

INTRODUCTION

The Book of Acts continues the story of the early Christian movement for thirty years after the death of Christ. This period saw the rapid growth in number and territorial expansion of Christianity. The believers developed the structure of their organization as their number increased. New problems arose, requiring new types of ministries to meet the needs. Racial tensions increased as people of various nations were born into the Kingdom of God and came to be recognized as part of the Church. Acts records the story of how the young Church faced and solved the problems which threatened to destroy her fellowship and to hinder her divinely-given commission.

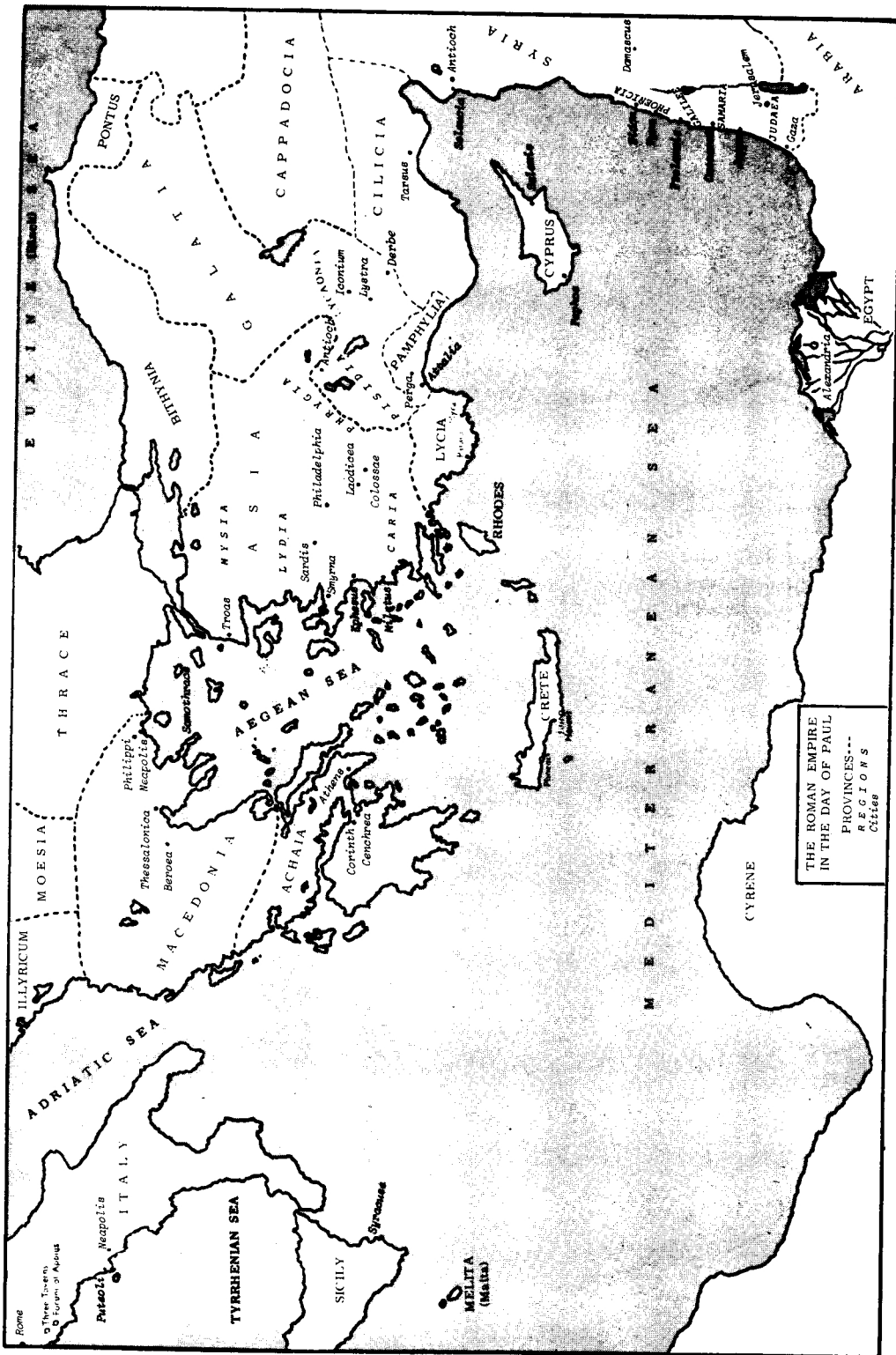
Jesus repeatedly gave the commission to His followers to make disciples as they went into all the world. The Book of Acts opens with Jesus' last post-resurrection appearance to His disciples and His final instructions concerning the power and work of the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom was to be established on earth as the disciples gave witness in the power of the Holy Spirit to Jesus as the Messiah. The Kingdom made astonishing growth on earth during the first quarter of a century after the death of Jesus. Luke does not give all the details of the spread of the Kingdom, but he does give clues.

