

# Facts About Acts

by Victor Maxwell

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*The book of Acts records the continuation of Jesus Christ's work through the early church and conveys a movement that courses through three different stages: establishment, scattering, and expansion.*

**Scripture:** John 19:30, Acts 1:8, Acts 2:41, Acts 9:36, Acts 13:1, Acts 28:30, Colossians 4:14, 2 Timothy 4:11

**Topics:** "Early Church", "Mission Work"

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## Description

Victor Maxwell preaches on the book of Acts, highlighting how it continues the unfinished work of Jesus Christ, emphasizing the importance of the church's role in carrying out God's mission. He discusses the aim of Acts, which provides us with hope, humility, and factual honesty, urging for a revival in the church. Maxwell delves into the author of Acts, Luke, describing him as a modest, methodical, meticulous, medical missionary, and meaningful man who played a significant role in recording the history of the early church. The sermon also includes an analysis of Acts, outlining the founding and establishing of the church, the forward emphasis of the church, and the foreign evangelism by the church, showing the progression and expansion of the early Christian movement.

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## Transcript

The Church in Action #1 Facts about Acts The ancients frequently marked the graves of their dead with the symbol of a broken pillar. By this they expressed a sense of incompleteness in the life and work of the dead person. When a biography ends in a tomb often a man's work is buried with him. However, no symbol of a broken pillar can be raised against life and death of Jesus Christ. On the cross he was confident and conscious that the work He came to do was completed and in the darkness of His final hour he cried with a loud voice, "It is finished."(John 19:30; 17:5.)

In spite of this sense of accomplishment and completion none of the four Gospel writers recorded that their final was the end of the matter. Mark wrote, "The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ". and Luke referred to his work as, "all that Jesus began to both to do and teach". The words infer a sense of continuation and actuality. When the Germans bombed London during the war Winston Churchill waxed eloquent and brave in giving morale to the British people. However, when news came through of the Montgomery's victory in North Africa Churchill spoke to the House of Commons to caution against too much optimism, "This is not the end; it is not even the beginning of the end; it is the end of the beginning".

Christ's work here on earth was only the end of the beginning. The Gospels major on the finished work of Jesus Christ. The Acts of the Apostles is the continuation of our Lord's unfinished work. Initially called

"The History of Christian Origins", Acts is one of the five historical books in the New Testament. Among the quartet of Gospel writers only Luke gave an inspired sequel to the mysterious and yet majestic story of our Lord Jesus Christ. Between his account of the Gospel and Acts there is barely a pause as Luke dips his pen into an inkwell and starts into his second volume which in reality is an account of the acts of the ascended and glorified Lord.

Matthew finishes his gospel account with emphasis on the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Mark finishes his gospel account with emphasis on the ascension of Jesus Christ. Luke finishes his gospel account with emphasis on the Jesus promise of the Holy Spirit. John finishes his gospel account with emphasis on the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. At the end of each of these four gospels we never find written "The End". It is not the end. Luke takes up all the four threads of truth emphasised at the end of each Gospel and includes them in the first eleven verses of Acts 1.

Acts is one of the most important books of the New Testament. Can you imagine after reading John's Gospel you turn the page to Paul's Epistle to the Romans Without Acts we would have no inspired record of the origin and birth of the church. Without Acts we would have to gather from the epistles scant details about the growth and development of the early Church. Without Acts we would have no account of the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost and the events surrounding His coming.

Without Acts we would have no knowledge of the beginning of world missions and the spread of the church beyond Jerusalem and Judea. In Acts God is at work in the world through the church to accomplish the unfinished business of Jesus Christ. As those who carry the Olympic torch from Greece to the games so others have carried the torch of truth through the generations and handed it to us to bear in our generation. 2. The Aim of Acts. This document is not only inspired and important, it is invaluable to us for a multitude of reasons: (a) Acts furnishes us with actual history.

This is the first volume of church history that was ever been written. (Mat. 16:18 Acts 2:41, 42) There are two ways of writing history. One is to record the chronological details of events from week to week as in a journal. The other is to record a selected series of events that give an insight into the growth and development of the matter in question. The latter is the method employed in Acts. This history was not just the chronicling of historical facts. In Acts history is recorded in such a way that they should have a bearing on our church life today. (b) Acts fires us with hope.

While we usually speak of "The Acts of the Apostles" only four apostles are mentioned in the 28 chapters. Acts is the story of God in action through His church. Only the Lord can change impossible situations, save stout sinners, work miracles in answer to prayer and bestow dynamic power to the preaching of the Gospel. This same God is still at work today. (c) Acts fills us with deep humility. The reading of Acts is not meant to fill our minds with information. It was not given for us to tidy up our theology of the church.

This book should humble us to shame when we consider the present shape and attitude of the church. Acts should drive us to our knees to cry for revival and pray, "Lord, do it again." (d) Acts faces us with factual honesty. There were no super saints in the early church They were men and women sold out to God. There were no plastic saints living cloistered lives in an unreal world. These were courageous saints who faced a hostile world of political turmoil, religious bigotry, financial difficulty and many cultural barriers.

Their service for God was joyous and enthusiastic. It was mingled with persecution and martyrdom and yet it resulted in great blessing and tremendous growth. 3. The Author of Acts Undoubtedly the author of Acts was Luke - "the beloved physician". So much might be said about the man and his manuscript. (a) Luke

was a modest man. Little is known of Luke. He is the only Gentile author in the New Testament. The arrival of his name into the sacred Scripture is so unannounced. It is thought he was a native of Antioch in Syria.

