



ENOGERA BAPTIST CHURCH
Jesus changes lives

ACTS



Acts #1 – 1:1-11

Acts 1:8 – But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.

NOTE FOR LEADERS

This document is intended to be used as a discussion *guide*, rather than a curriculum. As small group leaders, please feel free to lead through the topic as most appropriate for your group.

HOUSEKEEPING

Things going at the moment:

- **Compassion Event: Noot's Story**
 - 7pm 15th March
 - Hill Church
- **Celebration Dinner** To thank God for all he's done over the last year! All invited!
 - 4:30pm 25th March
 - In lieu of evening service
- **Tri Church Summit Dates:** 25th –27th May. More info to come



THE BOOK OF ACTS (ESV STUDY BIBLE NOTES)

INTRODUCTION

Acts is unique among the NT writings, in that its main purpose is to record a selective history of the early church following the resurrection of Christ. It is the second part of a two-volume work, with the Gospel of Luke being the first volume. Both books are dedicated to a person named Theophilus, and Acts 1:1 explicitly refers back to Luke's Gospel.

AUTHOR

Both the Gospel of Luke and Acts are anonymous, but the earliest discussions attribute them to Luke. The name "Luke" appears only three times in the NT: Colossians 4:14; 2 Timothy 4:11; Philemon 24. All three references are in epistles written by Paul from prison, and all three mention Luke's presence with Paul.

DATE

Some scholars date Acts c. A.D. 70. This assumes that Acts was written *after* the Gospel of Luke (Acts 1:1) and that Luke used the Gospel of Mark as one of his sources (Luke 1:1–2). (Early tradition has Mark's Gospel written after Peter's death, which most likely occurred in the mid-60s.) Others date Acts in the 70s or 80s. They hold that the primary purpose of Acts was to give an account of how and where the gospel spread, rather than to be a defense of Paul's ministry (thus accounting for the omission of the events at the end of his life). Thus the gospel spread to "the end of the earth" (1:8)—that is, to Rome, which represented the end of the earth as the center of world power. But a number of scholars date Acts as early as A.D. 62, basing their view primarily on the abrupt ending of the book. Since Acts ends with Paul in Rome under house arrest, awaiting his trial before Caesar (28:30–31), it would seem strange if Luke knew about Paul's release (a proof of his innocence), possibly about his defense before Caesar (fulfilling 27:24), and about his preaching the gospel as far as Spain (cf. note on 28:30–31), but then did not mention these events at the end of Acts. It seems most likely, then, that the abrupt ending is an indication that Luke wrote Acts c. A.D. 62, before these events occurred.

THEME

In Acts, believers are empowered by the Holy Spirit to bear witness to the good news of Jesus Christ among both Jews and Gentiles, and in doing this they establish the church. In addition to this, Acts explains how Christianity, although it is new, is in reality the one true religion, rooted in God's promises from the beginning of time. In the ancient world it was important that a religion be shown to have stood the test of time. Thus Luke presents the church as the fulfillment and extension of God's promises.



KEY THEMES

The major themes of Acts can be placed under the general category of “witness,” as set forth in the thematic verse (Acts 1:8).

1. The witness is worldwide—Judea, Samaria, the “end of the earth.” [1:8](#)
2. The witness is inclusive of all kinds of people: Jews, Gentiles, Samaritans, the physically handicapped, pagan mountain people, a prominent merchant woman, a jailer and his family, Greek philosophers, governors, and kings. [chs. 2–5; 8:4–40; 10:1–11:18; 14:8–18; 16:11–15, 25–34; 17:22–31; 24:24–27; 26:1–29](#)
3. The witness is guided by the providence of God, who preserves his witnesses for their testimony through all sorts of threats: murderous plots, angry mobs, storms at sea, and constant trials before the authorities, to name only a few. [4:5–22; 18:12–16; 19:23–41; 23:12–22; 24:1–23; 27:21–26](#)
4. On the other hand, faithful witnesses must be prepared to suffer, even to die for their testimony to Christ. [5:41–42; 7:54–60](#)
5. The power behind the witness is the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is granted to all believers, both male and female, whom he empowers for witness. The Spirit guides witnesses in moments of special inspiration and is behind every advance in the Christian mission. [1:8; 2:1–13, 18, 38; 4:8; 7:55; 8:17; 10:44; 13:2–12; 19:6, 21](#)
6. In the early days, the witness was often accompanied by “signs and wonders,” the “wonders” being the miracles worked by the apostles, which served as “signs” pointing to the truth of the gospel. Miracles usually opened a door for witness. e.g., [ch. 3](#)
7. Effective witness demands the unity of the church. [2:42–47; 4:32–37; 5:12–14](#)
8. A key component of the witness is the resurrection of Jesus. For the Jews the resurrection demonstrated that Jesus was the promised Messiah. For the Gentiles it pointed to his role as judge and established their need to repent. [1:22; 2:22–36; 17:30–31](#)
9. Acceptance of the message borne by the witnesses depends both on human response and on the divine sovereignty behind the response. e.g., [2:47; 11:18; 13:48](#)
10. The OT Scriptures point to the death and resurrection of Christ, and the prophecies that point to Christ and to his followers must be fulfilled ([1:16](#)). (The numerous OT citations in the sermons of Acts illustrate this point.)
11. The witness to the gospel calls for a response. Most speeches in Acts end with some sort of invitation. Representative of this is Paul’s exchange with Agrippa II. [26:27–29](#)
12. The response called for is repentance of one’s sins in the name of Christ, which brings forgiveness of sins. e.g., [2:38](#)
13. Witnesses must always maintain integrity before the world. In [18:12–15; 23:29; 25:18;](#)



