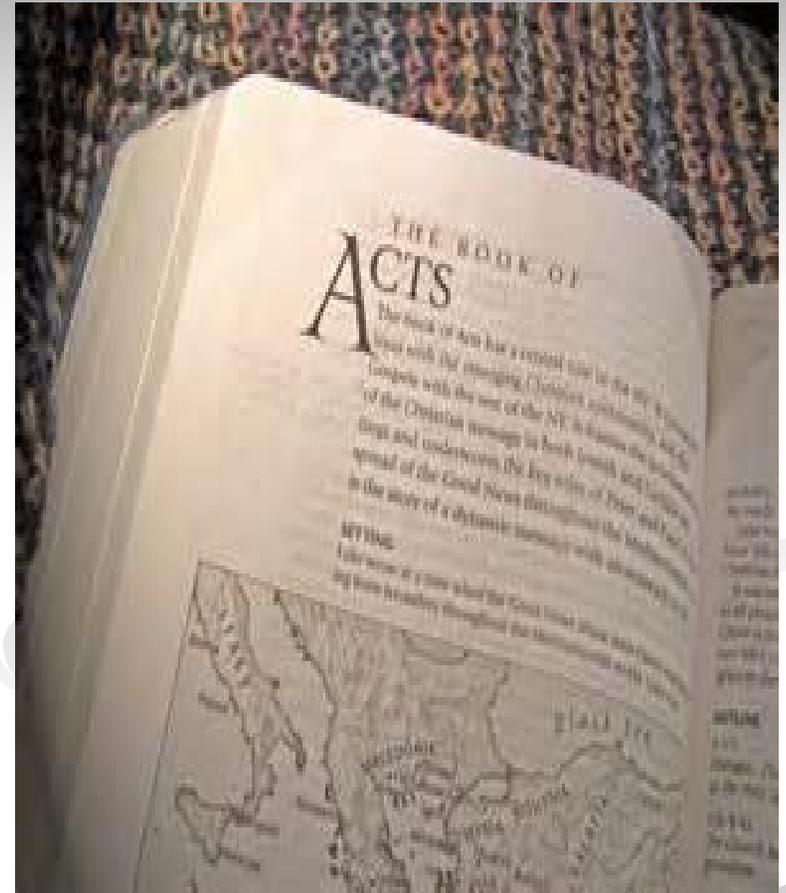


The Acts of the Apostles and Life in the Early Church

*Session 1
Introduction*



You can download this presentation at:

<http://www.ceorockford.org/adult-faith-formation/>

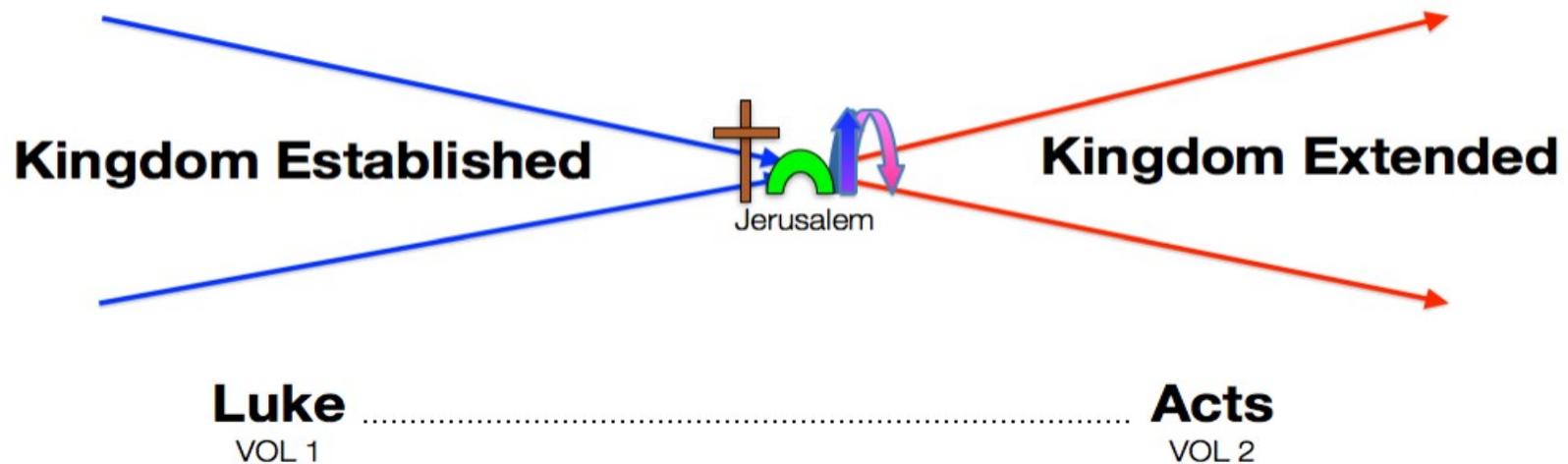
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“The book of Acts has everything but dinosaurs. It’s got earthquakes, shipwrecks, avenging angels, harrowing escapes, riots, murder plots, political intrigue, courtroom drama”

Mark Allen Powell, Introduction to the NT

Necessary Background

The General Shape/Structure of Luke-Acts



CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES



Luke's Prefaces

- Lk 1:1-4
- "...to write down an orderly sequence for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may realize the certainty of the teachings you have received."

