

INTRODUCTION TO ACTS:

A. Acts 1:1 - The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach,

1. Acts is probably the most difficult book in the Bible to get straight and then to keep it straight. If we don't get it right at the start, we will be incorrect in our interpretation of it.
2. There are 3 major books that are so difficult because they are transitional books. They are Matthew, Acts, and Hebrews.

****Let's suppose that there was no book of Acts. What would we think if we jumped from the Gospels to the book of Romans? It would be like we went to sleep in one country and woke up in another!**

3. Acts is the bridge of transition between 2 dispensations, Law and Grace. Just as many believers think Matthew is the beginning of the New Testament - something new, many also believe the beginning of Acts was something new - the beginning of the New Testament Church. But, the truth is the Jews were still on kingdom on earth ground (Acts 1:6).
4. Another indication that early Acts is on Jewish kingdom ground is that under God's direction, they chose Matthias to replace Judas. It was required that the person chosen must have been a disciple from the time of John the Baptist. Also, why did they need to replace Judas? The answer is: because the Kingdom offer had not yet taken place, and if established, they must have 12 apostles to sit on 12 thrones judging 12 tribes of Israel. This was the promise Jesus made to His disciples about when He would set up His Kingdom: Luke 22:30 - That ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.
5. So, we will see the transition of the Kingdom offer to Israel in Acts 1-6; then Israel's rejection in Chapter 7; then Israel being temporarily set aside in Chapter 8; the salvation of the first person in the Body of Christ - Saul/Paul in Chapter 9; then the rest of Acts goes from Peter/the 12/Israel's fall to Paul and the Body Church and the Mystery Program.

B. Now when the believer sees these dispensational distinctives between Prophecy-Israel and Mystery-Body Church, beginning with Paul, they will not only understand the book of Acts, but will also better understand the entire Bible!

***If not, they will always be ignorant of much truth, being scripturally controlled by some denomination, tradition or man's opinions, and remain in the dark spiritually to God's Word.**

1. Many within fundamental circles understand that the book of Acts is a transitional book. Sadly, there is a lot of disagreement on exactly what Acts is transitioning from and what it is transitioning to. Most say, there is only one church in the gospels and in Acts (it is the same one). Some say, it is a different church in Acts, that began in Acts 2 with the coming of the Holy Spirit. They say the 12 preached the gospel to the Jews and Paul preached the same message to Jews and Gentiles to bring them in.
2. Dispensationalists disagree with those statements because we see the difference between Israel's Church - under Law and the Body Church - under grace. We see the difference with those in early Acts being baptized with the Holy Spirit by Christ, and Body believers (us) being Spirit baptized into the Body of Christ when we believe the gospel.

Matthew 3:11 - I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and *with* fire:

Acts 1:5 - For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.

I Corinthians 12:13 - For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether *we be* Jews or Gentiles, whether *we be* bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.

Galatians 3:27 - For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

Ephesians 1:13 - In whom ye also *trusted*, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise,

3. Another error is that many theologians and early Church fathers have taught that the book of Acts is the story of the outgrowth of the Body Church - wherein the truth is, it is about the fall and diminishing of Israel (temporarily). It is about Israel's apostasy and their rejection of God, the Messiah, salvation, and their own 12.

****But again**, it is also a book of movement, change, and transition from Peter's (Israel) ministry to Paul's (Body) ministry. In Chapters 1-12, Peter's ministry to Israel comes to an end by their rejection of him. Paul is accepted by the Gentiles, but Israel rejects Paul's message in Chapters 13-28.

- C. The author of the book of Acts is not clearly stated, but it is easy to see that Luke is its author from the internal evidence of Luke and Acts.

1. Luke claims to be a traveling companion of Paul and it is suggested that he is a physician. Paul says a "Luke" was with him in his ministry and he was a physician.

Colossians 4:14 - Luke, the beloved physician, and Demas, greet you.

II Timothy 4:11 - Only Luke is with me. Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry.

Philemon 1:24 - Marcus, Aristarchus, Demas, Lucas, my fellowlabourers.

