (10:37). His ministry showed God’s power with words and actions.
4. Jesus, the Messiah, suffered and died on the cross according to God’s own plan (2:23; 3:13–15, 18; 4:11; 10:39; 26:23).
5. God raised Jesus from the dead. Jesus appeared to his disciples (2:24, 31–32; 3:15, 26; 10:40–41; 17:31; 26:23).
6. God exalted Jesus and gave him the name of “Lord” (2:25–29, 33–36; 3:13; 10:36).
7. God sent the Holy Spirit to create a new community, the church (1:8; 2:14–18, 38–39; 10:44–47).
8. Jesus will come back one day to judge all people and to make all things new (3:20–21; 10:42; 17:31).
9. The good news of Jesus is for all people. The gospel urges all people to hear the message, repent, and be baptized (2:21, 38; 3:19; 10:43, 47–48; 17:30; 26:20).

## THE AUTHOR

An early and reliable church tradition names Luke as the author of Acts and the Gospel of Luke. Because of the historical sequence found in the Gospel of Luke and Acts, it is likely that Acts was written after the Gospel. If Luke wrote the Gospel around the years AD 60–62, it is likely that Acts was written shortly after that period. Luke was one of the apostle Paul’s companions during his last three journeys.





## The Good News

We learn about the good news the apostles were to share from their own speeches.

- There are 24 speeches in the book of Acts.
- However, only eight of them help us with learning about the content of the gospel message:
  - Six of them are speeches addressed to a Jewish audience (2:14–39; 3:12–26; 4:8–12; 5:29–32; 10:34–43; 13:16–41)
  - Two of them to a Gentile audience (14:15–17; 17:22–34).

Examples:

SPEECH	AUDIENCE	REFERENCE	FOCUS OF THE CONTENT
Peter's speech to the other disciples in the upper room	Christians	1:16–26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fulfillment of God's purpose in Scripture (16, 20)</li> <li>• Activity of the Holy Spirit (16)</li> <li>• Decision to replace Judas (24)</li> </ul>
Peter's speech to the crowd in Jerusalem on Pentecost	Jewish not-yet believers	2:14–39	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• God's actions as fulfilling his promises in Joel (16–21)</li> <li>• God's actions and acceptance of Jesus' life, death and resurrection (22–24)</li> <li>• Conclusion: God made Jesus Lord and Messiah (36)</li> </ul>
Peter's speech to Cornelius's household in Caesarea	Gentile not-yet believers	10:34–43	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• God shows no partiality (34)</li> <li>• Jesus' preaching came from God (35)</li> <li>• God anointed Jesus with the Holy Spirit (38)</li> <li>• God raised Jesus from the dead (40)</li> <li>• The apostles as witnesses to these events (41)</li> <li>• God appointed Jesus as judge (42)</li> </ul>
Paul's speech at the Areopagus in Athens	Pagans	17:22–34	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• God has revealed himself (23)</li> <li>• God is creator and sustainer of the world (24–25)</li> <li>• God is the Lord of all nations (26)</li> <li>• God wants people to seek and find him (27–28)</li> <li>• Idolatry misses the mark (29)</li> <li>• God calls all to repentance (30)</li> <li>• God appointed Jesus as judge by raising him from the dead (31–32)</li> </ul>