



**A PASSAGE THROUGH THE NEW TESTAMENT
PART TWO**

The Acts of the Apostles

Chapters 1-12

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8. How did Rhoda react?

9. Do you think these Christians doubted their prayer for Peter could be answered in this way?

10. Were the soldiers to blame for Peter's release? What was to happen to them anyway?

11. (12:20-23) Why did the people of Tyre and Sidon need Herod's favor?

12. How did they attempt to impress Herod and win his favor?

13. Why did the angel strike Herod dead?

14. (12:24-25) Whom did Barnabas and Saul enlist as a fellow-laborer?

The Acts of the Apostles

Authorship: Luke, A.D. 63

The book is addressed to Theophilus, as Luke had also addressed his gospel account. Theophilus means "lover of God" in Greek and may, therefore, refer to an anonymous individual or someone who actually bore that good name. Effectively, the book is addressed to all of every age who love Jehovah and seek to understand the scheme of redemption and the pattern for the New Testament church.

The author is determined to be the beloved physician, Luke, one of Paul's traveling companions (Acts 16:10, 2 Tim. 4:11). Luke's scientific and analytical nature and education bring to bear a detailed study of every aspect of this history.

The purpose of this epistle is to complete a two volume historical set on the life of Christ and the church he built. Luke's gospel closes with an emphasis on Christ's ascension; Acts opens with an account of this event and its effect on the apostles.

At a loss as to what they should do now, two heavenly men and the Holy Spirit map out their first steps. The apostles replenish their number and then begin taking the urgent gospel message to a dying world, beginning on Pentecost in Jerusalem.

This book is actually some of the acts of some of the apostles. The greater number of them was not with Luke and so their work is more obscure to us. Peter is the main character in the first twelve chapters, but the remarkable conversion of former persecutor Saul of Tarsus makes him the leading man thereafter.

Acts shows us the scheme of redemption at work as the preached gospel converts men to Jesus. Numerous conversion accounts are recorded, creating a pattern for preaching and obedience that has lasted ever since.

The book is also valuable in that explains the nature, organization, work and worship of the church to which we claim to be a part.

The Acts of the Apostles appears to be a sequel to Luke's gospel account and picks up at the point of Christ's ascension back into heaven as the apostles and disciples wait for guidance concerning what to do next.

As promised, the Holy Spirit arrives to remind them of Christ's doctrine and to lead them into further truth. Immediately, redemption through the

blood of the savior becomes the overriding theme of the book and the church's mission. Throughout the Acts of the Apostles, audiences as small as one and as large as many thousands are instructed to believe the truth about Jesus, turn from their sins, confess their faith publicly and courageously, and then be baptized for the remission of sins. The baptism of the Holy Spirit occurs just twice, once upon Jews (the apostles in Acts 2) and then upon Gentiles (Cornelius's household in Acts 10), fulfilling Joel's prophecy and making the gift of the Holy Spirit (his presence and grace) possible for all of mankind.

The word "witness" is used at least 30 times in the book, showing that the early church used the eyewitness testimony of the apostles and others to assert that this same Jesus was resurrected from the dead and is the savior of the world. Eschewing a social or recreational gospel, the various congregations appointed their own overseers and attended to a spiritual mission centered around the forgiveness of sins.

Our English word "martyr" comes from the same root as witness and the Acts shows how often professing Christ could bring about persecution and even martyrdom. Yet this willingness to die for one's beliefs is surely also good reason for heathen and Jewish audiences to consider the faith more seriously – if some are willing to give their lives for it, there must be something to it. If we are failing to take risks for our faith, we should not be surprised if the lost understand that our beliefs really don't mean that much to us.

The governing and practice of the early church becomes an obvious pattern. Outside of Jerusalem where the apostles were, local congregations appointed overseers (known variously as elders, pastors, bishops and presbyters) and deacons (or servants) and labored with evangelists and other teachers. Worship consisted of prayers, singing, the Lord's Supper and a monetary contribution for needy saints. No pope was selected and no denomination was established; they were simply churches of Christ.

Out of this book springs forth a seminal character in church history. Paul emerges from among the fiercest persecutors of the church to become its most tireless proponent, abandoning his influence and prosperity within Judaism to embrace Christ and risk his life preaching him. His efforts take him around the known world and put him in extremely dangerous predicaments, but as the book concludes he is still going strong. His dedication is an example for all those who wear the same blessed name of Christ.