The Day of Pentecost was strategic to the spread of the Gospel for two reasons: the Holy Spirit empowered every disciple for effective witnessing, and Jews from ten Roman provinces and regions and from five regions outside the Roman Empire were present to hear the Gospel. Whether or not those present at Pentecost carried the Gospel back to Parthia, Media, Elam, Mesopotamia, Egypt, and Cyrene is not indicated by Luke. Some may have remained in Jerusalem. Luke states that men of Cyrene and Cyprus who were "some of them" scattered (from Jerusalem) by the persecution which arose about Stephen eventually went to Antioch and preached to Greeks (Acts 11:19-20). The Church in Rome was established many years before Paul arrived there in about A.D. 60. Jews from Rome, Cyrene, and Cyprus had been in Jerusalem, and had heard the Gospel on the Day of Pentecost, and apparently were the first disciples of Christ in those areas.

Little is known of the early spread of the Gospel in areas east of the Roman Empire. Acts 2:9 mentions that Mesopotamians and citizens from three nations east and south of Mesopotamia—Parthians, Medes, and Elamites—were present in Jerusalem and heard the Gospel on the Day of Pentecost. Arabians were also present (Acts 2:11). Most of the Roman provinces mentioned in Acts 2:9-11 appear later in connexion with Paul's work.

Although the Book of Acts does not follow a strictly geographical expansion of the Church, the student will benefit from knowing the locations of the areas mentioned. The author of Acts seems to combine geography and major issues to form the underlying structure of his book. The major issues centred in the relation of Jews and Gentiles in the Church. Chapters 1-5 are concerned primarily with the conversion of the Jews in Jerusalem with the movement dominated by the Hebrew element. Chapters 6-12 introduce the Hellenists or Grecian Jewish phase and include the spread of the Gospel among Samaritans and God-fearing Gentiles. Chapters 13-15 include the spread of the Gospel among Gentiles in provinces beyond Palestine and Syria; however, the approach continued to be closely related to the synagogues. Chapters 16-20 depict a definite shift in emphasis from Jews to Gentiles and the self-exclusion of the Jews. There is less connexion to the synagogues as the Gospel spread into Macedonia, Achaia, and Asia. Chapters 21-28 reflect the climax to the Jewish-Gentile tensions; the rejection of the Gentile mission and Apostle by the Jews and the turning to Gentiles in Rome by Paul.

To become better acquainted with the areas to which the Gospel spread, the student should locate on the map below as many as possible of the regions from which representatives came to Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:9-11).



ACTS 2:8-11:

“And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born? Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judaea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God.”

LESSON 1

PART I: INTRODUCTION TO ACTS

The two primary divisions of New Testament literature are the Gospels and the Epistles. The Gospels anticipate the Church, whereas the Epistles presuppose it.¹ The Book of Acts links the newly-formed Church of Jesus and the Apostles with the expanded Church to which the Epistles were addressed.

Although Acts gives a historical summary of the growth of the early Church, it is not a twentieth-century type history. The earliest title of the book was "The Acts of the Apostles"; this title can be traced back to about A.D. 150. However, the content of Acts does not follow strictly this title since it does not record the actions of all the Apostles.

The activities of Peter dominate the first part of the book, and those of Paul the latter part. The other Apostles receive little attention. Although a church developed in Egypt at an early date, no mention is made of its origin in Acts. Strictly speaking, Acts is *neither* a history of the Apostles *nor* a history of the early Church.

The author of Acts names the Apostles in Chapter 1:13, but, except for Peter, James, and John, not one of them is mentioned again. He does not tell us what happened to Peter after Acts 12:18. Did Peter go to Rome? Since James, the Lord's brother, became the leader of the Church at Jerusalem, apparently Peter left Jerusalem. The author also leaves questions unanswered concerning Paul. He fails to tell us about many of Paul's most important activities. He does not mention the literary activities of Paul and the outcome of his trial under Nero.

Acts is important as a link between the activities of Jesus and the churches established by the Apostles. It gives a background to the Epistles of Paul which makes them more intelligible.

Authorship

Objection to Lucan authorship

Few had questioned Lucan authorship until recent years. A. C. Clark, in *The Acts of the Apostles* (1933), questioned whether the same one wrote Luke and Acts because of a disparity of the use of smaller parts of speech. W. L. Knox, in *The Acts of the Apostles* (1948), made a similar study and arrived at a different answer. He concluded that Clark's methodology was faulty because he did not distinguish between Luke's sources and Luke's own style of writing. Others have asked why the contents of Acts and the writings of Paul differ so much if their authors were companions. For example, Acts 15 indicates that the disagreement concerning the legal and ceremonial requirements for Gentile converts was resolved; however, Paul indicates in Galatians that even Peter found it difficult to abide by the decision of the Council. This objection ignores the information in Acts which reveals that Paul continued to encounter opposition from the Judaizers after the Council. The decision of the Council did not remove men's prejudices, including Peter's.

Arguments for Lucan authorship

The author indicates that he had written a previous treatise (Acts 1:1). Both the Gospel of Luke and Acts are addressed to Theophilus and contain strong similarities of language and style.

¹ E. F. Harrison, *Introduction to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1964), p. 222.

The Book of Acts links the newly-formed Church of J_____ and the A_____ with the Church to which the E_____ were written.

(Jesus, Apostles, Epistles)

The Book of Acts (does, does not) record the actions of all the Apostles.

