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Article 44: Acts at a Glance

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ACTS AT A GLANCE

This book records the origin and early days of the church, emphasizing the ministries of Peter, Stephen, Philip, and Paul. It begins with the ascension of Jesus from Mt. Olivet near Jerusalem and concludes with the imprisonment of Paul in Rome.

BOTTOM LINE INTRODUCTION

THE BIRTH OF THE BRIDE, A TREMENDOUS TALE OF GROWING, GLOWING, AND GOING FOR GOD

Having recorded the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus in the Gospel bearing his name, Luke now told of the works of the risen, ascended, and glorified Christ through his church. Acts shows the dramatic spread of Christianity from Jerusalem to Judea, to Samaria, to Rome, and "to the ends of the earth" (1:8).

FACTS REGARDING THE AUTHOR OF THIS BOOK

1. Who? **Luke.** He was a Gentile physician (Col. 4:14) who served as Paul's faithful traveling companion (2 Tim. 4:11).
2. What? The books of Luke and Acts.
3. When and where?
 - a. Luke: 59 A.D., from Rome
 - b. Acts: 60 A.D., from Rome
4. Why?
 - a. Luke: To present Christ as the perfect man.
 - b. Acts: To record the activities of the early church.
5. To whom? (Specifically, both books were written to Theophilus. See Lk. 1:3; Acts 1:1)
 - a. Luke: To the Greeks.
 - b. Acts: To the early church believers.

KEY EVENTS (WITH CHAPTER REFERENCE)

1. Ascension of Jesus; Matthias chosen to replace Judas
2. Pentecost; Peter's first sermon; conversion of 3000 individuals
3. Healing of the lame man at the Beautiful Gate; Peter's second sermon
4. Converts now include 5000 men; testimony of Peter and John before the Sanhedrin; praying, praising, and sharing in the early church
5. Deaths of Ananias and Sapphira; miracles wrought by the apostles; imprisoned apostles supernaturally freed
6. Selection of the first deacons; ministry and arrest of Stephen
7. Stephen's address before and condemnation of the Sanhedrin; stoning of Stephen; first reference to Saul of Tarsus

8. Persecution of believers by Saul; Philip's revival crusade in Samaria; Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch
9. Conversion and early ministry of Saul; healing of Aeneas and raising of Dorcas from the dead by Peter
10. Conversion of Cornelius at Caesarea
11. Peter's vindication of his ministry to the Gentiles before some hostile Jews; Barnabas' ministry to the new church in Antioch; Agabus' prophecy in regards to a coming famine in Judea
12. Martyrdom of James the apostle; release of Peter; Herod Agrippa's death caused by his blasphemy
13. First missionary trip begun by Paul and Barnabas; Paul's first recorded miracle (the blinding of Elymas), and sermon; defection of John Mark
14. Healing of a cripple and stoning of Paul at Lystra; end of first missionary trip
15. The Jerusalem council; disagreement between Paul and Barnabas; beginning of second missionary trip by Paul and Silas
16. Timothy and Luke join Paul and Silas; Paul's Macedonian vision; conversions of Lydia, demon-possessed girl and Philippian jailor at Philippi
17. Paul's ministry (resulting in revivals and riots) in Thessalonica and Berea; his sermon on the unknown God in Athens
18. Founding of the church in Corinth; end of the second missionary journey
19. Conversion of John the Baptist's twelve disciples in Ephesus; riot against believers by worshippers of the goddess Diana
20. Raising of Eutychus from the dead at Troas; Paul's meeting with and exhortation to the Ephesian elders at Miletus
21. Paul is forbidden by the Holy Spirit to go to Jerusalem; He meets with Philip the evangelist at Caesarea; end of the third missionary trip; Paul takes a religious vow in Jerusalem, is then set upon by the Jewish leaders and rescued by the Roman soldiers
22. Paul attempts to defend his ministry before an angry Jewish mob and once again is rescued by the Roman soldiers
23. Paul speaks before the Jewish Sanhedrin and for the third time is rescued by the Roman soldiers; he is then removed by night to Caesarea
24. Paul's defense before Roman Governor Felix at Caesarea
25. Paul appeals his case to Caesar; Festus, the new Roman governor recounts Paul's case to visiting King Agrippa
26. Paul's defense before Festus and Agrippa
27. Paul's stormy trip en route to Rome; divine intervention allows all on board the sinking ship to safely reach the Isle of Melita
28. Paul survives a viper's bite; he heals the father of Publius, governor of the island; Paul arrives at Rome and witnesses to the Jews there