Lesson 13: Imprisonment of Peter

Acts of the Apostles 12:1-25

1. (12:1-4) Why was Herod harassing the church?
2. Why did Herod need four squads of soldiers to guard one prisoner (Acts 5)?
3. (12:5-11) What was the church doing while Peter sat in prison?
4. How might the church today engage in a similar activity?
5. How was Peter set free?
6. What was "the expectation of the Jewish people"?
7. (12:12-19) To where did Peter go after the angel left him?

7. (11:19-21) Why were so many Christians compelled to leave Jerusalem? What benefit to the gospel did this dispersion have?

8. What limitation was upon their evangelism? Who broke that limitation? Was God supportive?

9. (11:22-24) How did the church at Jerusalem react to the sharing of the gospel across racial lines?

10. What is Barnabas's record for encouraging Christians?

11. (11:25-26) Mormonism holds that disciples were called Christians as early as 73 B.C. (Alma 46:13-15). What does the Bible say?

12. Is there any other proper name by which the first disciples were called?

13. (11:27-30) How did the Antioch Christians show their gratitude to the Jerusalem church?

Lesson 1: Ascension

Acts of the Apostles 1:1-26

1. (1:1-3) Who wrote the book of Acts? To whom was it addressed? What other book did he receive from this author?

2. What convincing proofs did Jesus offer of his resurrection? What did he continue to preach?

3. (1:4-8) What is reflected in the apostles' question concerning the restoration of the kingdom to Israel?

4. For what reason did Jesus instruct the apostles to remain in Jerusalem? Had he made this promise to them before?

5. (1:9-14) Why did the apostles stare into heaven at the Lord's ascension? What assurance did the two men in white give them?

6. What did they do back in their upper room?

7. (1:15-26) Was there scriptural authority for Peter to push for someone to succeed this apostle in his office? Where is it? Is there any authority for a successor to the other offices or even this one, once it was filled this time?

8. Of exactly what were the apostles to testify? Could someone who has not seen the risen Christ qualify as such a witness?

9. Which man was chosen to fill the vacant seat? How was he chosen? Who chose him?

Lesson 12: The Conversion of Gentiles

Acts of the Apostles 11:1-30

1. (11:1-3) What does the phrase “those of the circumcision” mean?

2. Why were they upset with Peter?

3. (11:4-18) At what point in Peter’s sermon did the Holy Spirit fall on these Gentiles in Peter’s audience?

4. How does faith come (cf. Romans 10:17)?

5. What did the Holy Spirit’s arrival on the Gentiles prove to Peter?

6. Were the men of the circumcision convinced by Peter’s testimony?

7. Of what event did Peter think, upon witnessing the baptism of the Holy Spirit here?

8. Judging from the context and your knowledge of the Jews' disdain for Gentiles, even considering them second-class Christians in the future, why do you suppose the Holy Spirit came upon the Gentiles in this way?

9. What is Peter's last command here?

Lesson 2: Pentecost

Acts of the Apostles 2:1-47

1. (2:1-4) How did the Holy Spirit's arrival become apparent to the apostles? What new ability did the apostles suddenly possess?

2. (2:5-13) What caused these devout Jews from all over the world to be confused and amazed? Were the apostles speaking gibberish or real human languages?

3. (2:14-21) Whose prophecy did Peter claim this event was fulfilling? Are we then living in the "last days"?

4. (2:22-35) Did God know beforehand that Jesus would be crucified, or did the Jewish rebellion surprise the Creator?

5. What act of God put Jesus on David's throne over God's kingdom?

6. (2:36-39) What was the force of Peter's rebuke in verse 36? Peter tells the penitent to do two things. What are they?

7. (2:40-47) They believed but Peter continues to tell them that they still need to be saved. Finally they receive this command and are baptized. What does this teach us about the role of baptism in the scheme of salvation?

Lesson II: Peter Visits Cornelius

Acts of the Apostles 10:24-48

1. (10:24-33) How had Cornelius prepared for Peter? What grave error did Cornelius make when Peter arrived?

2. What did Cornelius want to hear from Peter?

3. (10:34-43) Is God a respecter of persons? How does he judge men worthy of election to grace and salvation?