CHOOSE ONE

(does not)

IS THIS STATEMENT TRUE OR FALSE?

The Book of Acts is a full history of the Apostles and the early Church. _____

(false)

Except for a listing of the Apostles in Acts 1, only three of the Apostles are mentioned in Acts. Who are the three? _____, _____, and _____

(Peter, James, John)

IS THIS STATEMENT TRUE OR FALSE?

All scholars agree Luke wrote the Book of Acts.

_____ (false)

List four arguments for Lucan authorship.

(Compare your answer with the text.)

Acts is a continuation of the account of Jesus in Luke (cf. Acts 1:1ff.). If the third Gospel was written by the physician Luke, it is likely that Acts was written by him also.

There are indications in Acts that the author was a companion of Paul on part of his travels. Several passages use the first person plural (we) instead of the third person (he; cf. 16:10-17; 20:5-21; 21:18; 27:1-28; 28:16). The author first joined Paul at Philippi and reappeared on Paul's return to Philippi. He accompanied Paul on the journey towards Jerusalem and stayed with Philip at Caesarea. After Paul's two-year imprisonment at Caesarea, the writer of Acts went with him to Rome and experienced shipwreck with him. He apparently stayed with Paul for two years during his imprisonment at Rome. The Book of Acts closes with the two-year imprisonment. Luke was with Paul when the Prison Epistle Colossians was written (cf. Col. 4:10, 14).

The association of Luke with the city of Philippi suggests that his home was there. The list of greetings in Colossians distinguishes Luke from the men of the circumcision; therefore, it is assumed that Luke was a Gentile (cf. Col. 4:11ff.). Colossians 4:14 states that he was a doctor.

Luke could have received the information for Acts 7, 9, 11:25-30, and 12:25-28:31 from the Apostle Paul. Luke knew Mark, and both were with Paul when he wrote Colossians (cf. 4:10, 14). According to Acts 12:12, the church in Jerusalem met in the house of Mark's mother. Mark likely had first-hand knowledge of the events previous to the Council of Jerusalem. The information in Acts 6:1-8:40 could have come from Philip who entertained Paul and Luke (cf. Acts 21:8).

The Date

Since the activities of Paul until A.D. 62 are included in Acts, it could not have been written earlier. The fact that it does not include a description of Paul's death indicates that it was probably written before that event. Tradition says that he was put to death by A.D. 65. Some scholars object to such an early date because the writing of Acts followed Luke's Gospel which depended on Mark's Gospel. However, both Mark and Luke were companions of Paul when the Prison Epistle Colossians (cf. 4:10, 14) was written, probably a short time before Paul's death. Therefore, it is not impossible that the Gospels of Mark and Luke were both completed by A.D. 64 and Acts was written shortly thereafter, before the death of Paul.

Purpose

A history of Christian origins.—Some scholars believe that Luke intended for his work to be regarded as history but not as a mere chronology of events. Donald Guthrie suggests that the scrappy work of Luke gives the impression that the author's purpose was to get to Paul as soon as possible.²

The omission of certain features, for example, Paul's visit to Arabia and information about the majority of the Apostles, reveals that Luke did not attempt to write an exact, scientific history of the early Church. He, like others of the books of the Bible, saw a theological purpose being worked out in history. His task was to present historical events in such a way that the purpose of God could be seen.

² Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction* (third ed., London: The Tyndale Press, 1970), p. 349.

<p>Luke accompanied _____ on part of his journeys.</p> <p>(Paul)</p>
<p>Luke was probably from the city of _____.</p> <p>(Philippi)</p>
<p>Luke was a G _____ and a d _____.</p> <p>(Gentile, doctor)</p>
<p>List three sources from whom Luke received information.</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>(Paul, Mark, Philip)</p>
<p>Acts includes the activities of Paul to A.C. _____, but it does not tell of Paul's death in A.D. _____.</p> <p>Therefore, it is assumed Acts was written (before A.D. 62, after A.D. 65, between A.D. 62 and A.D. 65).</p> <p style="text-align: center;">UNDERLINE ONE</p> <p>(62, 65, between A.D. 62 and A.D. 65)</p>
<p>Some believe Luke's purpose in writing Acts was to present a history of _____.</p> <p>_____</p> <p>(Christian origins)</p>

A Gospel of the Holy Spirit.—The Prologue of Acts indicates that the account of Jesus which was started in the Gospel would be continued under the guidance of the Holy Spirit in the Book of Acts (cf. 1:2). Frank Stagg points out that the emphasis is on the work effected by the Holy Spirit and not on the doctrine of the Holy Spirit.³ Great emphasis is placed on the work of the Holy Spirit. The Church came into being through the baptism of the Spirit (2:38); the fullness of the Spirit equipped the disciples for victory (2:4, 4:3, 8:17, 10:44, 19:6). No distinction is to be made between the work of the Holy Spirit and the continued activity of Jesus (cf. 3:6, 4:10). The Apostles performed their Christian service in the power of the Holy Spirit and in the name of Jesus Christ. The two phrases are synonymous.

