

## Acts Outline

**Introduction:** As the second volume of Luke-Acts, where the Gospel of Luke tells the story of Jesus, the book of Acts tells the story of the early church and Paul's ministry to the Gentile (non-Jewish) world. In some ways reading Acts is both a cause for joy and sorrow for the church today. On the joyful side it is wonderful to read about the diversity of the early church and the incredible amount of voices and different perspectives within it. On the sorrowful side it is eerie to hear about the diversity of the early church and the incredible amount of different voices and perspectives- and how often they could not find a way to stay together. Tension, it seems, is simply woven into the fabric of faith.

Probably the greatest tension experienced by the church in Acts is the same one tearing at the church today: namely how similar ought the church be to the host culture? On the one hand Jesus was Jewish, the disciples were Jewish, and the earliest expressions of Christianity were entirely for and by Jewish people. Then, right in the middle of the book of Acts we witness a seismic shift. People like Peter and Paul begin to have contact with Gentiles, and they begin to see that God might even be at work among them. Peter, far more conservative than Paul, argues that if Gentiles become as Jewish possible in their customs it is fine for them to be welcomed into the church. Paul then goes even further, later arguing that things like circumcision and eating meat sacrificed to idols really aren't important in and of themselves, although for the good of the "weaker members" in the church, the Judaizers, he counsels discretion. To me it's fairly eerie to see these same debates in the church today, although for circumcision and meat sacrificed to idols we argue over topics like sexual minorities in ministry and abortion.

### Section One: The Disciples' Ministry at Home

Chapter 1: Ascension; Matthias replaces Judas

*Chapter 2: Pentecost and Holy Spirit; Peter addresses crowd; early church*

Chapter 3: Peter heals crippled beggar; Peter speaks in Solomon's porch

Chapter 4: Peter and John before Jewish council; believers pray for boldness;

Church shares possessions in common

Chapter 5: Ananias and Sapphira; apostles heal many; apostles persecuted

Chapter 6: Seven chosen as deacons; arrest of Stephen

Chapter 7: Stephen's speech; stoning of Stephen

Chapter 8: Saul persecutes church; Philip preaches in Samaria; Philip and Ethiopian eunuch

Chapter 9: Conversion of Saul; Saul preaches in Damascus and Jerusalem; Peter in Lydda

### Section Two: Confusion between Judaizers and Hellenists

*Chapter 10: Peter and Cornelius; Gentiles hear good news and receive spirit*

Chapter 11: Peter's report to church at Jerusalem; church in antioch

Chapter 12: James killed and Peter imprisoned; Peter escapes; death of Herod

Chapter 13: Barnabus and Saul commissioned; P and B in Antioch

Chapter 14: P and B in Iconium; Lystra; Derbe; return to Antioch

Chapter 15: Council at Jerusalem; P and B go their separate ways

### Section Two: Paul's Ministry Abroad

Chapter 16: Timothy joins Paul and Silas; Paul has vision of man in Macedonia;

Lydia's household converted; Paul and Silas in Prison

*Chapter 17: Uproar in Thessalonica and Beroea; Paul in Athens*

Chapter 18: Paul in Corinth; Paul's travels; ministry of Apollos

Chapter 19: Paul in Ephesus; riot in Ephesus

Chapter 20: Paul begins journey to Jerusalem; speaks to Ephesian elders

Chapter 21: Journey to Jerusalem con't; Paul visits church in J; arrested in temple

Chapter 22: Paul on trial;

Chapter 23: Plot to kill Paul

Chapter 24: Paul before Felix

Chapter 25: Paul appeals to emperor; Paul before King Agrippa

Chapter 26: Paul argues before Agrippa

Chapter 27: Paul sails for Rome; shipwreck;

Chapter 28: Paul on Malta; Paul arrives in Rome; preaches in Rome

**Stories to know:** The spirit coming on Pentecost (Acts 2); Peter and Cornelius (Chapter 10); Paul in Athens (Chapter 17)