

## Acts Overview

### Authorship and date

Attributed to Luke, sometime after AD 70, before AD 90s, though some say between AD 62-64.

### Luke and chiastic structure:

*What question do the apostles ask Jesus in Acts 1, and how does he answer it?*

### Structure: the different expansions

#### Prologue: Acts 1 and 2, program and foundations

The person, the power, the program.  
See Acts 1:8.

#### Part 1: Acts 3 – 12, Christian mission to the JEWISH world (Peter)

1. The Jerusalem Church (3:1-6:7)
2. Expansion: Judea, Samaria, Galilee (6:8-9:31)
3. Further expansion: geographically and ethnically (9:32-12:24)

#### Parts 2: Acts 13 – 28, Christian mission to the GENTILE world (Paul)

4. Paul and the Gentiles (12:25-16:5)
5. Further Gentile penetration (16:6-19:20)
6. To Jerusalem and then Rome (19:21-28:31)

### Different 'panels' signalled by summaries:

Acts 2:42-47  
Acts 4:32-37  
Acts 5:12-16  
Acts 6:7  
Acts 9:31  
Acts 12:24  
Acts 16:5  
Acts 19:20  
Acts 28:30-31

*What different things are being highlighted in these summaries? Why?*

*What is significant about the way Luke ends Acts?*

## **Things to notice:**

### **The key to understanding each passage within that is:**

- To understand Luke's overall message or purpose.
- To understand where it fits in each subsection.
- To understand how the passage fits within the overall purpose.
- E.g. choosing Judas' successor in Acts 1:12-26

## **Purpose**

*'the triumph, the irresistible progress, of the word of God'* – Barrett

*'The Continuing Word and Works of Jesus by his Spirit through his Apostles'* – Stott's suggestion about the title.

Some helpful questions to ask would be:

- *What are the stakes here?*
- *What is being threatened and what are they trying to achieve?*
  - E.g. *how would you answer those questions differently from Acts 2, Acts 4 and Acts 15?*
- *What impact did the decisions and outcomes have on wider church?*

## **Application**

*What possible difficulties and dangers might there be in applying Acts?*  
*What kinds of questions do you come across in attempting to do so?*

*How much is normative?*

### **Good questions to ask:**

- *Is this something that happens in a consistent pattern in different contexts?*
- *Or do things vary from one context to another? (e.g. the coming of the Holy Spirit)*
- *Does Luke give clues about God's perspective on this? Is the behaviour blessed or punished?*
- *Can't be absolute if it leads to a contradiction in doctrine or practice (e.g. there are three different ways that leaders are appointed, so they can't all be absolute).*
- *Is it written as a command or a description? (Compare sharing of possessions with commands to repent in chapter 2).*
- *Is it reinforced in other parts of the NT?*
- *Rather than just asking: is this a command for the worldwide church? Ask instead, is this instructive, wise, encouraging?*