A defence of Christianity.—Some scholars use the emphasis in Acts on Paul's Jewish ceremonial observances to argue that the purpose of the book was to influence Jewish readers towards a favourable view of the Church. Timothy was circumcised and Paul took a Jewish vow. Emphasis is placed on the fulfilment of Old Testament predictions in the Church. Other scholars believed that the author's purpose was to present the Church in a positive light to Roman officials. The decisions and actions of Roman officials are not criticized. Romans who were sympathetic towards the Gospel are given special attention. The Jews are presented as the instigators of the trouble which arose concerning the Gospel.

Jesus as universal Lord.—Luke's Gospel presents Jesus as Lord of both Jews and Gentiles. A primary purpose of the author of Acts appears also to have been the presentation of Jesus as Lord of both Jews and Gentiles. Some Jewish Christians tried to restrict the Lordship of Jesus to the Jewish nation. Luke shows how the Kingdom of God included Gentiles as well as Jews. The Church began as a movement primarily among Jews, but the Gospel crossed the barriers of nationalism and racial prejudice and became a universal movement. As a Gentile, Luke had special interest in the plan of God which included the Gentiles.

The Kingdom of God is mentioned eight times in Acts. More frequent reference to the concept was probably not made because of:

1. the continued misunderstanding of the Jews concerning the Kingdom;
2. the lack of understanding by the Gentiles concerning the Kingdom (a Jewish concept);
3. the danger of being charged with treason for preaching the Kingdom of God in the Roman Empire.

Luke's primary purpose was to show the extension of the Kingdom to include all people. He did not attempt to give a detailed history of geographical expansion; however, he showed how the gospel spread to much of the Roman Empire. The greatest victory was the conquest of racial barriers which had excluded some people from the Kingdom.

The spread of the Kingdom is accomplished through the power of God. The Kingdom may be defined as God's rule over His people through the indwelling Holy Spirit who empowers God's chosen for victory against the enemy. The Holy Spirit is the presence and power of God. He equips Christians for the conflict with Satan and his forces. The battle is against a deadly foe who

Another possible purpose of Luke was to present the Gospel of the _____

(Holy Spirit)

Some scholars say Acts was written as a

_____ of _____

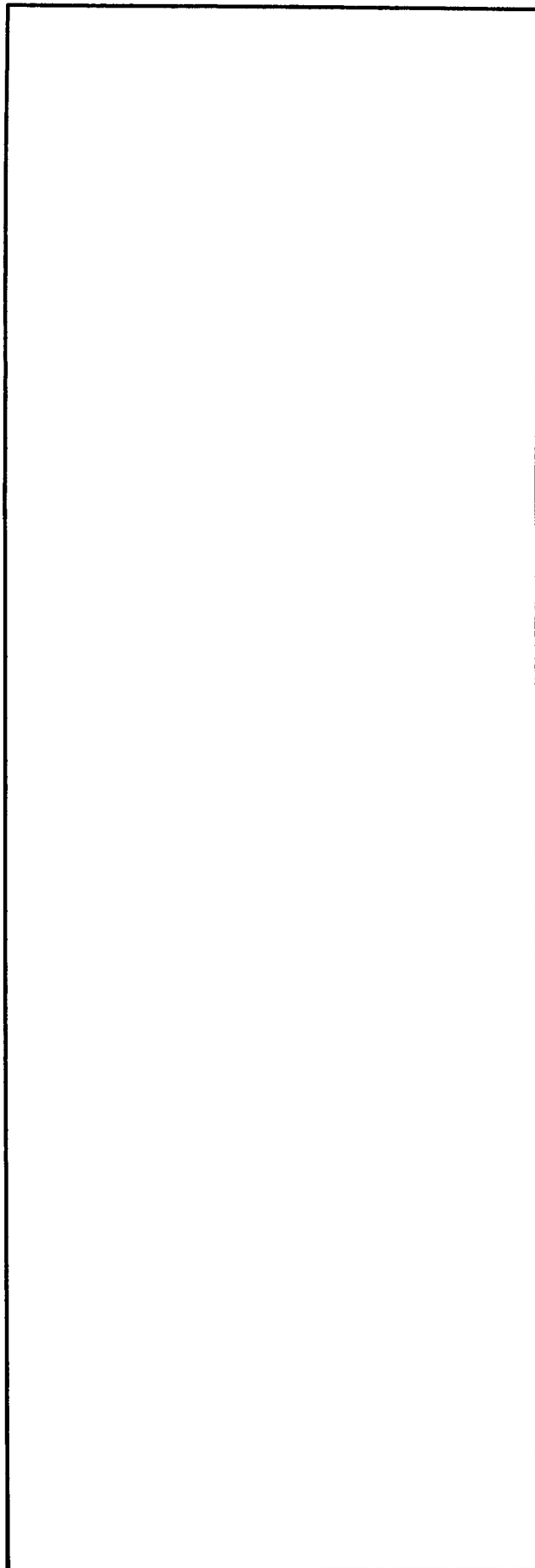
(defence, Christianity)

A primary purpose of Luke was to present Jesus as universal Lord of both _____ and _____

(Jews, Gentiles)

³ *The Book of Acts* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1955), p. 6.

enslaves and destroys God's creation. Satan works in man's heart to create enmity between national groups, selfishness leading to oppression, and pride expressed in prejudice. The real battle in the world is in the realm of the spirit—the control of man's heart.