KEY INDIVIDUALS

1. **Luke**, medical doctor who authored the New Testament books of Luke and Acts, and accompanied Paul on several of his missionary trips
2. **Theophilus**, Luke's friend and the recipient of the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts

3. **Peter**, leader of the apostles, who conducted the business meeting in the Upper Room just prior to Pentecost and who would later write First and Second Peter
4. **Matthias**, man who was selected to take the place of the fallen Judas Iscariot
5. **John the apostle**, brother of James and author of five New Testament books who teamed up with Peter in the early days of the church
6. **Annas and Caiaphas**, wicked ex-High Priest and High Priest who attempted (unsuccessfully) to keep the apostles from preaching the resurrection of Jesus
7. **Lame man from his birth**, healed in the name of Jesus by Peter and John at the temple gate called Beautiful
8. **Ananias and Sapphira**, dishonest church couple who were killed by God for lying to Peter concerning some money they had falsely claimed to have given to the Lord
9. **Barnabas**, uncle to John Mark, generous contributor to the Jerusalem church and Paul's companion during the first missionary trip
10. **Gamaliel**, respected Jewish lawyer who warned the Pharisees to refrain from persecuting followers of the Christian faith lest they fight against God Himself
11. **Stephen**, one of the first deacons and future evangelist who was stoned to death for his fearless preaching, thus becoming the first Christian martyr
12. **Philip**, one of the first deacons and future evangelist who conducted a great revival in Samaria and later led the Ethiopian eunuch to Jesus
13. **Simon the sorcerer**, false prophet in Samaria who attempted to buy the power of the Holy Spirit from Peter, only to be soundly condemned by the apostle for this
14. **Ethiopian eunuch**, royal treasurer of Ethiopia who was led to Jesus and baptized by Philip in the desert of Gaza
15. **Saul of Tarsus**, persecutor of Christians who was converted to Christ en route to Damascus and would later become one of the most fruitful believers of all time
16. **Aeneas**, crippled man, confined to his bed for 8 years whom Peter healed at Lydda
17. **Dorcas (also called Tabitha)**, godly widow raised from the dead at her own funeral by Peter at Joppa
18. **Cornelius**, Roman centurion led to Jesus by Peter at Caesarea
19. **Agabus**, a prophet in the early days of the church who predicted a famine in the land of Judea, and also later warned Paul that he would suffer imprisonment if he went to Jerusalem
20. **Herod Agrippa**, wicked grandson of Herod the Great who murdered James the apostle and was himself executed by God for blasphemy
21. **James the apostle**, brother of John and first apostle to suffer martyrdom, killed by Herod Agrippa
22. **Rhoda**, a girl whose glad report that Simon Peter had been freed from prison and was outside the door was at first ridiculed by those inside praying for his release
23. **Elymas (also called Bar-jesus)**, a demon-possessed sorcerer who attempted to prevent Sergius Paulus, Roman proconsul of the Isle of Cyprus from accepting Christ, but was temporarily blinded by Paul for this
24. **Sergius Paulus**, Roman proconsul on Cyprus who was led to Jesus by Paul and Barnabas
25. **John Mark**, nephew of Barnabas who forsook both him and Paul during their first missionary journey

