

BOOK OF ACTS — INTRODUCTION

What is Acts?

The book of Acts is the Spirit-inspired account of how the risen Jesus continued his work through the Holy Spirit by means of the apostles and the early church. Acts is both reliable history and theological interpretation, showing how the gospel spread from Jerusalem to the nations and how God formed the church as his new covenant people.

Authorship and Audience

Acts was written by Luke, the author of the Gospel of Luke. Together, Luke–Acts forms a two-volume work addressed to “Theophilus” (Luke 1:3; Acts 1:1), likely a real person and also representative of the wider Christian community. Luke writes to provide confidence, clarity, and formation in the faith through an orderly account of what God has done in Christ.

Date and Historical Setting

Acts is set in the first-century Roman world, beginning shortly after Jesus’ resurrection and ascension and continuing through the church’s expansion across the Mediterranean. The book depicts the earliest decades of Christian mission, shaped by persecution, cultural opposition, and internal challenges as Jews and Gentiles are united in one Spirit-filled people.

Genre

Acts is theological history. It records real events, people, places, speeches, and journeys, while also interpreting these events as the fulfillment of God’s promises and the unfolding of Christ’s reign. Acts is not a simple “how-to manual” for church methods, but it does reveal enduring patterns of worship, mission, holiness, and Spirit-empowered witness.

Literary Structure (Acts 1:8 as the roadmap)

Acts is organized around Jesus’ promise and commission in Acts 1:8:

1. **Jerusalem (Acts 1–7)**. The Spirit comes at Pentecost, the church is born, and witness begins in the holy city.
2. **Judea and Samaria (Acts 8–12)**. Persecution scatters believers and the gospel expands outward, including unexpected people.
3. **The ends of the earth (Acts 13–28)**. Paul’s missionary journeys carry the gospel throughout the Roman world, reaching major cities and Gentile communities.

Major Theological Themes

Jesus is Lord and continues his mission. Acts emphasizes the present reign of the risen Christ. The church’s mission flows from his authority and direction.

The Holy Spirit empowers the church. The Spirit is the driving force of Acts—creating boldness, holiness, unity, discernment, and power for witness.

The gospel advances through Word and worship. Acts highlights preaching, teaching, prayer, Scripture, and the sacraments as central to the church’s life.

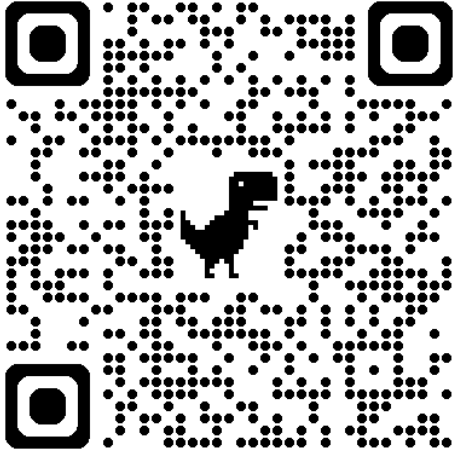
The church is God’s new covenant people. Acts presents the church as the renewed people of God: Jews and Gentiles united in Christ, no longer defined by the old covenant boundary markers, but by faith and the Spirit.

Holiness is missional. The Spirit forms a community whose transformed life becomes public witness to the truth and power of the gospel.

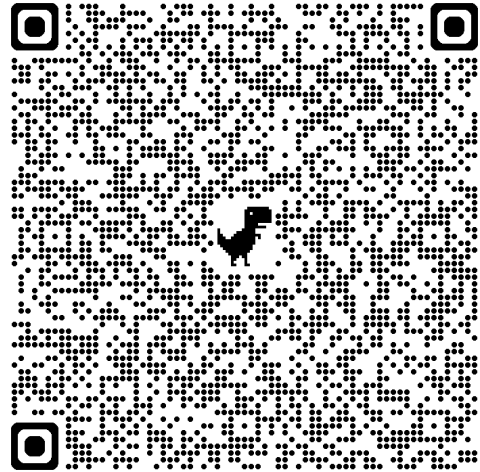
The church is eschatological. The church lives in the “already/not yet”: the Spirit has been poured out as the sign of the age to come, and believers live as those marked out for salvation as they await Christ’s return.

Why Acts Matters for the Church Today

Acts corrects modern misunderstandings by showing that the church is not a social club, a consumer experience, or a waiting room for heaven. The church is God’s Spirit-filled temple-community, worshiping in the age of fulfillment and sent into the world to bear witness to Jesus Christ until he comes again.



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BIBLE STUDY RESOURCES



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MEAL**

ACTS BIBLE STUDY — WEEK 1 TAKE-HOME

“What Time Is It? The Church as the People of the New Age”

Big Idea

Acts is the story of the risen Jesus continuing his work through the Holy Spirit—forming a worshiping, holy, mission-shaped people who live in the age of the Spirit while awaiting Christ’s return.

Key Text for the Week

Acts 1:1–11 (Read 2–3 times this week)

One Verse That Structures the Whole Book

Acts 1:8 — “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses...”

What Acts Teaches Us the Church Is

Acts corrects modern assumptions and gives us a biblical vision of the church:

- A worshiping community (prayer, Scripture, the breaking of bread, praise)
- A Spirit-filled temple people (God’s presence dwells in a people, not a building)
- A missional body (the church is sent, not stalled)
- A holy community (holiness is a witness to transformation)
- An eschatological people (living in the “already/not yet” until Jesus returns)

Themes to Watch for in Acts

As we read, notice how Acts highlights:

- Jesus reigns as Lord now
- The Spirit empowers witness
- The Word spreads through preaching and teaching
- Prayer is central, not optional
- Suffering often advances mission
- The gospel crosses boundaries (Jew/Gentile, insider/outsider)
- The church grows through conversion and formation

Reflection Questions

1. What is the biggest difference between “church” in Acts and “church” in America today?
2. Why does Jesus connect power with witness (Acts 1:8)?
3. Where are you tempted to “worship and wait” rather than “worship and witness”?
4. How does holiness function as mission and witness?

Practice for the Week (Spiritual + Missional)

Pray daily: “Lord Jesus, you are reigning now. Fill me with your Spirit. Make my life a witness—through my words, my holiness, and my love. Give me one opportunity today to point someone to you.”

Optional: Write down one person far from Christ and pray for them by name each day.

Next Week

Acts 1:12–2:13 — “Pentecost: The Spirit Comes and the Church Is Born”