PART II: FINAL INSTRUCTIONS AND THE ASCENSION OF JESUS

ACTS 1:1-11

The Prologue (1:1-5)

Verse 1.—The author makes reference to a previous composition also addressed to Theophilus (cf. Luke 1:1-4). He says that former treatise contained an account of “all that Jesus began both to do and to teach” (Acts 1:1). The statement indicates that he intended to write a historical account. The Prologue to the Gospel (Luke 1:1-4) may have served as an introduction to both books. Acts 1:1-5 may have been a secondary introduction. In the Gospel’s Prologue, the stated purpose of the author was to write an orderly record of “those things which are most surely believed among us” (Luke 1:1). Luke implies that Theophilus had already received some instruction (Luke 1:4). He claims historical accuracy in the statement “having investigated everything carefully from the beginning” (Luke 1:3—NASB). In the two-volume work, Luke-Acts, the statement implies that Luke either had investigated carefully all things from the very beginning of the birth of Jesus or had participated personally in the activities which he recorded.

The name Theophilus means “lover of God.” The title most excellent, which was prefixed to his name in Luke, was the usual Greek word which indicated someone of high official position (cf. Acts 23:26; 24:2; and 26:25). Theophilus may have been a Roman official who had received some instruction in the Christian faith. He may have been an official who would hear Paul’s trial; therefore, Luke wanted him to have a full knowledge of the content of Paul’s message (Kerygma) which had caused his imprisonment and trial. Some scholars believe that the name Theophilus referred to any Christian who loved God; therefore, the name was used in a general sense to address any Christian.

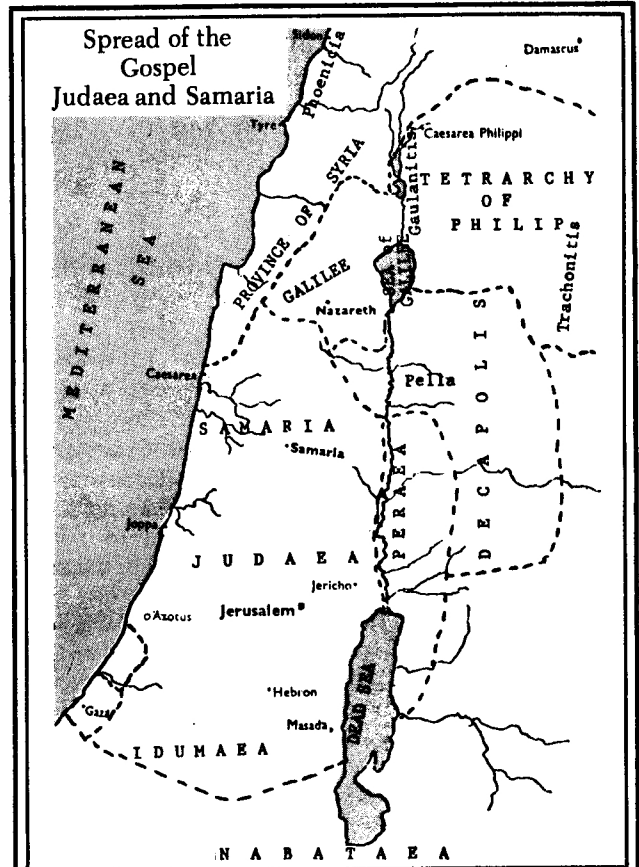
Verse 2.—The notation that instructions were given to the Apostles by the Holy Spirit after the resurrection of Jesus indicates that the work of the incarnate Jesus and the work of the risen Christ were one. Luke does not think of a Gospel of Christ and a Gospel of the Holy Spirit. He emphasizes that the Gospel of Christ was continued after His death and resurrection by the Holy Spirit.

Verse 3.—Luke gives a hint concerning the purpose of Acts. After His resurrection, Jesus continued to appear to the disciples for forty days. The two purposes of His appearances were—

1. to give to the disciples proof of His resurrection;
2. to give them instructions concerning the Kingdom of God.

Luke’s purpose was to show how the Kingdom of God changed from a nationalistic Jewish hope to a worldwide spiritual reality. Acts opens with the question of the disciples: “Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?” (1:6). The Book ends with Paul’s “Preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him” (28:31). Acts shows how the instructions of Jesus concerning the Kingdom of God became a reality.

Luke presents Jesus as the Son of the Most High who will be given the throne of His father David (cf. Luke 1:32). His reign will be without end. The Kingdom of God is the reign and rule of God over His people. The Kingdom came in power at the Baptism of Jesus when He received the Holy Spirit (cf. Luke 3:21ff.). John the Baptizer prophesied that the One who came after him



Theophilus means “_____”
 “_____.” Theophilus may have been a
 R_____ O_____. The name may
 have referred to any C_____ who loves
 God.

(lover of God, Roman official, Christian)

Luke emphasizes that the Gospel continued after
 Jesus’ _____ and _____
 by the _____

(death, resurrection, Holy Spirit)

was mightier than he and would baptize His disciples with the Holy Spirit and fire (cf. Luke 3:16). Jesus' activities and teachings had demonstrated the presence of the Kingdom. The power of God's Kingdom was present in the life and ministry of Jesus and would be given to the disciples when they were baptized with the Holy Spirit.