26. **Crippled man at Lystra**, healed by Paul who was subsequently stoned and left for dead for doing this by an angry mob
27. **James the half brother of Jesus**, pastor of the Jerusalem church and author of the Book of James
28. **Silas**, Paul's companion during his second missionary trip
29. **Timothy**, son of the godly Eunice and grandson of Lois (2 Tim. 1:5) who joined Paul and Barnabas at Lystra
30. **Lydia**, business woman from Thyatira whom Paul led to Christ during a prayer meeting at Philippi
31. **Demoniac girl**, led to Jesus by Saul at Philippi
32. **Philippian jailor**, Roman official at Philippi who beat and imprisoned Paul and Silas but who was later led to Jesus following an earthquake
33. **Epicureans and Stoics**, philosophers who heard and ridiculed Paul's sermon on the unknown God in Athens
34. **Aquila and Priscilla**, godly husband and wife team who, like Paul, were tent makers and would later offer much spiritual service to the great apostle
35. **Gallio**, indifferent Roman proconsul at Corinth who refused to hear the Jewish leaders' false charges against Paul
36. **Apollos**, eloquent and powerful Jewish preacher from Alexandria, Egypt, to whom Aquila and Priscilla served as Bible instructors while he was at Ephesus
37. **Twelve disciples of John the Baptist**, whom Paul baptized at Ephesus
38. **Sceva**, Jewish priest at Ephesus whose seven sons while attempting to cast out a demon were themselves viciously assaulted by this evil spirit
39. **Demetrius**, a silversmith in Ephesus who stirred up a riot against Paul whose preaching had harmed his craft of making and selling silver shrines of the Greek goddess Diana (also called Artemis)
40. **Eutychus**, young man raised from the dead resulting from a fall at Troas by the apostle Paul
41. **Roman commander in Jerusalem**, who rescued Paul from certain death on several occasions from a furious Jewish mob
42. **Paul's nephew**, who overheard a plot by 40 Jewish men to kill his uncle but prevented this by reporting it to the Roman officials
43. **Felix**, Roman governor at Caesarea who trembled upon hearing Paul's sermon on coming judgment
44. **Tertullus**, a Jewish lawyer who attempted to convict Paul before Felix the Roman governor in Caesarea
45. **Festus**, Roman governor who succeeded Felix at Caesarea who also heard the preaching of the imprisoned Paul
46. **King Agrippa**, Jewish ruler who permitted Paul to relate his conversion story and may have been at the point of accepting Christ himself
47. **Julius**, Roman centurion who showed Paul kindness during the first part of the ship's journey to Rome
48. **Publius**, governor of the Isle of Melita whose father Paul healed of a fever and dysentery

KEY PLACES

1. **Mt. of Olives:** a height east of Jerusalem, overlooking the Holy City, where Jesus gave His final instructions to the disciples and then ascended into heaven
2. **Jerusalem:** capital city of Israel and the place where the church was born and where Paul would be arrested at the end of his third missionary trip
3. **Akeldama:** literally, "field of blood," bought by the Jewish priests with the blood money returned to them by the traitor Judas, as referred to by Simon Peter in the Upper Room just prior to Pentecost
4. **Beautiful Gate:** probable gate leading into the court of the women in Herod's Temple where Peter and John healed a lame man
5. **Solomon's Porch:** a colonnade near the Beautiful Gate where Peter preached his second sermon following the healing of the lame man
6. **Samaria:** city north of Jerusalem where Philip the evangelist conducted a great revival meeting
7. **Gaza desert:** area in the Sinai where Philip led the Ethiopian Eunuch to Jesus
8. **Damascus:** capital city of Syria near where Saul of Tarsus met Jesus and in which city he was baptized by Ananias
9. **Lydda:** city where Peter healed a paralyzed and bedridden man named Aeneas
10. **Joppa:** city where Peter raised a godly believer named Dorcas (also known as Tabitha) from the dead at her own funeral! Peter would also later receive his sheet vision in Joppa.
11. **Caesarea:** coastal city where Peter met and led to Christ a Gentile military officer named Cornelius. Paul would later meet up with Philip the evangelist in this city and would eventually spend two years in prison.
12. **Antioch in Syria:** city where believers were first called Christians and the origin of Paul's first three missionary journeys
13. **Cyprus:** a large island in the Mediterranean, visited by Paul at the beginning of his first missionary trip where he led the governor of that island to Christ (Sergius Paulus).
14. **Antioch in Pisidia:** a Roman colony visited by Paul during his first missionary trip and the place where he preached his first recorded sermon
15. **Iconium:** a town in Asia Minor where Paul led many to Jesus during his first missionary trip
16. **Lystra:** a town in Asia Minor where Paul was stoned and left for dead after healing a cripple who had never walked
17. **Derbe:** a town in Asia Minor where Paul preached during his first missionary trip
18. **Troas:** a city in Asia Minor where Paul received his Macedonian vision and where he would later raise a young man named Eutychus from the dead
19. **Philippi:** a chief city in Macedonia where Paul led three notable converts to Jesus, namely, a business woman named Lydia, a demon possessed girl, and a Philippian jailor
20. **Thessalonica:** a city in Macedonia where Paul preached in during his second missionary trip which caused a riot and which church in that city would later receive two epistles from the apostle – First and Second Thessalonians
21. **Berea:** a city in Macedonia where Paul met and taught some diligent Bible students