Acts this is illustrated by the many remarks from the authorities about the Christians giving no evidence of any wrongdoing.	26:31–32
14. Christian witnesses continue the ministry that Christ “began” (1:1). This is illustrated throughout Acts with the many implicit parallels between the experiences of the apostles and those of Christ: his miracles, the forebodings of his journey to Jerusalem, the cry of the angry Jewish mob for his death, and his trial before the governor and the king.	20:36–21:16 (cf. Luke 9:22 ; 13:31–34 ; 18:31–34); 21:36 ; 22:21 (cf. Luke 23:18); 24:1–26:32 (cf. Luke 23:1–25)
15. Faithful witness brings great results. Acts is all about the victory of the Christian gospel. The witness brings results among both Jews and Gentiles. The book ends on this note, with Paul bearing his faithful witness to “all” who came to him in Rome.	4:4 ; 11:20–21 ; 13:48–49 ; 17:4 ; 18:6–11 ; 21:20 ; 28:30–31

PURPOSE, OCCASION, AND BACKGROUND

Luke’s stated purpose for both of his books is provided at the beginning of the first (Luke 1:1–4). He had a historian’s interest in providing an “orderly account” of “the things that have been accomplished among us.” One would assume the latter statement applied both to the ministry of Jesus (the gospel) and to that of the early church (Acts). Dedicating the work to Theophilus, he wanted him to have “certainty” (a firm foundation) for what he had been taught. The exact nature of Luke’s purpose depends on how one identifies Theophilus. He evidently had already been instructed in the Christian way and may have been a new convert or a seeker on the verge of commitment. Since “Theophilus” means “lover of God,” it is also possible that Luke is challenging the devotion of his readers rather than addressing his book to just one of them.

Luke probably had a number of purposes for writing Acts. These are best determined through the emphases or themes found throughout the book.

HISTORY OF SALVATION SUMMARY

After his ascension (1:9; cf. Ps. 68:18; Eph. 4:9–10) Jesus sends the Holy Spirit (Joel 2:28–32) to empower the apostles as witnesses (Acts 1:8), to spread the message of the gospel (Isa. 52:7), and to draw to himself people from the nations (Matt. 28:19).



THE SETTING OF ACTS

c. A.D. 30–60

The book of Acts records the spread of the gospel from Jerusalem to Rome, thus fulfilling the risen Christ's words to his apostles in Acts 1:8.





#1 ACTS 1:1-11

REFLECT

This is a time to generate some discussion by reflecting on the ideas in this week's message. Some ideas include:

- Ask the group to debrief for those who have missed the sermons on Sunday
- What stood out? Do you have any questions?
- Were there any special moments of clarity where God spoke to you clearly?

DIG INTO THE WORD

Let's dig a little deeper. Use the biblical text to discover what God reveals to us in his Word.

This passage gives us precious insight into a monumental occasion in the history of the world: Jesus final words, and his ascension to the right hand of the Father. In these precious last words Jesus gives his disciples answers to three dominating question: **1) What Mission? 2) What Power? And 3) What Next?**

Acts 1:1-11

1 In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach, ² until the day when he was taken up, after he had given commands through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. ³ He presented himself alive to them after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God.

⁴ And while staying with them he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, "you heard from me; ⁵ for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

⁶ So when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" ⁷ He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. ⁸ But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." ⁹ And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. ¹⁰ And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, ¹¹ and said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven."