The disciples had thought previously that the Kingdom of God belonged to Israel and the power of God's Kingdom would be expressed in military strength. After His resurrection, Jesus appeared to the disciples over a period of forty days to instruct them concerning the Kingdom of God. He taught them that the Kingdom of God consisted not in the strength of Israel as a nation but in the promised gift from the Father.

Verse 4.—The sending of the Holy Spirit is referred to as the promise of the Father (cf. Acts 1:4), baptism with the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:5), and the filling with the Spirit (cf. Acts 2:4).

Instructions concerning the Kingdom (1:6-8)

Verse 6.—The disciples had not understood fully the teachings of Jesus concerning the Kingdom of God. They inquired of Him, "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" Their question reveals a narrow nationalistic conception of the Kingdom. The Crucifixion may have forced them to abandon the idea of a temporal and political kingdom; however, they continued to believe that the Kingdom would be an expansion of Judaism. Judaism was to them a nation as well as a religion.

The Prophets spoke of the coming of God's Kingdom. According to Ezekiel, the Kingdom meant primarily the deliverance and restoration of Israel (chs. 36-37). Deliverance from foreign domination would vindicate the holiness of Yahweh's name which had been profaned by the nations among whom Israel dwelt. Apparently the Israelites were guilty of idolatry during their exile (cf. Ezek. 36:25). Gentile nations had interpreted the defeat of Israel to be the result of Yahweh's weakness before the gods of the conquering nations. Yahweh's glory and power were to be demonstrated by the deliverance of His people and their restoration to their land. Isaiah saw another purpose in the deliverance of Israel. The glorious deliverance of the Israelites by Yahweh would attract the Gentiles to worship Him (cf. Isa. 42:6f.; Zeph. 3:9ff.).

The victorious Messiah would be a prince of the house of David (Isa. 9:6f.; 11:1-5; Jer. 23:5; 30:9). Luke made reference to Jesus as One who would occupy the throne of His father David and reign forever over the house of Jacob (Luke 1:32ff.). Zacharias rejoiced in the fulfilment of the prophecies which promised deliverance from Israel's enemies by the house of David (Luke 1:68-71). Jesus was introduced to His public ministry by the announcement of the arrival of the Kingdom of God (cf. Matt. 3).

Some of the Jews based their hopes on the prophecy of Daniel and looked for the coming of a heavenly Son of Man who would establish a kingdom in power and glory (cf. Dan. 7:13ff.). Others looked for a Davidic king who would be endowed with supernatural power and would destroy God's enemies and would establish a reign of peace and righteousness (cf. Isa. 11). Others expected a holy war in which the angels would help the righteous to destroy the wicked.⁴ Luke mentioned that all the people were in great expectation with reference to the Messiah (3:15). The death of Jesus on the cross had not extinguished the Messianic hopes of the disciples. The death and resurrection of Jesus had added a new dimension to the nature of the Kingdom.

⁴ "The War Scroll" from Qumran.

Write the two purposes of Jesus' postresurrection appearance.

(Compare your answer with the text.)

The Book of Acts shows how the Kingdom of _____ changed from a nationalistic _____ hope to a world-wide _____ reality.

(God, Jewish, spiritual)

Jesus taught that the Kingdom of God was the promised gift from the _____.

(Father)

The sending of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost is referred to as:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

(Compare your answer with the text.)

The prophets spoke of the coming of God's _____

(Kingdom)

Jesus was introduced by the announcement of the arrival of the _____ of _____.

(Kingdom, God)

Jesus' death and resurrection added a new dimension to the nature of the _____.

(Kingdom)

Verse 7.—Luke records the question of the disciples concerning the restoration of the Kingdom to Israel as the beginning of the story of Acts. The Pharisees had asked previously a similar question. Jesus had answered them by stating, “The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within «among» you” (Luke 17:20f.). The Kingdom of God would not come with signs which could be observed. The disciples were not to be deceived by those who claimed to be messiahs who would establish a political kingdom.

Jesus gave a two-fold answer to the question of the disciples: (1) the Kingdom will not come according to a fixed calendar which the Father reveals to the disciples; and (2) the disciples are to witness in the power of the Holy Spirit. Since Jesus was speaking concerning the Kingdom of God (v. 3), apparently He intended for the disciples to understand that it would come through their witnessing. God’s Kingdom expands on earth as men respond to the preaching of the Gospel by submitting to the King through faith.

Verse 8.—The earthly ministry of Jesus was performed in the power of the Kingdom. That same power would come to the disciples when the Holy Spirit had come upon them. They would be qualified to do the work of witnessing, not only to the Jews of Jerusalem and Judaea but also to the Samaritans and the Gentiles in all parts of the earth. Jesus concluded His teachings concerning the Kingdom of God with the promise of the Holy Spirit.

The ascension (1:9-11)

Verse 9.—The earthly life and ministry of Jesus had a definite beginning and ending. His earthly life which began in a manger ended, not on the Cross but on the Mount of Olives as a cloud received Him out of the disciples’ sight. The disciples may have concluded prematurely that His earthly ministry had ended with His death.