22. **Athens:** intellectual center of the ancient world, where Paul preached his famous sermon entitled, "To the Unknown God."
23. **Corinth:** capital city of the Roman province of Achaia, where Paul would spend 18 months, meeting two fellow tent makers, Aquila and Priscilla. Later he would write two epistles to the church in Corinth (1 and 2 Corinthians).
24. **Ephesus:** capital city of the Roman province of Asia where Aquila and Priscilla helped Apollos understand the scriptures and where Paul would conduct a great revival, baptizing many believers, including 12 original apostles of John the Baptist.
25. **Miletus:** a seaport of Asia Minor where Paul met and ministered to some elders from the church at Ephesus.
26. **Tyre:** coastal city where Paul spent seven days during the end of his third missionary trip, there meeting some believers who knelt and prayed for him
27. **Fair Havens:** a harbor on the south coast of Crete where the captain of the ship ignored the warnings of his prisoner Paul and eventually sailed into a vicious winter storm
28. **Malta (Melita):** an island in the Mediterranean on which Paul was shipwrecked, where he was unharmed by the bite of a deadly snake, and where he healed the father of Publius, governor of the island
29. **Rome:** political capital of the ancient world and of the mighty Roman Empire, where Paul would be imprisoned for two years

UNIQUE FEATURES

1. The book of Acts is the true story relating the first 30 years of the early church. In many ways it is the high mark of Christian witness.
2. It is the supreme missionary document.
3. Acts is the second longest New Testament book.
4. The action centers around two great "crusades;" the Greater Jerusalem Crusade (Acts 1-12) headed up by Peter, and the Global Crusade (Acts 13-28), led by Paul.
5. The associates involved in their campaigns were John the apostle, Stephen, Philip, Barnabas, Silas, Timothy, and Luke.
6. The book of Acts is in reality a fulfillment of Jn. 15:26-27. *"But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me: And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning."*
Believers were first called Christians during this time (11:26).
7. The preaching of the gospel is viciously attacked by the devil when he attempted to:
 - a. Ban it—The Jewish religious leaders (4:18; 5:28)
 - b. Buy it—Simon the sorcerer (8:9-11, 18-19)
 - c. Bury it—Saul of Tarsus (9:1-2)
 - d. Bridle it—The legalists (15:1)
 - e. Blur it—The demon-possessed girl (16:16-18)
 - f. Belittle it—The Stoics and Epicureans (17:18-21, 32)
 - g. Blaspheme it—Demetrius the silversmith (19:24-34)
8. Both angels and demons are seen in action. An angel protects an apostle

