

Overview of the Book of Acts

Luke and Acts

The “Gospel of Luke” and the “Acts of the Apostles” are parts of the same story, with one following directly after the other. The two parts, or books, were written by Luke as a narrative that is an orderly (not necessarily chronological) account of the story of Jesus and His first followers. Both were addressed to a man named Theophilus.

Luke was an educated man, and we later learn he was a doctor ([Colossians 4:14](#)). Later in Acts, we learn that Luke joined Paul on some of his mission journeys and became a loyal friend ([2 Timothy 4:9-13](#)).

The Gospel According to Luke

The Book of Luke is called a “gospel” because it contains the Good News of the birth, life, ministry, death, resurrection and enthronement of Jesus and what that means to the world. Luke opens his telling of the gospel in the following way:

“To Theophilus: Many have tried to give a history of the things that happened among us. They have written the same things that we learned from others—the people who saw those things from the beginning and served God by telling people his message. I myself studied everything carefully from the beginning, your Excellency. I thought I should write it out for you. So I put it in order in a book. I write these things so that you can know that what you have been taught is true.” Luke 1:1-4, ICB

After those opening words, Luke records how Jesus ushered in salvation by living a sinless life and fulfilling God’s promises through His death, burial and resurrection. In the last chapter of his first book, Luke records the words of Jesus as He explains to the apostles what will happen next.

“You saw these things happen—you are witnesses. You must tell people to change their hearts and lives. If they do this, their sins will be forgiven. You must start at Jerusalem and preach these things in my name to all nations. Listen! My Father has promised you something; I will send it to you. But you must stay in Jerusalem until you have received that power from heaven.” Luke 24:47-49, ICB

The Acts of the Apostles

In his second letter, the Book of Acts, Luke picks up the story with Jesus saying farewell to the apostles before returning to heaven to sit in His rightful place as King. Luke continues with the following words.

“To Theophilus, The first book I wrote was about everything that Jesus did and taught. I wrote about the whole life of Jesus, from the beginning until the day he was taken up into heaven. Before this, Jesus talked to the apostles he had chosen. With the help of the Holy Spirit, Jesus told them what they should do.” Acts 1:1-2, ICB

The rest of the book records how the Holy Spirit worked through the Apostles in telling everyone about Jesus. The Apostles are not random in their approach. The Holy Spirit guides them to follow the path Jesus had set out for them earlier when He said the following.

“Jesus said to them, ‘The Father is the only One who has the authority to decide dates and times. These things are not for you to know. But the Holy Spirit will come to you. Then you will receive power. You will be my witnesses—in Jerusalem, in all of Judea, in Samaria, and in every part of the world.’” Acts 1:7-8, ICB

Explaining the Gospel Message to a Child

Over and over in the Book of Acts, you will read about people who hear about Jesus and are then baptised. This connection becomes clearer as we read the entire New Testament, but it might be helpful to keep it in mind as we teach the stories of Acts. Children will probably ask questions about it from time to time. The following wording might be helpful to you. It is a simple way to explain the overarching story of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus and our response to it.

This is a very important message, so make it personal! Instead of reading it to a child, put it into your own words.

God created the whole world and wanted everyone to be happy and love Him. Sadly, people make bad choices, which have caused many bad things in this world. Sometimes, people even die. God was very sad that people had caused the earth to be so bad.

God knows about every bad thing people have ever done in the past. He even knows about bad things people who have not even been born yet will do in the future. God knew that all of these terrible things were sins. Sin caused a very big problem that affected everyone who has ever lived!

God has so much love for us that He did something very important to fix this problem. God sent His Son, Jesus, from heaven to earth to show everyone how to obey God and make good choices. But many people did not believe Jesus and got so angry that they made Him die on the cross.

Jesus was dead, but guess what!? Three days after He died on the cross, Jesus came alive again! Jesus showed that He is stronger than death and any sin. He is stronger than any bad thing that can ever happen.

Soon after He came back to life, the time came for Jesus to go to heaven to live with His Father again in heaven. Before Jesus left, He told His followers to tell others about the Good News. The Good News is that “Jesus died, but He came alive again! Death is terrible but Jesus won over death. Sin is terrible but Jesus won over sin.”

