

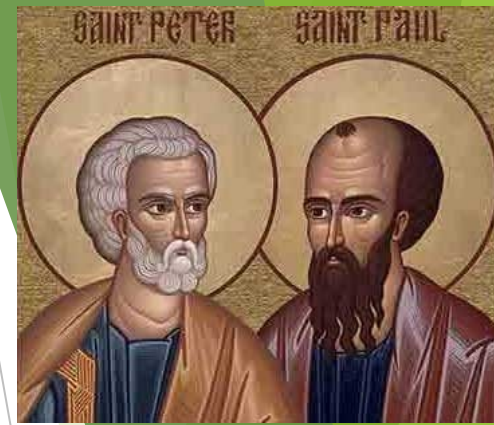


# THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

## Introductory Notes

# Who wrote Acts?

- ▶ ***Acts of the Apostles*** is part 2 to **The Gospel of Luke**. The same author is thought to have written both books.
- ▶ ***The Gospel of Luke*** describes the ministry of Jesus Christ, his birth, death and Ascension.
- ▶ ***Acts of the Apostles*** focuses on the ministry of Peter in the first half of ***Acts*** and on Paul's ministry in the second half.
- ▶ Luke makes many comparisons between their ministries and the ministry of Jesus.



# The Author

- ▶ No where in either the Gospel of Luke or in Acts of the Apostles does the writer identify himself.
- ▶ Both books are dedicated to “Theophilus” who may be a patron to whom the books are dedicated.
- ▶ Tradition has called the author, Luke, a “fellow worker,” and companion of Paul or “the beloved physician” mentioned in Col 4:14, 2 Tim 4:11, and 2 Cor 8:18.

# The “we passages” in Acts

- ▶ Most of Acts is written in the **third** person as a narrator telling a story would.
- ▶ In other places, Luke writes in the first person using "we," as in "we" did this or that.
- ▶ These "we" narratives provide the most detailed accounts in Acts including the time Paul spent in Philippi.
- ▶ These passages point to a person who was there with Paul and a witness to some of the events in Acts.



# Genre

- ▶ *Acts* is considered a **narrative account**. The text is a series of stories about the Apostles told in story form.
- ▶ It is also considered a **history** of sorts.
- ▶ This type of writing was often used to praise an historical or mythical figure, recounting their deeds.
- ▶ In antiquity this type of literature was evident in the *Acts of Hercules*, *Acts of Alexander*, *Acts of Hannibal*, and the *Acts of the Divine Augustus*. (Roman Emperor who brought peace to the Roman Empire at the time of the birth of Jesus.)

# When was it written?

- ▶ The work was not signed and not dated. Scholars do not all agree on *when* it was written.
- ▶ Some believe that Acts must have been written in the 60's because there is no mention of Paul's death. Paul was beheaded in Rome around 64-65AD.
- ▶ Some believe it was written as late as 100-130 AD. These scholars believe that Luke used Josephus' *Antiquities of the Jews* as a source which was written around 93 AD.
- ▶ Many scholars believe that Luke/Acts was written between 80 and 90 AD. These scholars rely on historical references noted in Luke's Gospel. And they believe Luke also used the Gospel of Mark as a source for Luke's Gospel.

# Where do scholars line up on issue of date?

*NRSV 80-90*

*Anchor Bible 80-90 (85)*

*Jerome Biblical Commentary 80-85*

*The Navarre Bible 64-70*

*Collegeville Bible Commentary 80's or 90's*

*Expositor's Bible Commentary 64 -70*



# Brief Historical Timeline

6-4 BC- Jesus is born

5-10 AD- Saul/Paul is born

26-36 AD- Pontius Pilate is prefect of Judea and Samaria

30 AD- Jesus is crucified, dies and is resurrected

36 AD -Stephen is martyred, Paul is converted on road to Damascus

49-51- An Apostolic conference is held in Jerusalem to decide about inclusion of Gentile believers.