- (Peter, 12:7-8) and plagues a king (Herod, 12:23). Demons possess sorcerers (8:9; 13:6-10), damsels (16:16-18), and vagabonds (19:13-16).
9. Both revivals (19:18-20) and riots break out (19:28-34).
 10. The book of Acts lists three significant conversions.
 - a. The eunuch (8:36-38), a descendant of Ham (Gen. 10:6-20)
 - b. Saul (9:1-6), a descendant of Shem (Gen. 10:21-31)
 - c. Cornelius (10:44-48) a descendant of Japheth (Gen. 10:2-5). The convert number jumps from 120 (1:15) to 3,120 (2:41), to 8,120 (4:4), to untold multitudes (5:14).
 11. Acts provides for us the final two of five of the most famous New Testament sermons.
 - a. The Sermon on the Mount (Mt. 5-7)
 - b. The sermon on the kingdom of heaven (Mt. 13)
 - c. The sermon on the second coming (Mt. 24-25)
 - d. The sermon at Pentecost (Acts 2)
 - e. The sermon on Mars Hill (Acts 17)
 12. In fact, an outstanding feature of the book of Acts is the number of speeches and sermons. No less than 24 messages are found in its 28 chapters.
 - a. Peter delivers 9 (Acts 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 10, 11, 15)
 - b. Paul delivers 9 (13, 14, 17, 20, 22, 24, 26, 27, 28)
 - c. Gamaliel delivers one (5)
 - d. Stephen delivers one (7)
 - e. James delivers one (15)
 - f. Demetrius delivers one (19)
 - g. A town clerk delivers one (19)
 - h. Festus delivers one (25)
 13. The Holy Spirit is mentioned fifty plus times in Acts. The first is in 1:2, and the final, 28:25.
 14. Acts provides the background for ten of Paul's epistles
 - a. 1 and 2 Thessalonians
 - b. 1 and 2 Corinthians
 - c. Romans
 - d. Galatians
 - e. Colossians, Philippians, Ephesians, and Philemon
 15. Acts records the wisest advice from an unsaved man in the entire Bible (5:33-40)
 16. It gives us the most detailed review of Old Testament events in the New Testament (chapters 7, 13)
 17. The book opens with Peter preaching in Jerusalem, the Jewish religious capital, and ends with Paul preaching in Rome, the Gentile political capital (2:14; 28:31). Paul preached before *prison keepers* (16:25-34), *philosophers* (17:16-31), *Pharisees* (23:6), and *potentates* (24:24-25; 26:24-28).
 18. The ministry of prayer plays an all-important role in Acts.
 - a. The prayers of the apostles
 - (1) In the Upper Room (1:14, 24)
 - (2) Following Pentecost (2:42)
 - (3) In the hour of persecution (4:23-30)
 - (4) Upon ordaining the deacons (6:6)
 - b. The prayers of Peter and John

- (1) In the temple (3:1)
 - (2) At Samaria (8:15)
 - c. The prayers of Peter
 - (1) At Joppa, at the raising of Dorcas (9:40)
 - (2) At Joppa, resulting in his vessel vision (10:9)
 - d. The prayer of Cornelius at Caesarea (10:4)
 - e. The prayer of the Jerusalem church for Peter (12:12)
 - f. The prayer of the Antioch church upon ordaining Saul and Barnabas (13:3)
 - g. The prayers of Paul and Barnabas for the churches founded during their missionary journey (14:23)
 - h. The prayers of Paul and Silas
 - (1) At Philippi, by a riverside (16:13)
 - (2) At Philippi, inside a prison (16:25)
 - i. The prayers of Paul
 - (1) In Damascus following his conversion (9:11)
 - (2) In Jerusalem (22:17)
 - (3) In Miletus (20:36)
 - (4) In Tyre (21:5)
 - (5) On the Isle of Melita (28:8)
19. Acts lists two of nine famous biblical teams.
- a. Moses and Aaron (Ex. 5:1)
 - b. Joshua and Caleb (Num. 14:6-9)
 - c. Elijah and Elisha (1 Kings 19:19-21)
 - d. Zerubbabel and Joshua (Ezra 3:2)
 - e. Haggai and Zechariah (Ezra 5:1)
 - f. Ezra and Nehemiah (Neh. 8:9)
 - g. Peter and John (Lk. 22:7; Acts 3:1)
 - h. Paul and Barnabas/Silas (Acts 13:2; 15:40)
 - i. Elijah and possibly Moses (Rev. 11:3-12)
20. It is a bridge book which spans the gap between the Gospel accounts and the epistles
21. It records the only biblical instance of a believer experiencing no harm after being bitten by a poisonous viper (28:3-6)
22. First biblical events as found in Acts
- a. First of two occasions where the ascended Savior is pictured as standing (Acts 7:55, 56; Rev. 1:10-16)
 - b. First example of tongue speaking (2:1-4)
 - c. First official religious and political persecution of believers (4:3, 18; 5:17-18, 40)
 - d. First practice of commonism (2:44-47). Note: This is a far cry from communism. The first says, "What is mine is thine," while the second says, "What is thine is mine."
 - e. First example of sin unto death (5:1-11)
 - f. First church election of deacons (6:5-6)
 - g. First Christian martyr—Stephen (7:59)
 - h. First apostolic martyr—James (12:2)
 - i. First view of the ascended Savior (7:55-56)
 - j. First missionary journey (13:2-4)

