

The Message of Acts

Session One

Source: Stott, John W.R. "The Message of Acts: The Spirit, the Church and the World".
Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity Press, 1990, 428 pages.

"The Acts of the Apostles have long ago finished. That acts of the followers of Jesus will continue until the end of the world." --John W.R. Stott

Introduction

If we did not have the Book of Acts, what would be lost?

About how much time does Luke cover in Acts?

- a) 1 year
- b) 5 years
- c) 15 years
- d) 30 years

Mapquest: What is Point A and Point B of the gospel's geographical expansion in Acts?

"It has, in fact, been a salutary exercise for the Christian church of every century to compare itself with the church of the first, and to seek to recapture something of its confidence, enthusiasm, vision and power. At the same time, we must be realistic. There is a danger lest we romanticize the early church, speaking of it with bated breath as if it had no blemishes. For then we shall miss the rivalries, hypocrisies, immoralities and heresies which troubled the church as now. Nevertheless, one thing is certain. Christ's church had been overwhelmed by the Holy Spirit, who thrust it out to witness." (p. 6)

T / F Luke is the only Gentile author in the Bible.

Luke was a _____ and a traveling companion with Paul on his missionary journeys. He wrote Acts c. AD 60-62.

Scan the first few chapters of Luke's gospel. Shepherds, the Magnificat, the flight to Egypt...how does a Gentile get such an inside scoop as a historian? How can Luke be so familiar with Jewish customs, land and its people?

“This then was Luke’s political apologetic. He produced evidence to show that Christianity was **harmless** (because some Roman officials had embraced it themselves), **innocent** (because Roman judges could find no basis for prosecution) and **lawful** (because it was the true fulfillment of Judaism).” (p. 27)

Read Acts 1:1-5

Who was Theophilus (v. 3)?

Read Acts 1:6-11

Keeping Track of Easter Time:
40 days (resurrection to ascension)
10 days (ascension to Pentecost)

T / F There are multiple, similar accounts of Christ’s ascension in Scripture, just as there are with the resurrection.

“Looking back, I think we may say that the apostles committed two opposite errors, which both had to be corrected. First, they were hoping for a political power (the restoration of the kingdom to Israel). Secondly, they were gazing up into the sky (preoccupied with the heavenly Jesus). Both were false fantasies. The first is the error of the politician, who dreams of establishing Utopia on earth. The second is the error of the pietist, who dreams only of heavenly bliss. The first vision is too earthy, and the second too heavenly.” (p. 51)

Note how Acts 1:8 functions like a table of contents for the entire book of Acts.

Read Acts 1:12-26.

T / F The casting of lots is used in the Bible, even after Pentecost.

What is the significance of the 120 mentioned in v. 15, according to Jewish law? According to the kingdom?

“The stage is now set for the Day of Pentecost. The apostles have received Christ’s commission and seen his ascension. The apostolic team is complete again, ready to be his chosen witnesses. Only one event is missing: the Spirit has not yet come. Though the place left vacant by Judas has been filled by Matthias, the place left vacant by Jesus has not yet been filled by the Spirit. So we leave Luke’s first chapter of the Acts with the 120 waiting in Jerusalem, persevering in prayer with one heart and mind, poised ready to fulfill Christ’s command just as soon as he has fulfilled his promise.” (p. 59)