51 AD- Paul writes his first letter - To the Thessalonians

66-70 AD- The Jewish War occurs

70 AD - Jerusalem and the Temple are destroyed

80-90 AD -The Gospels of Matthew and Luke are written; Acts of the Apostles is written

90-100 AD - The Gospel of John is written.



# The Message and Purpose of Acts

- ▶ 1. To show the origin and growth of Christianity as the work of the **Holy Spirit**. Peter, Paul and other missionaries carry on the work of Jesus *according to His plan*.
- ▶ 2. To show how Peter and Paul spread the Word of God “to the ends of the earth.” (Rome is the end of the earth in Acts)
- ▶ 3. To explain the transition of Christianity beyond that of a Jewish sect, to a universal Church that includes Gentiles from every nation.
- ▶ 4. To show how the “Good News” blessed the Gentiles.
- ▶ 5. To pay tribute to the life and works of Peter and Paul.

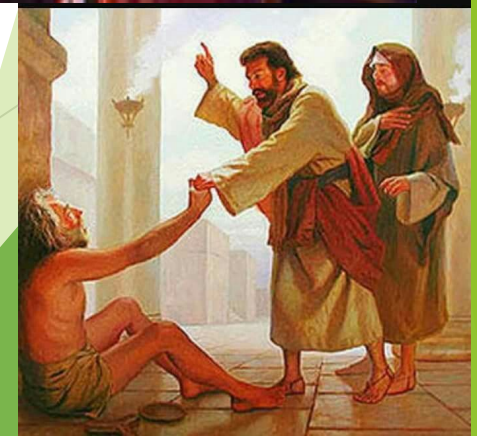
# Parallels between Luke's Gospel and Acts

Both the Gospel and Acts include a preface to Theophilus.

The Spirit descends on Jesus at his baptism as he prays. The Spirit descends on the Apostles as they pray at Pentecost.

Jesus heals a lame man (5:17-26), Peter heals a lame man (Acts 3:1-10).

Religious leaders attack Jesus (5:29- 6:11) Religious leaders attack apostles ( Acts 4:1-8:3)



# More Parallels between Luke and Acts

- ▶ A Centurion invites Jesus to his house (Lk 7:1-10), a centurion invites Peter to his house. (Acts 10:1-23)
- ▶ Jesus raises a widow's son from death (Lk 7:11-1), Peter raises a widow from death. (Acts 9:36-43)
- ▶ Sadducees oppose Jesus, but scribes support Him (Lk 20:27-39), Sadducees oppose Paul, but Pharisees support Him. (Acts 23:6-9)



# Luke's style- themes to watch for when reading Luke/Acts

- ▶ The importance of prayer and worship.
- ▶ Emphasis on work of the Holy Spirit.
- ▶ Acts begins in Jerusalem and there is a continuous move towards Rome and the “ends of the earth.”
- ▶ The interest in food throughout both Luke and Acts.
- ▶ Women are prominent and mentioned by name.
- ▶ Promise and fulfillment of prophecy and scripture.
- ▶ Salvation both in this world and the next.
- ▶ Institution of sacraments in the early Church.



# More things to look for in Acts

The Ascension and Pentecost

Miracles and healings done in the name of Jesus Christ.

The conversion of Saul/Paul.

Mass conversions.

Jail breaks, an earthquake and a shipwreck.

Humor!

Speeches, speeches and more speeches.....

Angels to the rescue.



# Let us Pray

- ▶ Lord we thank you for the gift of your words and the gift of this wonderful community. Bless us and guide us as we study the Acts of the Apostles this year. May we be inspired and blessed with understanding of our faith through these studies.
- ▶ As we open our Bibles  
We also open our hearts.  
May these words of truth fall upon the very fabric of our lives.  
Father, we pray that these ancient scriptures would come alive within us,  
To inspire, to heal, to cleanse, to teach  
To restore and to guide our hearts and minds.  
Lord, come weave your words of life in us. Amen.<sup>14</sup>