23. Final biblical events as found in Acts
 - a. Final appearance of God's glory cloud (1:9)
 - b. Final mention of Mary (1:14)
 - c. Final listing of the 12 apostles (1:13)
 - d. Final casting of lots (1:26)
 - e. Final two of eight resurrections from the dead as recorded in the Bible (Dorcas, 9:36-42; Eutychus (20:7-10)
24. Three of the greatest evangelistic meetings in the New Testament were conducted in Acts.
 - a. The meeting at Pentecost (2:41)
 - b. The meeting in Samaria (8:5-8)
 - c. The meeting in Ephesus (19:18-20)
25. Acts 10 is the greatest example showing how God arranges those circumstances to bring together a seeking sinner and a soul winner.
26. Acts 12 gives us the most dramatic New Testament account of an angel ministering to a believer.
27. Acts 15 describes the most important church council ever held.
28. Acts 16 records the most important New Testament vision (vv. 9, 10).
29. Acts 16 presents the most dramatic conversion of a Gentile in the Bible (vv. 22-34).
30. Acts 20 records for us the most touching farewell address in the New Testament.
31. Acts 24:25 records one of the saddest responses to the gospel message in the Bible. Compare with Lk. 18:23.
32. Acts 27 describes possibly the most severe ocean storm since the great flood.
33. Acts can be called a tale of three cities, as it traces the spread of Christianity from Jerusalem to Rome through Antioch of Syria.
34. It can also be called a tale of three continents—Africa, Asia, and Europe.

COMPARISON WITH OTHER BIBLE BOOKS

1. **Jonah:**

Both books record the call of God in the lives of two Jews whose ministry was to evangelize Gentiles

- Jonah (1:2; 3:1, 2)
- Paul (Acts 9:15)

2. **Luke:**

- Both were written by the same author, Luke.
- Both were written to the same individual, Theophilus.
- Luke is the longest New Testament book.
- Acts is the second longest New Testament book.
- Luke records the birth of the Son of God.
- Acts records the birth of the Church of God.
- Luke tells us what the Father began to do through the body of his Son (the Savior).

- Acts tells us what the Father continued to do through the body of his Spirit (the saints).

3. **Genesis 11:**

- In Gen. 11 human language was confused by God.
- In Acts 2 human language was clarified by God.
- In Gen. 11 the builders are seen working for human glory.
- In Acts 2 the believers are seen waiting for God's glory.

4. **Matthew, Mark, Luke, John:**

The last chapter of each gospel may be compared with the first chapter of Acts.

- Matthew refers to Jesus' resurrection, as does Acts (Mt. 28:5-7; Acts 1:3)
- Mark refers to Jesus' ascension, as does Acts (Mk. 16:19; Acts 1:9)
- Luke refers to Jesus' promise of the Holy Spirit, as does Acts (Lk. 24:49; Acts 1:8)
- John refers to Jesus' second coming, as does Acts (Jn. 21:22; Acts 1:10, 11)

5. **Matthew, Mark, and Luke:**

- In Acts the door of faith is opened to Jews, Romans and Greeks. The three synoptic Gospels opened the door of faith to:
 Jews (Matthew)
 Romans (Mark)
 Greeks (Luke)

TITLES FOR AND TYPES OF JESUS

1. Jesus (1:1)
2. Lord (1:6)
3. Lord Jesus (1:21)
4. Jesus of Nazareth (2:22)
5. Lord and Christ (2:36)
6. The Holy and Just One (3:14)
7. The Prince of Life (3:15)
8. A prophet (3:22)
9. The rejected cornerstone (4:11)
10. The holy child Jesus (4:27)
11. Prince and Savior (5:31)
12. Son of man (7:56)
13. Son of God (8:37)
14. Lord of all (10:36)
15. Judge of the living and dead (10:42)
16. Lord Jesus Christ (11:17)
17. The Just One (22:14)