



**FOUNDATIONS  
OF FAITH**

The Message of the Bible

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**Week 27: Acts**

**The Structure of Acts**

<b>Prologue</b> 1:1–11	<b>Jerusalem</b> 1:12–5:42	<b>Judea &amp; Samaria</b> 6–12	<b>The Ends of the Earth</b> 13–28
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**The Teaching of Acts**

*Prologue (Acts 1:1–11)*

*The Early Church in Jerusalem (Acts 1:12–5:42)*

1. Through use of significant Old Testament passages (2Sam 7; Joel 2:28–32; Ps 16:8–11; Ps 110), Peter’s sermon at Pentecost clearly showed that the kingdom was once again being offered to Israel.
2. As the church grew, opposition increased from the leaders in Jerusalem.

*The Spread of the Early Church into Judea & Samaria (Acts 6–12)*

1. In order that the apostles might devote their attention to the word of God, the people appointed seven men to assist them in serving the church (6:1–6). Things were going well (6:7).
2. Stephen, one of the seven, was brought before the high priest before whom he presented a masterful summary and defense from the Old Testament.
3. In response to his message, the Son of Man stood at the right hand of God, but the Jews stoned Stephen (with Saul looking on).
4. Philip led the Ethiopian eunuch to faith in Christ through the Scriptures.
5. Saul, converted on the road to Damascus, began preaching Christ in the synagogues there (9:1–22).
6. The word continued to prosper in the church; things were going well (9:31).

7. On the way to Cornelius' house, Peter saw a vision in which he was called upon to eat unclean animals.
8. Although Peter was perplexed at the vision, he clearly understood its impact, when he delivered a message to the Gentiles (10:34ff.).
9. In confirmation of the acceptance of Gentiles into the church, the Holy Spirit fell upon those who were listening to Peter (10:44–48).
10. The word of the Lord continued to spread, even in the midst of persecution (12:24).

*The Mission of the Church to the Ends of the Earth (Acts 13–28)*

1. The First Missionary Journey (13–14)
  - a. In 13:16–41, Luke includes a summary of one of Paul's synagogue sermons in which he focuses on the resurrection of the Messiah as predicted in the Old Testament.
  - b. Paul boldly spoke to the Jews at Antioch about their turning their message to the Gentiles (13:46–47)
2. The Jerusalem Council answered early questions about the relationship of believing Gentiles to the Jewish Law (15:1–35).
3. The Second Missionary Journey (15:36–18:22)
  - a. Even in adversity (disagreement over Mark) the work of God prospered.
  - b. Paul and Silas met the disciple, Timothy, in Rome; Lydia was converted in Philippi.
  - c. Paul and Silas were stripped, beaten and thrown in jail in Philippi.
  - d. After Thessalonica and Berea, Paul addressed those in the Areopagus in Athens (Acts 17).
  - e. Throughout this journey, Paul continues to remain focused on reasoning with those in the synagogues (e.g., 18:19).
4. The Third Missionary Journey (18:23–21:16)
  - a. In Ephesus, Paul found some disciples of John the Baptist (19:1–7). They believed in Jesus, but they had not received the Spirit.
  - b. In showing their acceptance, Luke justifies the inclusion of transition groups in the early church.
  - c. Paul experienced an effective, two-year ministry at Ephesus, but he also experienced opposition.
  - d. After journeying from Ephesus, to Greece and back to Troas, Paul went to Miletus, where he called the Ephesian elders for a farewell address (ch. 20).
5. Paul's Arrest (21:17–23:10)
  - a. Returning to Jerusalem, Paul is faced with an intriguing situation. What becomes of those Jews who are "zealous for the Law"? Should they abandon the Law?
  - b. The question of the Gentiles' relationship to the Law was established at the Jerusalem Council.

- c. The answer here seems to be that God had not cast Israel off when the Gentiles were brought into the church, in that a remnant of Israel were saved (cf. Rom 11:2–5).
6. Paul's Journey to Rome (23:11–28:31)
    - a. As Paul receives a message of the Lord Himself, the reader understands that what follows had a determined purpose.
    - b. After being rescued from a conspiracy against him, Paul was imprisoned in Caesarea and remained there until Festus replaced Felix.
    - c. Luke shows that Paul had broken no laws and that the charges brought against him in his trials before Festus and Agrippa were false (25:8, 19, 25–27; 26:31).
    - d. Luke portrays the story of Paul's journey to Rome in much the same way that Jonah is described. E.g., both stories stress the guidance, through peril, of a sovereign God bring his plan to completion; Jonah was reluctant to go to the Gentiles, and Paul was brought in chains; Paul did not originally set out to preach to the Jews, but God had other plans, like with Jonah; both were in a storm at sea; like Jonah, Paul encouraged the men to have faith in God, and God rescued them.
    - e. After arriving in Rome, Paul carried out his practice of reasoning with the Jewish leaders. His verdict is the verdict of the book: "this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will also listen" (28:28).
    - f. Note the content of Paul's ministry: preaching the kingdom and teaching concerning the Lord Jesus Christ (28:31).

### **The Purpose of Acts**

The Apostolic Witness (i.e. the Word) spread in accordance with the plan of God from Jerusalem to Rome and was proclaimed to both Jews and Gentiles.

### **How should I respond?**