And the Good News is for you and me, too! Jesus died, was buried and came alive again. Because Jesus won over sin and death, people can change from bad to good!

In a new and special way, we can also be like Jesus and have a death, burial and resurrection.

- *We can say we are sorry so that our sins can be put to death.*
- *Our old selves are buried when we go under the water in baptism.*
- *Then, when we live a new Christian life, it is a resurrection.*

People who follow Jesus never again have to be afraid of dying. If we follow Jesus, then, even after we die, we will come alive again to live with God forever!”

Lessons from the Book of Acts

Understanding the plans Jesus laid out will help you as you teach the following lessons found on this website.

Jesus Ascends to Heaven

- [Great Commission & Ascension of Jesus](#)

Beginning in Jerusalem

The Apostles met in Jerusalem and began to tell the Good News as Jesus had instructed them. Peter and John are often central characters in Jerusalem. The first chapters in Acts record how Jewish people began to accept Jesus.

- [Sermon at Pentecost](#)

- [The First Church](#)
- [Peter & John Heal a Man Who Could Not Walk](#)
- [Ananias and Sapphira](#)
- [Helpers in the Church](#)
- [The Stoning of Stephen](#)

Beyond Jerusalem

Scattered by persecution, the Apostles and others began to reach out to other regions and peoples. Many boundaries are crossed as the Good News spreads.

- [Simon the Sorcerer](#)
- [Philip Teaches the Man from Ethiopia](#)
- [Saul \(Paul\) Becomes a Christian](#)
- [Dorcas is Raised from the Dead](#)
- [Cornelius Becomes a Christian](#)
- [The Antioch Church](#)
- [Peter's Miraculous Escape from Prison](#)

Mission Journeys

The remainder of the Book of Acts features the Apostle Paul. He was not one of the original twelve but received his commission directly from Jesus in a vision. Paul's missionary journeys took the Good News of Jesus to far-reaching places, particularly to Gentiles.

- [An Angry Crowd in Lystra](#)
- [Macedonian Vision](#)
- [Lydia Becomes a Christian](#)
- [A Jailer Becomes a Christian](#)
- [Scripture Study in Berea](#)
- [Paul Preaches in Athens-Mars Hill](#)
- [Priscilla and Aquila](#)
- [Paul in Ephesus](#)
- [Eutychus Falls from a Window](#)

From Jerusalem to Rome

Luke ended his letter by writing about Paul going to Jerusalem, where he was arrested. As a Roman citizen, Paul appealed to the highest court in Rome and made his way there. During his mission journeys and time in prison, Paul wrote epistles, or letters, to churches. These letters are now contained in our New Testaments.

- [Paul Goes to Jerusalem](#)
- [Paul's Nephew Uncovers a Plot](#)
- [Paul's Trial](#)
- [Paul's Shipwreck](#)
- [Paul Writes Letters from Prison](#)

Other Online Resources:

- [Follow this link](#) if you would like to teach a series of lessons about the Life of Paul. The lessons above are grouped as a set for that purpose.
- [A humorous video outlining the Book of Acts \(from http://youtu.be/MJIHgMR7LP0 \)](http://youtu.be/MJIHgMR7LP0)
- [Outline of the Spread of Christianity \(6 parts of the Book of Acts\) at http://www.simplybible.com.au/f750.htm](http://www.simplybible.com.au/f750.htm)
- [Outline of Paul's Missionary Journeys at http://www.simplybible.com.au/f757.htm](http://www.simplybible.com.au/f757.htm)
- [Video cartoon tracing Paul's Missionary Journeys on a map \(3 minutes and 19 seconds\). Find this video at http://youtu.be/Hy4K1pP408Y.](http://youtu.be/Hy4K1pP408Y)
- [Background Information on the Book of Acts at http://www.biblestudytools.com/acts/](http://www.biblestudytools.com/acts/)
- [Free-to-download online illustrations of stories in the Book of Acts at http://distantshores.org/resources/illustrations/sweet-publishing/acts](http://distantshores.org/resources/illustrations/sweet-publishing/acts)