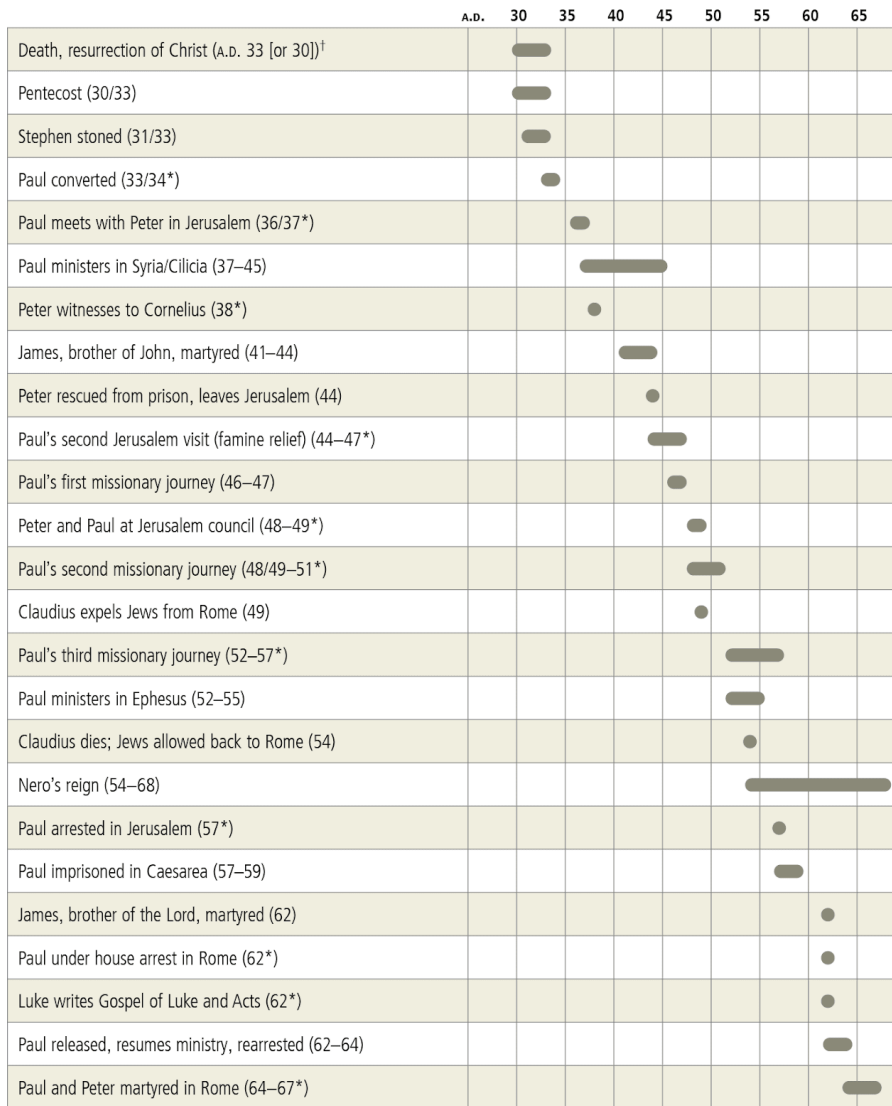


Timeline of Acts¹



* denotes approximate date; / signifies either/or; † see *The Date of Jesus' Crucifixion*, pp. 1809-1810

Next week: An Introduction to Paul and His Letters

¹ From the *ESV Study Bible*, "Introduction to Acts."

New Testament Survey

Class 8: Acts

When you think of Acts, what comes to mind? What is most important about the book?

Author and Date

Luke wrote this book sometime after 62 AD (the last recorded event, Acts 28:30). Luke was a physician (Col 4:14) and co-worker of Paul (Philemon 24) who was with him through the end of Paul's life and ministry (2 Tim 4:11). The author of Acts recounts his experiences with Paul, using first-person narrative, beginning at 16:10-17 and in three other sections (20:6-15; 21:1-18; 27:1-28:16). Paul's letters to the Colossians and to Philemon include greetings from Luke, and appear to have been written during his Roman imprisonment, when the author of Acts was with Paul (Acts 28). The fact that the author of Acts never refers to Luke by name, although he was such an important colleague of Paul's, is striking and adds weight to the conclusion that Luke is the missing link. Early Christian writers also identified Luke as the author of Acts (e.g., Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 3.14.1; Eusebius, *Church History*, 3.4.7).