Psalm 127:1-2

*Unless the Lord builds the house,
those who build it labour in vain.
Unless the Lord watches over the city,
the watchman stays awake in vain.
²It is in vain that you rise up early
and go late to rest*

John 16:7 *Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you.*

APPLY

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scriptures apply directly to their lives. Get group members to talk about the real life implications of the study.

1. **DISCUSS:** How are we to apply these things? Are there any immediate implications?
2. **WHAT MISSION?** Jesus again corrects the Apostles faulty understanding about what he's really on about by escalating the mission from just about the nation of Israel to one concerning the ends of the earth!
 - a. In what ways do you think you have misunderstood God's purposes like the apostles?
 - b. How did you realise you were wrong?
 - c. What assumptions have we brought to him?
 - d. Are we still willing to let God set our agenda?
3. **WHAT POWER?** Jesus tells them that this mission is going to take supernatural power. There is no conceivable way 12 men could change the planet without God's direct, consistent power at work.
 - a. What does it mean to be clothed on power by the Spirit?
 - b. When have you experienced this power?
 - c. What other worldly powers do we turn to instead?
4. **WHAT NEXT?** However before that day that day that Jesus would send his Spirit, Jesus called his disciples to wait. Don't leave town. Don't begin your ministry. Wait. For what? Wait to be clothed in power from on high (Luke 24:49). Although we don't wait for the day the Spirit enters into human history like the disciples did, we are still called to wait on God to move before we do.
 - a. Why do we find the command to wait on God so hard?
 - b. Where is he calling you to wait on Him today?

PRAY

PRAY FOR GOD'S MISSION, POWER & GUIDANCE



HELPFUL NOTES

NOTES ON KEY TEXTS

Acts 1:1–2:13 Preparation for Witness. Acts opens with the account of the Spirit's descent at Pentecost. Chapter 1 relates the preparation for that event, which occurs in 2:1–13.

Acts 1:1–5 Jesus Prepares the Disciples. After a brief introduction (vv. 1–2), Luke reviews the 40-day period when Jesus prepared the disciples for their witness (vv. 3–5).

Acts 1:1 Luke's first book is the Gospel of Luke, which gives an account of what Jesus began to do and teach. This suggests that the book of Acts is going to be about what Jesus *continued* "to do and teach" in the world. Though physically he had ascended into heaven (v. 9), yet spiritually he was still present on earth (cf. Matt. 28:20). When one realizes that the term "Lord" (Gk. *Kyrios*) in Acts usually refers to Jesus, it becomes evident that the entire book tells how Jesus was building his church: selecting an apostle to replace Judas (Acts 1:24), pouring out the Holy Spirit in new power (2:33), adding people to the church day by day (2:47), appearing to Ananias (9:10) and to Paul (9:5; 18:9), healing a paralyzed man (9:34), receiving worship from the church (13:2), stopping a magician who was opposing the gospel (13:11), and opening people's hearts to believe the gospel (16:14). (See also 1:2 on the Holy Spirit's role.) It is the execution of the divine program that Jesus directs and mediates. Luke's Gospel was also dedicated to Theophilus, either an actual person or a symbolic name for any Christian seeker or convert.

Acts 1:2 The day when he was taken up refers to Jesus' ascension into heaven (Luke 24:51). The beginning of Acts parallels the conclusion of Luke's Gospel (Luke 24:36–53). Through the Holy Spirit means that as Jesus gave instructions and commands to his disciples, the Holy Spirit accompanied his teaching, empowering the disciples so that they would rightly understand it and obey it. apostles.

Acts 1:3 Jesus appeared multiple times to his disciples and gave them many proofs to strengthen their faith. Solid evidence and knowledge of facts increase faith (an idea contrary to some modern views of "faith"). Only Acts provides the specific time reference of a 40-day period for the resurrection appearances, a number that evokes thoughts of many biblical events, such as the wilderness wanderings of Israel and the temptations of Jesus. Though common in the Gospels as the main theme of Jesus' preaching, the phrase kingdom of God occurs only six times in Acts (1:3; 8:12; 14:22; 19:8; 28:23, 31). Significantly, two of the six are at the beginning and end of Acts, indicating that the proclamation of the gospel in Acts represents the beginning of the fulfillment of God's kingdom promises. The "kingdom of God" means not an earthly political or military kingdom but the present spiritually directed reign of God, gradually transforming individual lives and entire cultures through the power of the Holy Spirit. Cf. Matt. 6:33.