- Acts 1:1-2
- "In the first book, Theophilus, I dealt with all that Jesus did and taught until the day he was taken up,..."

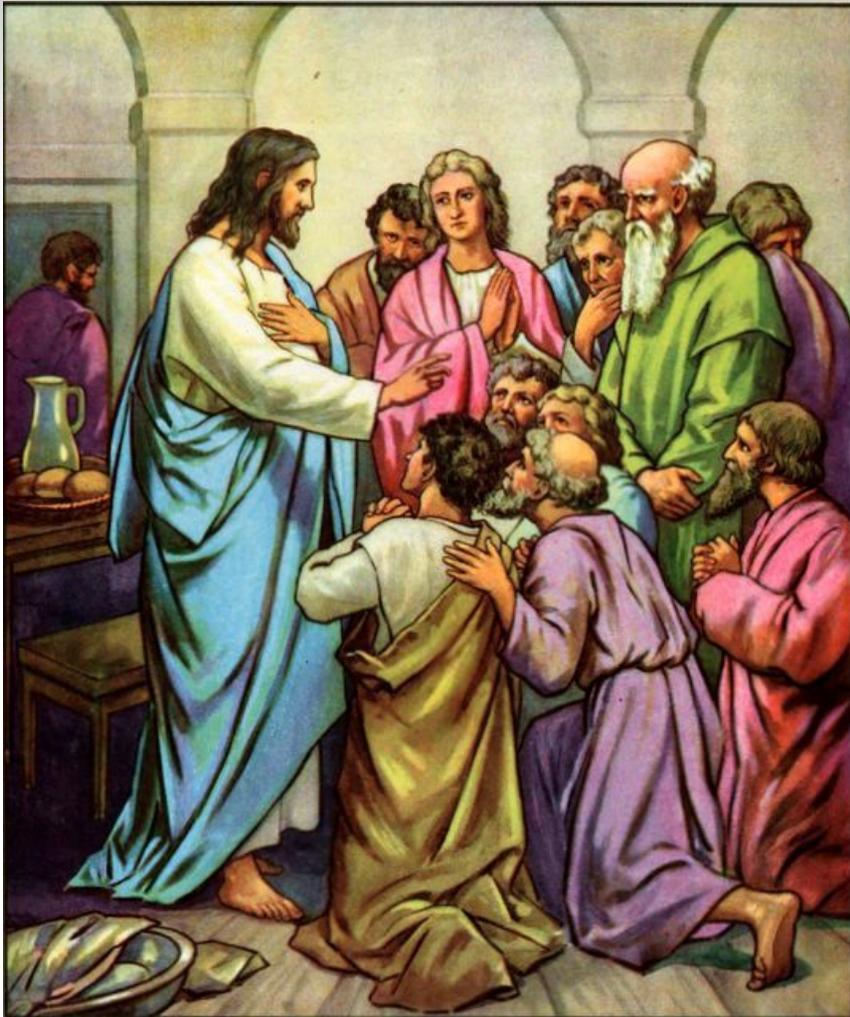
What kind of literature is Acts?

- A history of early Christian origins, but doesn't follow modern historical standards
- = More than merely chronicling events
- Luke's interpretation is theological, focusing on the work of the Holy Spirit in guiding the Church
- Discrepancies with Paul's letters
- Luke wants to show that Christianity is compatible with Roman world
- Dates to mid 80s

Authorship: Luke?

- Acts 16:10 – “we sought passage to Macedonia at once...” = “*we passages*”
- Colossians 4:14 – “Luke, the beloved physician sends greetings...”
- Philemon 24 – Epaphras, my fellow prisoner greets you, as well as Luke...”
- 2 Tim 4:11 – “Luke is the only one with me...”

