

Introduction to Acts

Luke is the author of Acts as well as the Gospel of St. Luke. He was a physician by trade and a companion of the Apostle Paul in his travels (Colossians 4:14; 2 Timothy 4:11; Philemon 24). Luke wrote the book of Acts about A.D. 63.

The theme of the book of Acts is *“The Advance of the Kingdom of God into all the earth by the Gospel of Jesus Christ.”* The book begins and ends with the kingdom of God (1:3; 28:31). The highest theme of all prayer is “Thy Kingdom Come” (Matthew 6:10). The overriding theme of the Old Testament is the establishment of the Messiah’s Kingdom on earth. This will be temporarily fulfilled during the 1000 year Millennial Reign of Christ on the earth (Revelation 11:15; 20:1-7) and eternally fulfilled in the new heavens and earth (Revelation 21-22). The Old Testament prophets placed a great emphasis on the earthly rule of the Christ. Jesus will be seated in Jerusalem and the nations will flow in and out of the city to see the King in his beauty (Micah 4:2-3; Haggai 2:7; Zechariah 2:11; 1 Kings 10:4-7). The Messiah’s earthly reign was on the minds of the disciples in Acts 1:6. Jesus did not deny a future earthly kingdom restoration; he just stated its fulfillment was in the Father’s hands. The thing that concerned Jesus was the establishment of his kingdom spiritually. The kingdom of God is primarily a spiritual one, and the only way into it is by spiritual birth (Luke 17:21; John 3:5). The new birth would be accomplished by the Spirit and the proclamation of the gospel. This is where the book of Acts comes in.

The advance of God’s purpose on the earth was initially given to Adam. Adam was not only created to be fruitful and multiply the earth, he was also to subdue it, and keep dominion over it. The charge to subdue and rule was given to Adam because there was an enemy lurking in the garden that was determined to destroy God’s purpose. History shows us that Adam failed his mission and allowed the enemy to introduce a deadly poison into the world that would eventually require the Son of God to come to his own earth. That poison is known as “sin.” Sinless Adam became sinful Adam, and instead of advancing the righteousness of God throughout the earth and to his seed, Adam advanced his poison into the human race. The apostle Paul amplified this fact very clearly in his letter to the Romans 5:12-18.

We would be biblically safe in saying that: *“Kingdom Advance is the salvation of sinners.”* Every sinner that is rescued from sin and won to Christ is an advance of the King’s kingdom. People are our greatest investment, evangelism is our greatest work, and the Passion of Christ is our greatest message.

After Adam’s failure, God raised up the nation Israel to carry forward his purpose. God granted to Israel his holy law which equipped them for their mission. We might note here that the giving of the law is a parallel event to the giving of the Spirit. The law would be an effective weapon for Israel to advance righteousness in all the earth. Tragically, Israel followed in Adam’s footsteps and failed her mission. She committed the blunder of exalting the law above the Lord (Romans 10:1-4). Despite the many blunders of Israel, God would call forth certain persons out of the nation Israel and empower them to advance his cause. Prophets, Priests, and Kings would be brought forth to help in the advance. Finally, after many centuries there would come out of Israel a Deliverer that would settle the victory for Kingdom Advance once and for all. Luke has already given Theophilus a thorough, investigated treatise on the person and work of the Deliverer (Luke 1:1-4). He begins his second treatise with the words: *“...of all that Jesus began to do and teach”* (Acts 1:1).

In the book of Acts, the advance was taken out of the hands of the Jews as a nation and it was given to the Church which would consist of believing Jews and Gentiles. The Church would now become the primary leader in Kingdom Advance. For 2000 years the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ has been the advancer of gospel righteousness. The Spirit and the bride are still calling for thirsty sinners to take of the

water of life freely (Revelation 22:17).