Acts 1:4 The promise of the Father refers to the gift that was promised by the Father, namely, the new and greater empowering of the Holy Spirit that the disciples were to await in Jerusalem (see Luke 3:15–17; 24:49).



Acts 1:5 Baptized with the Holy Spirit looks forward to Pentecost (see ch. 2). John had contrasted his “repentance” baptism with Jesus’ “Holy Spirit” baptism (Mark 1:8). Throughout Acts, baptism and the gift of the Spirit are closely related. Repentance, forgiveness, water baptism, and reception of the Spirit comprise the basic pattern of conversion.

Acts 1:6–11 Jesus Ascends. At the end of the 40 days (v. 3), Jesus took his disciples to the Mount of Olives and ascended visibly (vv. 9–11). Before doing so he commissioned them to be his witnesses (v. 8).

Acts 1:6 The place of the disciples’ assembly was the Mount of Olives (v. 12), at the foot of which lay Bethany (Luke 24:50). The disciples asked Jesus when he would restore the kingdom to Israel because they concluded from his resurrection and the promise of the Spirit that the messianic era had dawned and the final salvation of Israel was imminent. However, they were probably still expecting the restoration of a military and political kingdom that would drive out the Roman armies and restore national sovereignty to Israel, as had happened numerous times in the OT. Jesus corrected them, not by rejecting the question, but by telling them (Acts 1:8) that they would receive power from the Holy Spirit, not in order to triumph over Roman armies but to spread the good news of the gospel throughout the world. In other words, the return is in God’s timing; in the meantime, there are other key things believers are to do.

Acts 1:7 the Father has fixed by his own authority. Ultimate authority in determining the events of history is consistently ascribed to God the Father among the persons of the Trinity.

Acts 1:8 Jesus corrected the disciples’ questions (v. 6) with a commission: “this time” (v. 6) would be for them a time of witnessing for the gospel, and the scope of their witness was not to be just Israel but the world. Verse 8 is the thematic statement for all of Acts. It begins with the Spirit’s power that stands behind and drives the witness to Jesus. Then it provides a rough outline of the book: Jerusalem (chs. 1–7), Judea and Samaria (chs. 8–12), and the end of the earth (chs. 13–28). you will receive power. Interpreters differ over whether the Holy Spirit was at work in the lives of ordinary believers prior to Pentecost in a lesser way or not at all, except for empowering for special tasks. On either view, something new that needed to be waited for was here. This powerful new work of the Holy Spirit after Pentecost brought several beneficial results: more effectiveness in witness and ministry (1:8), effective proclamation of the gospel (cf. Matt. 28:19), power for victory over sin (Acts 2:42–46; Rom. 6:11–14; 8:13–14; Gal. 2:20; Phil. 3:10), power for victory over Satan and demonic forces (Acts 2:42–46; 16:16–18; 2 Cor. 10:3–4; Eph. 6:10–18; 1 John 4:4), and a wide distribution of gifts for ministry (Acts 2:16–18; 1 Cor. 12:7, 11; 1 Pet. 4:10; cf. Num. 11:17, 24–29). The disciples likely understood “power” in this context to include both the power to preach the gospel effectively and also the power (through the Holy Spirit) to work miracles confirming the message. The same word (Gk. *dynamis*) is used at least seven other times in Acts to refer to power to work miracles in connection with gospel proclamation (see Acts 2:22; 3:12; 4:7; 6:8; 8:10; 10:38; 19:11).

Acts 1:9 Elsewhere in Scripture a cloud is often associated with a manifestation of God’s presence (Luke 9:28–36). This was not an ordinary rain cloud but the cloud of glory that surrounds the very



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presence of God. as they were looking on, he was lifted up. This visible ascension of Jesus into heaven indicates that Jesus retains a physical human body, as a man, though he is exalted to the right hand of God, i.e., given direct executive rule in God's spiritual kingdom (Matt. 28:18). When coupled with Acts 1:11, it also indicates that he will someday return in the same physical body. The amazing miracle of the incarnation is not only that the eternal Son of God took human nature on himself and became a person who is simultaneously God and man, but also that he will remain both fully God and fully man forever.

Acts 1:10 The pair of "men" were angels in human form, as their white robes attest (see Matt. 28:3; Luke 24:4; John 20:12).

Acts 1:11 will come in the same way as you saw him go. Jesus' return, like his ascension, will be bodily and visible. (See note on v. 9.)

REFERENCE:

Developed with the help of the following:

- ESV Study Bible, Crossway.