4. Briefly summarize Peter's very brief sermon.

5. (10:44-48) Consider Acts 11:15 – about how long had Peter been speaking when the Holy Spirit fell on them?

6. How were the Jews affected by this spectacle?

6. How promptly was Peter convinced?

7. (10:17-23) The Holy Spirit was giving Peter this ground breaking development in pieces. The first piece was his vision; the second piece was the instruction to go with some men; the third piece was whom these men represented. Whom did they represent? Why did he want Peter to come?

8. Who told Peter to go with Cornelius's servants?

9. What is the significance of the fact that some brethren from Joppa accompanied Peter?

Lesson 3: Solomon's Porch

Acts of the Apostles 3:1-4:4

1. (3:1-10) Why was this man put daily at the temple gate? What did he ask of the Christians he encountered there? Is there any evidence to suggest this man was a member of Christ's church?

2. How did the apostles reply to his request? Why did they not take some money from the church treasury (2:44-45, 4:37) and give it to him?

3. How much time elapsed between Peter's healing and the man's recovery?

4. What impression did this leave on him? How did it impress the other people nearby?

5. (3:11-21) With what open accusation did Peter address his hungry audience? How were so many people partly responsible for this event?

6. Was their sin one of ignorance or blatant, intentional rebellion?

7. What is Peter's twofold command to them in verse 19? Define both terms.

8. (3:22-26) What had Moses predicted about those who rejected Jesus?

9. The covenant God made with Abraham involved three promises to the man. What were they (Genesis 12:1-3)? How was each fulfilled by God?

10. Was the message of Jesus designed to tolerate or eradicate sin?

11. (4:1-4) What three groups of men interrupted the sermon?

12. Can you find something in Peter's speech that would especially bother the Sadducees?

13. Where did the preachers spend that night? What did Peter later say about suffering this way (First Peter 4:15-16)?

14. Did Peter's sermon have any good effect on the audience?

Lesson 10: Peter and Cornelius

Acts of the Apostles 10:1-23

1. (10:1-8) How does Luke describe Cornelius?

2. If God does not hear the prayer of sinners (John 9:31), why was he listening to Cornelius?

3. (10:9-16) Describe Peter's vision.

4. Why did Peter object to the vision's command to kill and eat the animals?

5. What did God ultimately mean when he said to Peter, "What God has cleansed you must not call common?"

8. Did Jesus have a life of leisure prepared for Saul?

9. Were Saul's sins washed away before he was baptized (cf. Acts 22:16)?

10. Did faith alone save Saul? Did prayer alone save him?

11. (9:20-22) What was Saul's new job? How did people react?

12. (9:23-31) How do we know that Saul was preaching well?

13. Why did the Jerusalem church refuse him at first? Who was responsible for establishing his character and faith?

14. (9:32-35) What was the effect of the healing of Aeneas?

15. (9:36-43) What does Luke say about Dorcas?

Lesson 4: Initial Jewish Hindrance

Acts of the Apostles 4:1-31

1. (4:1-4) Why was Peter in trouble?

2. (4:5-12) Knowing for what reason he was in this mess, did Peter change his message or his method to accommodate the rulers?

3. Verse 11 is an often repeated quotation that proves the crucifixion of Christ was foreknown to God long before the Jews rejected Jesus's earthly ministry. From where does this quote come? Of what is Christ the chief cornerstone?

4. (4:13-22) What piece of evidence was staring the rulers in the eye, proving that Peter and James had done something marvelous?

5. How would you characterize the rulers' handling of the gospel claims Peter was asserting?

6. What solemn warning did the rulers give the apostles? Did the apostles heed it in deference to the government?

7. What are the practical implications of Peter's statement in verse 19?

8. (4:23-31) Were the apostles and disciples overly discouraged by this turn of events? Have you ever faced anything like the rulers' threat?

9. Some misapply the prophecy of Psalm 2 to point to the end of the world. Peter defines for us the fulfillment of David's prediction, however. What is the fulfillment, according to this passage?

10. What single word characterized their preaching, according to both verses 29 and 31?

Lesson 9: The Conversion of Saul

Acts of the Apostles 9:1-43

1. (9:1-9) What was Saul's occupation?