2. Luke also authored the book of Luke, where he shared much of Christ's birth, infancy, and some of Jesus' boyhood. He wrote of the Good Samaritan, the Prodigal Son, end-time events, and was the only one to record three of the sayings of Christ on the cross: "Father forgive them", "Today, shalt thou be with Me in paradise", and "Father, into Thy hands I commend My Spirit."
3. Luke wrote more of the New Testament than anyone else. The book of Luke has 24 chapters, Acts has 28 chapters, and there is a good chance Luke even wrote the book of Hebrews.
4. There are some who try to say Luke was a Gentile because Luke is a Gentile name. But, didn't Paul have a Gentile name? This was common back then. The Jews were entrusted with the oracles of God, which was not said of any of the Gentiles. Paul confirms this in Romans 3:1-2 - What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit *is there* of circumcision? Rom. 3:2 Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God.

****So all Scripture came through the Jewish nation.** Luke also had intimate knowledge about the Temple (Luke 1:8-20), showing his Jewish heritage.

5. An important truth was that Luke knew God the Father was asked by Christ to forgive Israel (only found in Luke).

*God did forgive Israel, allowing His work with her to continue until Israel's final rejection of the Messiah in Acts 7 - with the stoning of Stephen.

**This was the additional one year God gave Israel to repent.

Luke 13:6-10 - He spoke also this parable; A certain *man* had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none. Luke 13:7 Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground? Luke 13:8 And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it: Luke 13:9 And if it bear fruit, *well*: and if not, *then* after that thou shalt cut it down. Luke 13:10 And he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the sabbath.

6. If the book of Acts were butted up to the book of Luke, with no chapter or verse divisions, the two books would be as one. Nothing had changed in God's dealings with Israel, except for the risen Messiah and the offering of the Kingdom.
- a. Israel was still under Law and the Gentiles were still alienated from God, with no life. Israel was still God's favoured nation and He was still reaching out to them to repent and return to Him (Acts 2:38, 3:19). Peter was still the spokesman for the Disciples and he was still preaching the kingdom was at hand.
- b. Compare: Matthew 10:5-7 - These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into *any* city of the Samaritans enter ye not: Matt. 10:6 But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Matt. 10:7 And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand.

With: Acts 3:19-21 - Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; Acts 3:20 And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: Acts 3:21 Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.

7. Remember: In only going to the Jews, God was not ruling out the Gentiles for the Kingdom. He was simply following the provisions of the Abrahamic Covenant that the Gentile would be blessed through Israel. This means Israel must be saved first before she could reach out to the Gentiles.

* It should not be surprising that the main question on their minds in Acts was: Acts 1:6 - When they
* therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again
* the kingdom to Israel?

Note: As I was thinking about all of this, Luke became my author for Acts in a personal way. I thought, who better than Luke to take us through this transition from Israel to the Mystery Body, from Peter & the 12 to Paul. Luke had been with the disciples, written of Christ's birth-life-death-resurrection and ascension. Luke knew of the disciples and that ex tended year. But, he also knew of Saul of Tarsus who became Apostle Paul. As he travelled often with Paul, he learned the new dispensational message God had given Paul. Luke was privileged to have seen both dispensations of Law and Grace. Luke knew how and why the transitioning took place in Acts. There was none other, with the comprehension of both programs (other than Paul), like Luke. Who better than to have Luke as the author of Acts and our guide through this amazing transitional book?

D. There are **3** pivotal moments in Acts that we should always keep in our minds:

1. The first pivotal moment is the giving of the Holy **Spirit** in Acts 2.

*This was an act of prophecy, which was promised by John the Baptist. This gives proof of God's continuing His relationship with Israel and the Kingdom Program (not us - the Body).

2. The second pivotal moment was the stoning of Stephen, when Israel's leaders **blas**phemed the Holy Spirit through Stephen.
3. The third pivotal moment was when God raised up **Paul**. God changed in His dealings to reach the Gentiles with**out** involving Israel.