Risen Jesus' Parting Words



“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” Acts 1:8

Geographical Structure of Acts

*“But you will receive **power** when the **Holy Spirit** [5 outpourings of the Spirit] comes upon you, and you will be my **witnesses** [martyrs] in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”*

The Ascension

Luke 24:50-51



JESUS RETURNS TO THE FATHER

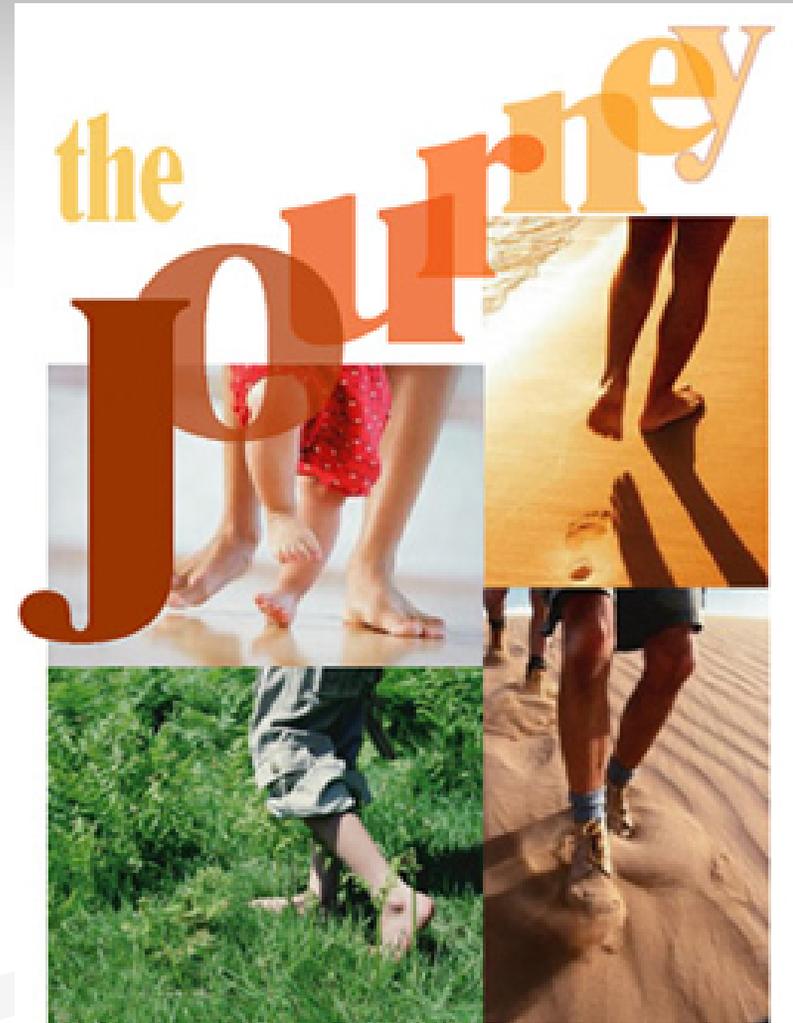
Acts 1:9-11

The Purpose of Acts

1. **God's Role** – God has kept his promises to Israel and is trustworthy!
 - The promises made to Abraham were intended for all humanity from the beginning
2. **Church's Role** – conflict with the old order present in society
 - Be open to the guidance of the Holy Spirit

Key Themes

- **Divine Plan for Salvation**
- **Power of the Holy Spirit**
- **Discipleship – journeying to / from Jerusalem**
- **Persecution**



1. Plan of Salvation

- 2:23 – “delivered up by the set plan and foreknowledge of God...”
- 13:2 – “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul...”
- 9:15 – “... this man is a chosen instrument on mine to carry my name before Gentiles, kings and Israelites...”
- OT → Jesus → Church

2. Power of the Holy Spirit

- “The Gospel of the Holy Spirit”
- 5 Outpourings – Pentecost (ch. 2) + Cornelius (ch. 10)
- Peter (2:14-20) sees the Spirit as fulfilling Joel’s prophecy about the last days

3. Discipleship is a Journey

- Luke's geography is theological
- Luke's Journey to Jerusalem – (Lk 9:51, etc.)
- Jesus' Transfiguration (Lk 9:31)
- Emmaus (Lk 24)
- Acts – circling back to Jerusalem: 12:25, 15:2, 18:22, 19:21, 20:16, 21:13, 25:1
- Discipleship = being with Jesus “on the way” to/from Jerusalem

4. Persecution

- Persecuting the Church = persecuting Jesus (9:4)
- Persecution actually helps to spread the Gospel (8:1)
- Proclaimers receive divine assistance in fighting persecution
- Gamaliel's advice – (5:34ff)
- Paul as apostle to the Gentiles

Speeches in Acts: 28!

1. God has directed all the events of salvation, nothing has been left to chance
2. The prophets foretold this salvation in their promises
3. These promises have been fulfilled in Jesus, validated through his resurrection
4. The 12 and Paul are witnesses to God's fulfillment of these promises + proclaim it
5. Repentance + conversion are demanded of all who hear this good news

Next Week

- Read Acts 1-8 if you have time
- Otherwise, read chapter 2, 3 and 6