Verses 10 and 11.—The two men in white clothing informed the disciples that Jesus would make no more post-resurrection appearances. However, they were not to conclude that His ministry had ended with His ascension to heaven. They had been instructed already to continue His ministry in the power of the Holy Spirit. The two men informed the disciples that Jesus would come in just the same way as He had departed from them.

Luke has set forth clearly in verses 6-11 the essence of the story of the Kingdom as it will unfold in the Book of Acts. The disciples were to do the work of the Kingdom (witness) in the power of the Holy Spirit as they awaited the return of Jesus Christ. That work is to extend the Kingdom through witnessing unto the ends of the earth.

The nature of Jesus’ resurrection body is of speculative interest. Paul taught that the resurrected body is a spiritual body in contrast to a natural or flesh and blood body. Luke and John emphasize that Jesus was raised in the same body in which He was buried (cf. Luke 24:39; John 20:27ff.). Jesus joined the disciples on the way to Emmaus but was not recognized by them. He joined them for the evening meal (Luke 24:30). He appeared in the midst of the assembled disciples and ate a piece of broiled fish (Luke 24:36ff.). The spiritual nature of His body is emphasized by the conclusion of the disciples that he was a Spirit or Ghost (cf. Luke 24:37). Jesus indicated that His body was not a purely spiritual phenomenon since the nail scars were evident in His hands and feet and His body could be touched (Luke 24:39).

The story of Acts begins with the disciples’ question concerning the_____ of the Kingdom to Israel.

(restoration)

Write Jesus’ two-fold answer to the question of the disciples.

(Compare your answer with the text.)

The essence of the story of the Kingdom as it will unfold in Acts is set forth in verses_____ of the first chapter.

(6-11)

The work of the Kingdom is to witness to the_____ of the_____.

(ends, earth)

PART III: THE REPLACEMENT OF JUDAS

ACTS 1:12-26

The upper room (vv. 12-14)

Luke's Gospel identifies the place of ascension as Bethany, but Acts identifies it as Mount Olivet. Perhaps Luke made no distinction between Bethany and Mount Olivet. He describes the distance from Mount Olivet to Jerusalem as "a Sabbath day's journey" (approximately 3/5 mile). The statement may indicate also that the ascension took place on the Sabbath.

The "upper room" may have been the scene of the Last Supper. It has been suggested that it was at the house of Mary, the mother of John Mark, a meeting place for Christians in Jerusalem (cf. Acts 12:12). The eleven Apostles are named in verse 13.⁵ Except for Peter, John, and James, not one of them is mentioned again.

Luke notes that the Apostles obeyed the instructions of Jesus to wait for the coming of the Holy Spirit. They spent the time in prayer along with the women and the mother and brothers of Jesus. The women may have included Mary Magdalene, another Mary, Salome, Joanna, Susanna, and others.

Mary, the mother of Jesus, is mentioned nowhere else in Acts. She was highly esteemed as the mother of Jesus, but the Scriptures do not justify the special position given to her by the Catholic Church. The "brothers of the Lord" were obviously the sons of Mary. Mark 6:3 gives their names as James, Joses, Judas, and Simon. They seem to have questioned the rationality of Jesus before His death and resurrection. Their conversion probably came after His resurrection. Paul mentions the appearance of Jesus to James (1 Cor. 15:7) who apparently became a leader in the Jerusalem Church. The theory of some of the early Church Fathers that the brothers of the Lord were sons of Joseph by a former marriage is unsupported by historical evidence.

The fate of Judas (vv. 15-20)

Verse 15 gives evidence of Peter's leadership in the early Christian assembly. The group of 120 persons probably was composed of those who had come from Galilee to Jerusalem. Paul states that Jesus appeared to over 500 brethren in Galilee (1 Cor. 15:6). Since there were four million Jews in Palestine, the 120 disciples gave a ratio of less than one in thirty thousand. The future of the Kingdom did not depend on the strength of the disciples but on the power of God.

Three accounts are preserved concerning the death of Judas. Matthew 27:3-5 indicates that Judas committed suicide. After Jesus was captured and brought before Pilate, Judas expressed sorrow for his deed by returning the thirty pieces of silver to the priests and admitting that he had betrayed innocent blood. After Judas hanged himself, the priests decided that the blood money could be used lawfully to purchase a field to use as a cemetery for strangers.

The second century Church Father Papias asserted that Judas swelled up and was crushed in a narrow street by a wagon. Luke in Acts indicates that Judas himself acquired a field with the price of his evil deed. Luke does not deny nor mention that Judas hanged himself. He does state that he fell and burst open. Because his inner organs and blood gushed out, the property he purchased became known as the "field of blood."

⁵ Other lists of the Apostles are found in Mark 3:16-19; Matt. 10:2-4; and Luke 6:13-16.

According to Acts, the place of ascension was _____.

The "upper room" may have been in the house of _____, John Mark's mother, a meeting place for _____ in _____.
(Mary, Christians, Jerusalem)

The Apostles waited for the coming of the _____. While they waited, they _____.
(Holy Spirit, prayed)

Who was the leader of the early Church?