He was educated and trained in the sciences at one of the leading universities of his time. He was fluent in Hebrew and Greek. His experience in the medical and linguistic fields contributed to make him one of the best historians ever. For all of this he is only mentioned three times in the New Testament (Col. 4:14, Philemon 24, 2 Timothy 4:11.) and never from his own pen. He was a self effacing and modest man. (b) Luke was a methodical man. After meticulous and detailed research Luke set forth in order his record of the Gospel of Jesus Christ in a systematic, authentic, simplistic and yet dynamic way. Note the parallels and compliments in his system:

Luke's Gospel

Acts

The commencement of Christ's work

The continuation of Christ's work.

A period of 33 years

A period of 33 years.

The birth of Jesus Christ

The birth of the Church.

Infancy of the Saviour

Infancy of the Church

Humanity of Jesus Christ

Humanity of the Church

Jesus Christ the Son of Man giving life

Jesus Christ the Son of God giving power.

The Holy Spirit in the life of Christ

The Holy Spirit in the life of the Church

Christ crucified and risen

Christ ascended and exalted.

What Jesus began to do and to teach.

What Jesus continued to do and is still doing

Acts opens in Jerusalem, the great ecclesiastical centre of the Jewish nation, and closes with Paul preaching in Rome, the centre of political and secular power in the world. In spite of the system Luke employs Acts ends very abruptly, as if Luke had dropped the pen and never returned to complete the manuscript. It needed to end abruptly. Church history began in Acts and continues to this present day in the acts of our Ascended Lord.

(c) He was a meticulous man.

Luke's scientific acumen is evidenced throughout his writings by the careful detail he gave to physical conditions and chronological events. (Acts 1:3; 3:7; 9:18) In reporting the transition from the early Jewish atmosphere to the later Gentile era Luke was careful to give equal balance to the ministry of Peter and Paul, the respective apostles of the Jewish and Gentile masses. His painstaking and meticulous work reflects Luke's devotion in that what ever he did for God he did it with all his might.

Peter Paul

A Palestinian Jew A Hellenistic Jew

An unlearned fisherman. A cultured scholar of the best rabbinical schools.

Seven of his sermons recorded. Seven of his sermons recorded.

Many signs and wonders (5:12). God wrought special miracles by hand of Paul (19:11)

Raised a paralytic (3:1). Raised a crippled man at Lystra.

Raised Dorcas from the dead (9:36f). Raised Eutychus from the dead (20:9f).

(d) Luke was a medical missionary.

As the first medical missionary Luke joined Paul, Silas and Timothy on their first mission into Europe. Undoubtedly he attended to the physical needs of Paul and his companions and probably used his medical skills to attend to the sick on their missions. Some think that Theophilus was an imminent Roman official whom Luke had befriended and led to faith in Christ. In all his work Luke set forth abiding principles for pastoral theology and all missionary enterprise which followed.

(e) He was a meaningful man.

How meaningful Ask Paul. To Paul, the foremost of the Apostles, Luke was a beloved physician, (Col.4:14) a present companion - when everyone else had gone Luke was with Paul anticipating his soon departure. It is important to be with our friends at the most vulnerable times in life. (2Tim. 4:11) and a loyal partner in labours. (Philemon 24) We all owe a lot to Dr. Luke.

3. An Analysis of Acts.

Acts can be outlined either biographically: The Ministry of Peter in Jewish world. Chs. 1-12. The Ministry of Paul in Genital world. Chs. 13-28. The geographical outline is based on our Lord's words in Acts 1:8 and is as follows:

Text

Geography

Missions

Nations

Chs. 1-7

Jerusalem

City Mission- across the street

The Jews

Chs. 8-12

Judea & Samaria

Home Mission- across the country

Jews & Gentiles

Chs. 13-28

The uttermost parts

Foreign Missions - across the world

Gentiles

A more detailed outlines is as follows:

1. The Founding and Establishing of the Church. Chs. 1-7

Ch. 1 The promise and preparation

Ch. 2:1-41 The Pentecostal power in preaching

Ch. 2:42 -3:26 The progress in public

Chs. 5 & 6 The problems within

Ch. 7 The price paid - martyrdom

2. The Forward Emphasis of the Church Chs. 8-12

Ch. 8. The Mission of Philip on the road to Gaza. - A son of Ham converted.

Ch. 9. The Miracle of Paul on the road to Damascus. - A son of Shem converted.

Chs. 10 & 11 The Message to Cornelius in Caesaria. - A son of Japheth converted.

Ch. 12. The Martyrdom of James in Jerusalem

### 3. The Foreign Evangelism by the Church Chs. 13-28

#### (a) Paul's pioneer ministry 13:1 - 21:36

Paul's first missionary journey Chs. 13,14

Paul's second missionary journey 15:38-18:22

Paul's third missionary journey 18:23 - 21:36

#### (b) Paul's prison ministry 21:37-28:31

Paul is captive in Jerusalem 21:37 - 23:22

Paul is charged in Caesaria 23:23 - 26:32

Paul is a castaway in Melita 27:1 - 28:11

Paul is chained in Rome 28:12 - 28:36

### 4. The Application of Acts

The book of Acts conveys a movement that courses through three different stages; establishment of the church, the scattering of the church and expansion of the church. These same stages may be traced in our lives. All of us at one of these stages. Where are you?

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