

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

Why the Book is Called “The Acts of the Apostles”

It is called the Acts of the Apostles because it recounted the works and ministries of the apostles. D. A. Carson saith that when the holy Luke penned this book, it had no title. In the second century, it was given the name *Acts of the Apostles* as a continuation of the history of early Christianity. This title was assigned in the time when a certain man named Marcion began to teach that the Lord Jesus Christ had brought a new religion, and that only the holy Apostle Paul had fully obeyed it. Marcion was exceedingly moved by the ministry of Paul. Therefore, this book was named *Acts of the Apostles* to show that it is not the acts of Paul alone. Some scholars hold that the title ought rightly to be *The Acts of the Holy Spirit*, for it is by the Spirit that all these works were wrought.

Why the Book of Acts is Important

1. A Bridge Between the Gospels and the Epistles

The book of Acts is the fruit of the Gospels. In the Gospels, the Lord Jesus Christ is likened unto a grain of wheat which falleth into the ground, dieth, and bringeth forth much fruit (John 12:24). It continued the narrative of the Gospels. In the Gospels, the Lord shed His blood to redeem the Church, and in Acts the Church is brought into existence. Christ foretold in the Gospels that He would build His Church (Matthew 16:18), and in Acts this prophecy is fulfilled. The Lord commanded His disciples to preach the Gospel unto all nations, and in Acts this is put into practice. Moreover, Acts serveth as an introduction to the Epistles, providing historical context that helped us understand their message.

2. A Book of Practical Theology

Acts establishes the foundational principles and truths of the Church both in word and in deed. It showed Christ’s teachings in action. This book provided instruction in matters of:

- Evangelism
- Pneumatology
- Mission and Church Planting
- Church Governance
- Teamwork
- Prayer Life of the Church
- Character of a Biblical Christian
- Discipleship
- Christian Apologetics

3. A Book of Beginnings

It is like a book of genesis for the New Covenant:

- i. The beginning of the preaching of the Gospel.
- ii. The beginning of a new age through the power of the Holy Spirit.
- iii. The foundation of the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

4. An Unfinished Book

Acts is the only book of the New Testament which remained unfinished. It ended not with *Amen* but with the continual preaching of the kingdom of God (Acts 28:30–31).

Date of Composition

At the conclusion of Acts, Jerusalem and the Temple standeth, and the holy Paul is alive and well in a Roman prison, showing that it was written before AD 70. It was written also before the martyrdom of Paul, which occurred before AD 68. On the other hand, it was written after AD 54, when the Gentiles were drawn unto Christianity (Acts 2:18). Scholars such as Norman L. Geisler estimate that it was written about AD 61 or 62. Constantine Campbell also holdeth that it was written in AD 61. The book of Acts covered a period of approximately thirty-three years.

“He” and “We” in the Book of Acts

The Use of “He” and “We”

The holy Luke included not himself directly in the narration of the Acts; yet when he recounted the deeds of the apostles, he used *we* instead of *he*, thereby revealing his presence among them. Until Acts 8:16, the story is told using *he*, but from Acts 9:16 onward, this style changed, and *we* taketh the place of *he*, continuing thus unto the end of the book. This demonstrated that from Acts 9:16 to Acts 28:31, the holy Luke was an eyewitness of all these events.

Why Saul Became Known as Paul

It is commonly thought that Saul’s name was changed upon his acceptance of Christ; yet this is not correct. The holy Luke continued to call him Saul even after the transformation. If his name had been changed, Luke would not have so named him. Luke first called him Paul during the first missionary journey (Acts 13:9). Fourteen years after his conversion, Saul began to be called Paul. Being born in the Roman province of Tarsus, he had two names from birth. When Paul’s ministry commenced among the Gentiles, he was called Paul that he might be accepted among the nations.

The Author

The author of this book is the holy Luke. He was of a good and learned household, and the Greek which he used manifested that he was highly educated. The same author wrote both the Gospel according to Luke and the Acts of the Apostles, for the style of writing, and the use of medical terms and vocabulary, is the same in both. Fifty words appear only in these two books and nowhere else in the New Testament. By the holy Luke, the beloved physician, was written nearly 27% of the New Testament, whereas Paul wrote 23% and John 20%.

The holy Luke was a learned, prudent, and skilled physician, often accompanying the holy Paul on his missionary journeys. By his authorship, the Gospel and the Acts are but two parts

of the same story. He was born at Antioch, and was not a Jew, but of Greek origin. His parents dwelt there also. Luke was a physician (Colossians 4:14). Unlike the twelve apostles, he was more desirous to keep historical records and was a man of knowledge (Luke 1:3–4; 21:25).

Luke did not see the earthly ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ with his own eyes (Luke 2:1). Some suppose he came to faith at Antioch or Tarsus. His first meeting with the holy Paul was likely during Paul's second missionary journey in Tarsus (Acts 11:16). Luke accompanied Paul on many journeys (Acts 12:16–17) and remained with him in the company (Acts 1:17). When Paul returned to Philippi, Luke again joined him (Acts 5:20). It seemed that Paul sent him with Titus to carry the second epistle to the Corinthians.

The holy Luke was among the dearest companions of the holy Paul. Paul called him "the beloved physician" (Colossians 4:14). Whenever Paul was near Luke's city, Luke would come to meet him. He accompanied Paul even on his final journey (Acts 20:6–21:18), and was with him on the prisoner's ship going to Rome, when a great tempest arose (Acts 27:28). He was present with Paul in the Roman imprisonment and served him while Paul wrote to the churches and to Philemon (Colossians 4:14; Philemon 24). He remained with Paul during the second imprisonment, even when Paul wrote the second epistle to Timothy (2 Timothy 4:11). When all others forsook Paul, Luke remained steadfastly with him (2 Timothy 4:11).