(Peter)

Matthew says Judas committed _____.
(suicide)

Luke says Judas _____ and _____ open.
(fell, burst)

The selection of Matthias (vv. 21-26)

The interpretation of Psalm 109:8 caused the early Church to select Matthias to replace Judas. The nature of the office and function of the Apostles prevented the apostolate from being transferable. T. W. Manson has pointed out that the Hebrew equivalent of the Greek *apostolos* is *shaliach* (to send). The emphasis is on the sender rather than the one sent. The sender could commission the one sent as his representative, but the commission could not be transferred to another.⁶ Psalm 109:8 was interpreted to mean that God would commission another man to take the office of the traitor; however, when James was put to death by Herod some thirteen years later, no person was selected to replace him (cf. Acts 12).

The qualifications of the one selected to replace Judas reveals the nature of the apostolic function. He was required to have been with Jesus from the time of His baptism until His death, and he must have witnessed a resurrection appearance. The special functions of the Apostles were to give an account of the activities and teachings of Jesus and to be able to give evidence that Jesus is the living Lord as a result of His resurrection. The written accounts of the Gospels later replaced the living word of the Apostles concerning the activities and teachings of Jesus.

Although Jesus had appeared to more than 500 men in Galilee, only two qualified to replace Judas. At a later date, the Apostle Paul received a special commission in a vision of the resurrected Lord. He was commissioned to represent Jesus before the Gentiles.

The selection procedure reveals the business procedure of the early Church. Although Peter was the leader, he had no special authority; therefore, he did not appoint a successor to Judas. Peter was speaking to the 120 when he explained the qualifications for the successor of Judas. Apparently the group decided which men were qualified ("and they put forward two men"). They looked to the Lord to make the selection between the two. The casting of lots may have followed the Jewish tradition of writing names on stones, putting them in a vessel, and shaking the vessel until one of the stones fell out. The stone which first fell from the vessel was not by chance but by the direction of God. Three factors involved in early church business procedures were—

1. the interpretation or understanding of Scripture determined the action to be taken;
2. the participation of all the believers in the transaction;
3. the determination of the will of God through prayer.

Maintaining the number 12 for the leadership of the early Church may have symbolized that the Church was the new Israel. According to the Mishnah, the number of offices open for leadership within the congregation was one-tenth of the membership. The congregation consisted of 120.⁷ It is interesting to note that before Pentecost, the disciples depended on the casting of lots for divine guidance. After Pentecost, the believers became the community of the Holy Spirit who gave to them divine guidance.

⁶ *The Church's Ministry* (London: Hodder and Stoughton Ltd., 1948), pp. 31ff.

⁷ Cf. T. C. Smith, *Acts, The Broadman Bible Commentary*, Vol. X (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1970), p. 23.

List three requirements for Apostleship.

(Compare your answer with the text.)

The order of Matthias' selection was:

1. Peter explained the _____
for Judas' successor.
2. The group decided which men _____.
3. They prayed for _____ in the selection.
4. The group cast _____.

(qualifications, qualified, guidance, lots)

List the factors involved in early church business procedures.

(Compare your answer with the text.)

Home Study Assignment

Basic study (Levels 1, 2, and 3). After reading the study guide text, answer the following questions.

1. How does Acts relate to the Gospels and the Epistles? _____

2. Why is "Acts of the Apostles" not a correct title? _____

3. Give three facts about Luke: (1) _____ (2) _____
_____ (3) _____
4. Why is the date of the writing of Acts set after A.D. 62 and before A.D. 65? _____

5. List four purposes which have been suggested for Acts. (1) _____
_____ (2) _____
(3) _____ (4) _____
6. Who was Theophilus? _____

7. According to Acts 1:2, how does Acts relate to Luke's Gospel? _____

8. Give two purposes of Jesus' post-resurrection appearances. (1) _____
_____ (2) _____

9. What answers did Jesus give to the question concerning the restoration of the Kingdom to Israel?
(1) _____
(2) _____
10. State the teaching set forth in Acts 1:6-11. _____

11. How does Luke's Gospel differ from Matthew's concerning the fate of Judas? _____

12. List the requirements for Apostleship. (1) _____
(2) _____
(3) _____
13. Name three factors involved in early church business procedures.
(1) _____
(2) _____
(3) _____

Supplementary activities (Levels 2 and 3):

1. Name the reasons some have given for rejecting Lucan authorship of Acts.
2. Suggest the disciples' concept of the Kingdom which caused them to ask the question in Acts 1:6.
3. Explain the relation of "the promise of the Father," the "filling with the Holy Spirit," and the "baptism with the Holy Spirit."

Advanced activities (Level 3):

1. Read pages 1-34 in *The Book of Acts*, by Frank Stagg.
 2. Establish the date for Acts and give reasons to support that date.
 3. What does Frank Stagg consider to be the primary purpose of Acts?
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Seminar Discussion

1. What do you consider to be the purpose of Acts?
2. At what point does the fulfilment in Acts 1 parallel the prediction of Daniel 7?
3. What do the requirements of Apostles in Acts 1:21-26 suggest their unique role to have been?