The book of Acts is Luke's report of the *Commencement* of the Church and her *Continuous* territorial expansion of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Brother Luke is constantly giving us updates throughout his treatise. The principle of advance and increase is well established in the book of Acts. *If we are not seeing a spiritual increase in our own personal lives; or if we are not seeing increase in the saving of sinners in our churches, then we are not a biblical pattern for New Testament Christianity.*

There are seven simple but potent facts we need to keep in mind as we tour the book of Acts:

Fact 1: Acts is a transitional book. It is the “between place” of the Old and New Covenants. Many methods that are used in Acts may not apply to us today. For example, we are not required by Scripture to take Communion every day; we are not required to pick seven deacons when we only need two, and people do not speak with other dialects when they are saved. However, we must not throw out the baby with the bathwater. We can and must be filled with the Spirit; we can expect miracles and revivals; we can expect sinners to be saved in masses. All will be well if we leave all these things up to the Sovereign Spirit. We must not allow the non-essentials to divide us.

Fact 2: To be filled with the Spirit is crucial. The Great Commission can only be achieved when the Church stays in full Submission to the Spirit. The Holy Spirit knows how to “run” things and we know how to “ruin” things. *A submissive obedience to the Holy Spirit's leadership will guarantee Kingdom Advance on a local and world-wide level.*

Fact 3: There is an enemy to confront. Our priority against Satan is to “*Endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace*” (Ephesians 4:3). If Satan divides us, he conquers us. Those of us that are actively involved in Kingdom Advance must not be ignorant of the devil's devices. He will constantly be seeking to plant tares in the wheat. The Church can avoid many of these tares if she keeps the focus on “quality” as well as “quantity.” Evangelism must be balanced by discipleship.

Fact 4: The gift of utterance is vital. This is our “preaching gift.” God has chosen the foolishness of preaching to save. To compromise the preaching of the Word is to halt the advance. Any local assembly that has not kept the pulpit the priority has ceased to help in the cause and has placed themselves under the “curse of Meroz” (Judges 5:23). The gift of utterance was continuously prayed for by the early saints (Acts 4:31; Ephesians 6:18-19). We need a revival of gospel preachers today that are filled with the Spirit and gifted with gospel utterance.

Fact 5: Prayer is a divine necessity. We must give ourselves to prayer. If there is one thing that the book of Acts breathes, it is the spirit of prayer. Acts teaches us with demonstrable clarity that Kingdom Advance lives or dies by prayer power. This is taught in the Old Testament as well as the New. From time to time, God has poured out the Spirit of grace and supplication upon the Church in a mightier way. This greater effusion of the Spirit of prayer has always been followed by great revivals and super thrusts of Kingdom Advance. Oh! That we could see such an outpouring at this present hour!

Fact 6: Missions and Evangelism are crucial. We must make much of missions and evangelism. Territorial expansion of the name of Jesus is the goal of all the above. This expansion may come about by winning whole cities (Samaria), or whole families (Cornelius), or maybe just one person at a time (the Eunuch). Our responsibility is to be ready at all times to *Go, Stand, & Speak* (Acts 5:20).

Fact 7: The power of personal testimony is priceless. Nothing surpasses the effectiveness of Kingdom Advance like one person's testimony. Paul's most powerful sermon was not a nice exegesis of some prominent doctrine, or an eloquent sermon on how to get from point A to point B in seven easy steps. Paul's most powerful message was what he was before and after he met Jesus Christ. If we could only persuade the saints to take their testimony to their work places, to their schools, to their neighborhoods and to their families; I have no doubt that evangelism would explode. After all, the best definition of

evangelism I have ever heard is: *“Evangelism is one beggar telling another beggar where to get bread.”*

I can only speak for me personally on this matter of evangelism through personal testimony. I have read many good books on evangelism (and still do), I have seen videos and attended conferences about evangelism, and I have read and heard many great preachers concerning evangelism. However, I must tell you that nothing has motivated me more in sharing my personal testimony than my passion for my Savior’s Passion. Several years after my salvation experience, I received an abundant infilling of the Holy Spirit. He literally transformed my life. One of the outstanding things that changed in me was that I fell freshly in love with my Lord. Jesus literally became my passion. I had an insatiable desire to witness for Christ like I never had before. Sharing my faith was no hardship whatsoever. I say very humbly and thankfully that God has helped me to keep the fire burning. To be saved and called to advance the gospel and kingdom of Jesus Christ is the highest honor that can be placed upon any one human being.

I might add that I would never give a step by step method on how to be filled with the Spirit. All I know is that before I got to Romans 8:2; I had to get to Romans 7:24. I was sick and tired of being sick and tired.