



# Introduction to the Book of Acts

# An Introduction to the Book of Acts

- The same author who wrote the Gospel of Luke wrote the Book of Acts.
- Both are written by Luke, a Gentile to a group of Romans.
- The Gospel of Luke was about the work and person of Jesus.
- Acts, a sequel to Luke shows how the life of Jesus and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit impacted Christ's followers.
- Mark, like Luke, closes with Jesus' ascension into heaven (Luke 24:51).
- Their final message from Jesus is to take the Gospel to the ends of the earth.
- Luke, in Acts, tells us just how that began to happen.

# History

- Both the Gospel of **Luke 1:3** and the book of **Acts 1:1** begin with an address to a fictional person named **Theophilus**.
- Theo, meaning **God** and philos meaning **love**.
- Acts was written to those who **love God**.
- In the Book of Acts, we see a handful of believers grow into a multitude of Christ followers.
- We witness the establishment of Christ's church.

# Persecution

- The formation of the church came at a high price under persecution from two main sources.

1. The Jewish religious leaders and local politicians

AND

2. The Roman Empire

- Early believers were considered radical Jews until they were first called Christians in Acts 11.
- In the first century, the Roman Empire controlled large parts of the known world and harshly controlled over anyone suspected of subversion.

# The Holy Spirit

- Acts spends much time looking at the Holy Spirit and the development of the church.
- This book records a unique incident: the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in all believers (**Acts 2**).
- **The message** of Acts is how the Holy Spirit moved the gospel from Jerusalem to Rome.
- Acts demonstrates what God can do in and through individuals and churches who are fully committed to God and empowered by the Holy Spirit (**1:8**).
- A primary role of the Holy Spirit in Acts is to create **unity** among a diverse group of believers.
- Sadly, in today's world, defining the Holy Spirit is often a source of disunity among believers.

# Tongues

- There are three primary perspectives on the tongues in **Acts 2**.
- The **first** is that the language heard was different from the language being spoken.
- The **second** is that the believers were given a supernatural ability to speak in a language they had not previously known.
- The **third** view is that the tongues are a heavenly language (**glossolalia**) that is unintelligible to humans.
- Since Acts specifically says people were hearing the gospel in their own language, the third explanation is **not** what is meant by tongues in Acts.

# The Bride of Christ

- Throughout the New Testament, the church is known as the bride of Christ.
- The indwelling of the Holy Spirit moved passionate followers of Jesus to turn the world upside down with a message of hope and to establish the bride.
- For us, Christ-followers, studying the book of Acts is like watching a documentary about the establishment of our faith via God's work through men and women who sacrificed for us to know Jesus.

# Journey Through Acts

- The Gospels follows Jesus through his birth, death and resurrection.
- Acts picks up at the ascension of Jesus to heaven and follows all the way to Paul's imprisonment in Rome where he will eventually die.
- In the beginning of Acts, we have **Peter's ministry** primarily to the **Jews** from **chapters 1-12**.
- Much of Acts is about **Paul's ministry** to the **Gentiles**.
- Luke was one of Paul's companions.
- From **chapters 13 through 28**, we are following Paul's missionary journeys.
- Paul's letters are written during these journeys.
- Paul's letters give you the details, but Acts gives you the itineraries.



## ➤ Read **Luke 24:44-53**. How did the Gospel of Luke end?

<sup>44</sup> He said to them, “This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.””<sup>45</sup> Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. <sup>46</sup> He told them, “This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, <sup>47</sup> and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. <sup>48</sup> You are witnesses of these things. <sup>49</sup> I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.”

### **The Ascension of Jesus**

<sup>50</sup> When he had led them out to the vicinity of Bethany, he lifted up his hands and blessed them. <sup>51</sup> While he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up into heaven. <sup>52</sup> Then they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy. <sup>53</sup> And they stayed continually at the temple, praising God.

# Acts 1:1-11 (NIV)

## Jesus Taken Up Into Heaven

<sup>1</sup> In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach <sup>2</sup> until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen. <sup>3</sup> After his suffering, he presented himself to them and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God. <sup>4</sup> On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: “Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. <sup>5</sup> For John baptized with water, but in a few days, you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.”

<sup>6</sup> Then they gathered around him and asked him, “Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?”

<sup>7</sup> He said to them: “It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. <sup>8</sup> But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

<sup>9</sup> After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight.

<sup>10</sup> They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. <sup>11</sup> “Men of Galilee,” they said, “why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.”