2. What appeared to him on the road to Damascus?

3. How did the personage identify himself to Saul?

4. What does the phrase "hard to kick against the goads" mean?

5. What was the effect of this event on Saul, physically and emotionally?

6. (9:10-19) Whom did Jesus appear to next? Why?

7. What was this man's reaction?

9. (8:14-25) Were there saved people in Samaria *before* the apostles made it there (Mark 16:16)?

10. Did Philip have the ability to pass on the power to work miracles by the Holy Spirit?

11. Is it possible, judging by this context and inference, for men to have miraculous powers by the Holy Spirit today?

12. What did Peter tell Simon to do when he discovered his heart was not right in the sight of God?

13. (8:26-40) What was the eunuch reading when Philip came along?

14. What did Philip preach to him (8:35)? What was the eunuch's first question after the "sermon"?

15. What was the eunuch's confession?

Lesson 5: One Heart and One Soul

Acts of the Apostles 4:32-5:42

1. (4:32-37) Many people in denominations speak of "witnessing" as their attempts at teaching. The Bible gives the job of "witnessing" to a select group of people who had actually seen something they could testify about. What had the apostles and some others actually witnessed?

2. Where was the collection for the needy saints laid?

3. Why did the apostles give Joses his nickname?

4. (5:1-11) What possession did Ananias and his wife Sapphira sell? What did they do with the proceeds?

5. Was it permissible for them to give only a portion of their proceeds? What exactly was their sin?

6. What effect did this very unusual event have on the church?

7. How does this event affect our attitudes today?

8. (5:12-16) What was wrong with the people, that they could esteem the disciples highly but refuse to join their number?

9. (5:17-25) What did the apostles do once the angel released them from prison?

10. (5:26-32) Did the apostles intend to bring Christ's blood on the priests and council?

11. When had the priests commanded them not to preach Jesus anymore?

12. Did the apostles go silent for even a moment?

13. What are the implications of Peter's statement in verse 29 for us today?

14. (5:33-42) What is Gamaliel's other claim to fame (Acts 22:3)?

15. What was his advice to the council?

Lesson 8: Philip in Samaria

Acts of the Apostles 8:4-40

1. (8:4-8) Why were so many Christians being "scattered" (see Acts 8:1-3)?

2. Were they dispersed and displaced now hiding their dangerous beliefs? What were they doing with their time?

3. What had been Philip's duty in the Jerusalem church (6:5)?

4. Where did he go when the persecutors dispersed his brethren?

5. Did he have the ability to work miracles? What was the purpose of the miracles (Mark 16:20)?

6. In Samaria, was Philip going to an easy field (cf. John 4:5-9)?

7. (8:9-13) What was Philip preaching in Samaria?

8. What was Simon's occupation? Why was he compelled to stay close to Philip?

7. The Calvinist says that the Holy Spirit is irresistible. What does Stephen say?

8. How did these men regard the law of God? How is this a warning to Christians today?

9. (7:54-60) What was the last straw before the men rushed him?

10. How does Stephen's death resemble the Lord's?

Lesson 6: Meet Stephen

Acts of the Apostles 6:1-15

1. (6:1-7) Within what two groups was the dispute? What was it over?

2. What solution did the apostles suggest to the church?

3. How successful was their evangelization of Jerusalem?

4. If these men are typical of the office that deacons would eventually hold, what was the general scope of their work here?

Answer:

5. What qualities did Paul identify for deacons (First Timothy 3:8-13)?

6. (6:8-15) What sect disputed with Stephen?

7. Of what was Stephen full? Explain (cf. Second Timothy 1:7).

8. Could they refute his arguments for the gospel? What tactic did they employ in their failure?

9. How did Stephen appear to them?

Lesson 7: Stephen Is Martyred

Acts of the Apostles 7:1-8:3

1. (7:1-8) Stephen first calls Abraham as a witness. What was the sign of his covenant with God?

2. (7:9-16) Next he calls Joseph. How did God provide for Israel through Joseph?

3. (7:17-43) How did Stephen's accuser's forefathers treat Moses?

4. (7:44-50) Stephen summarizes his defense against the charge of blasphemy, relating to the temple. Is God dependent upon an earthly structure to relate to man?

5. (7:51-53) What does it mean to be "stiff-necked"?

6. What does it mean to be "uncircumcised in heart and ears"?