Purpose

Acts is the earliest book of church history. It recounts the people, places, and events that shaped the history of the followers of Jesus.

Summary

The message about Jesus's resurrection continually advanced as the witnesses invited increasingly broad circles of people to put their trust in Jesus.

What is the basic outline of the book?

Geographic advance of the witnesses (Acts 1:8): from Jerusalem (Acts 1-7), to Judea and Samaria (Acts 8-12) and the ends of the earth (Acts 13-28)

What themes does Luke emphasize?

- The centrality of Jesus's resurrection (2:24-32; 3:15, 26; 4:10, 33; 5:30; 10:40-41; 13:30-31, 33-37; 17:3, 18, 31-32; 23:6; 24:15, 21; 25:19; 26:8, 15-16, 22-23²)
- "The increase of the word" (Acts 6:7; 12:24; 13:49; 19:20)
- Gentile mission: Samaritans (Acts 8:1-17), Ethiopians (8:26-39); a Roman (10:1-48), and Greek-speaking Gentiles (11:19-21, etc.)
- Numerical growth of the church (Acts 1:15; 2:41; 4:4; 6:1; then persecution changes the dynamic!)
- From Peter (Acts 1 - 15:21, then never mentioned again!) to Paul (not introduced until 7:58). They had different target audiences (Acts 9:15; cf. Gal 2:7-9), but the same message (e.g., Acts 13:38-39; 15:7-11).
- The challenge of the Jewish/Gentile issue is highlighted by the longest speech (Acts 7) and longest narrative (Acts 10).

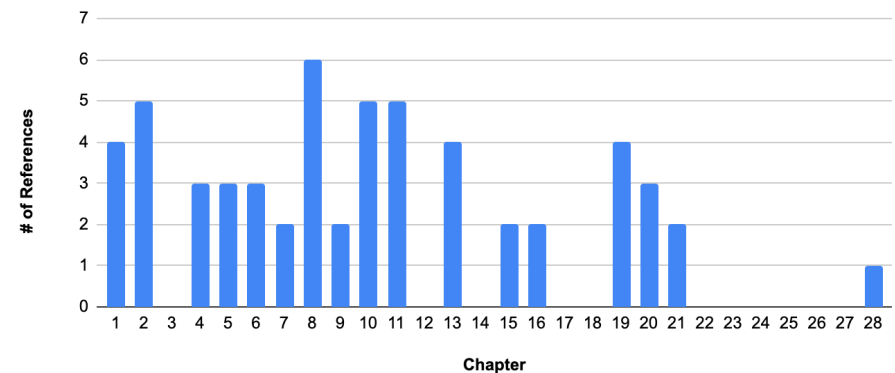
What is the heart of the message?

- Jesus is resurrected (see citations above) and now offers salvation from judgment and the forgiveness of sins
- God wants people to repent, believe in Jesus, and be baptized (2:38; 3:19-20; 8:12, 22; 10:43-48; 22:16)

The message about Jesus is fixed, but the method of proclamation is adaptable.

- The message is about Jesus: his identity, history, and mediating work.
- The proclamation took different forms. With Greeks, Paul reasoned from common sense theology (Acts 17:22-31) and quoted Greek philosophers and poets (v.28), while with Jews he recounted Jewish history and cited Hebrew Scripture (Acts 13:16-41).

References to the Holy Spirit in Acts



42x in chapters 1-14; 14x in chapters 15-28

The joy of following Jesus in the midst of suffering

- Persecution spreads the gospel and gives opportunity to honor Christ (Acts 7:56; 8:1 + 11:19-20)
- Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God (Acts 14:19-23)
- Faithfulness, betrayal, and deep friendships (Acts 20:17-38)
- Acts ends with Paul in jail (Acts 28). What does this teach us about loss? What does it remind us about from the teachings of Jesus?

² This list of references is from Mark Dever, *The Message of the NT*, p.128.