**What You Should Know from NT4-The Early Church in Acts**

Lakeside Institute of Theology

1. What are some of the other names that have been either used or proposed for the Book of Acts?
	1. The Acts of the Apostles *– 2nd century*
	2. The Acts of the Holy Spirit *– 18th century*
	3. The Continuing Words and Deeds of Jesus by his Spirit through his Apostles *– 21st cent.*
2. What is the purpose of the Book of Acts?
	1. To tell the story of the growth and development of the early church, from the last words and ascension of Jesus to the arrest and first Roman imprisonment of the Apostle Paul, especially as a fulfillment of the promises of God recorded in the Old Testament.
3. About when do we believe the Book of Acts was written?
	1. Around AD 62-69.
4. Who wrote the Book of Acts, and for what else is he known?
	1. Luke the Physician, who had been a companion of the Apostle Paul.
	2. Luke also wrote the Gospel of Luke. Together, Luke & Acts make up about 25% of the New Testament.
5. What is especially unique about Luke, among all the Bible writers?
	1. Luke is the only non-Jewish author of any part of the Bible.
6. What were Luke’s motivations to write the Book of Acts?
	1. He wrote as a historian, to provide an orderly record of events about the creation and development of the Early Church.
	2. He wrote as a diplomat, addressing some of the issues that had affected relations between the Church and the Roman State.
	3. He wrote as a theologian and evangelist, with a focus on the means to salvation in Christ, as experienced by the Church.
7. What are the “three parts” of the Book of Acts?
	1. Part One – the witness of Christian believers in Jerusalem, as the Church is first established and begins to grow, from the ascension of Jesus to the persecution by Saul and martyrdom of Stephen.
	2. Part Two – The witness of Christian believers throughout Judea and Samaria, especially by Philip and Peter; the conversion of Saul, who becomes Paul; and the first Gentile converts.
	3. Part Three – The witness of Christian believers – especially Paul, Barnabas and their companions – to “the ends of the earth” (the entire eastern and central Mediterranean region).
8. Where was the first Christian church and who made up that fellowship?
	1. In Jerusalem, with all the early Christians being Jews.
9. In what ways did Jesus especially equip the Apostles in preparation for the creation of the Church?
	1. He chose them from among his followers.
	2. He showed himself to them, after his resurrection.
	3. He commissioned them to go to the whole earth and tell people of him.
	4. He promised them the Holy Spirit.
10. In what way do the opening verses of the Book of Acts separate Christianity from every other religion?
	1. They declare that Jesus, unlike any other religious leader who ever lived, had only begun his ministry during his life, and that it would continue after his death, resurrection and ascension.
11. What four major events occupied the Apostles as they awaited Pentecost?
	1. They received their commission from Jesus.
	2. They witnessed His resurrection.
	3. They persevered together in prayer.
	4. The chose a replacement – Matthias – for Judas Iscariot.
12. What errors and misunderstandings are evident in the question the Apostles asked Jesus: *“Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?”* (Acts 1:6)
	1. The kingdom of God was spiritual, not geo-political, in nature. It had nothing to do with earthly nations or politics.
	2. The kingdom of God was to be available to all people, and not just to Israel.
	3. The kingdom of God was to expand gradually – not all at once, as the Apostles seemed to expect.
13. What special significance was there to having Twelve Apostles?
	1. The 12 Tribes of Israel had represented and embodied the Old (Mosaic) Covenant; and so the 12 Apostles represented the New Covenant – something that would almost certainly have been obvious to all 1st century Jews.
14. What were the two criteria required of a candidate to take Judas’ place as an Apostle?
	1. The person had to have been present throughout Jesus’ entire earthly ministry, from John the Baptist onward.
	2. The person had to have witnessed the resurrected Jesus.
15. What was the Jewish festival of Pentecost, and why is that important?
	1. It was the Festival of Harvest, or Festival of Weeks, that occurred 50 days (thus “Pentecost”) after Passover. During the inter-testamental period it has become a celebration of the giving of the Law and First Covenant at Mt. Sinai – which means it had become a major festival that drew Jews from all over the Eastern Mediterranean region.
16. What is the significance of the Events at Pentecost in Acts 2?
	1. It is the day the Christian Church was born.
	2. Jesus had promised that after his ascension the Comforter would come, and on the day of Pentecost the followers of Jesus were all gathered when the Holy Spirit came upon them in power and they spoke in other tongues. These languages were recognized by the many people who had come from all over the Eastern Mediterranean region to Jerusalem for the Festival of Pentecost. Peter gives his first great sermon and three thousand people believe in Jesus – the start of the Christian Church.
17. Why was the coming of the Holy Spirit on the disciples so important?
	1. It fulfilled Jesus’ promise to the disciples, and was – in effect – the final act of Jesus‘ saving ministry before his ascension and until his eventual return.
	2. The Holy Spirit gave the disciples everything they needed to complete their mission.
	3. It inaugurated the new era of the Holy Spirit – or Messianic Era – in the Church.
	4. It constituted the first “revival” – a visitation by God that both revived believers and caused others to turn to God.
18. How does Peter present Jesus in his great Pentecost sermon?
	1. Jesus was a man attested to as able to do great miracles.
	2. He was killed – handed over by the Jews to wicked men (the Romans) for execution.
	3. But he was resurrected, because death could not hold him.
	4. God then exalted Jesus as Lord and Messiah.
	5. In Him is found salvation.
19. When the Jews heard Peter’s sermon and asked, “What shall we do?” – what did Peter tell them?
	1. Repent and be baptized.
	2. Receive two gifts – forgiveness of your sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit.
	3. “Save yourselves from this corrupt generation” – meaning join the new Messianic community of the Church.
20. Why was Pentecost so important for Christian mission and evangelism?
	1. Jews from 15 different regions of the Eastern Mediterranean were in Jerusalem and heard Peter’s first great sermon – with 3000 of them coming to accept Jesus. When these people later returned home, they took their new faith with them and started sharing it with others.
21. Why have some scholars observed that this book is actually less the “Acts” of the Apostles and more the “Speeches” of the Apostles?
	1. There are 19 major speeches in Acts – making up over 25% of the text of the book. There are 8 major speeches by Peter, 1 each by Stephen and James, and 9 by Paul.
22. In Acts 3, we have Peter and John going up to the Temple at three o’clock in the afternoon – the usual time of Jewish prayer. What does that tell us?
	1. The early Jewish Christians continued to practice their Jewish faith for a considerable time after they first believed in Jesus.
23. What one characteristic can we identify as most remarkable in the sermons in Acts – especially those early sermons of Peter?
	1. Their extreme “Christ-centeredness” – everything was focused on Jesus and salvation that came through faith in Him.
24. Why were the Sadducees on the Sanhedrin upset with the preaching of Peter, John and the others?
	1. They were preached that Jesus was resurrected – and the Sadducees did not believe in resurrection.
	2. They felt they were being accused of participating in the death of Jesus (which they had).
	3. They feared this could lead to disorder that could result in a clamp-down by the Roman authorities.
	4. They feared this would undermine their own authority.
25. Why in Acts 6, was it necessary to appoint the first deacons, and what was unusual about those appointed?
	1. A dispute had arisen in which it was claimed the Hellenistic Jewish widows in the church were not being cared for as well as the Hebraic widows. Rather than having the Apostles take time away from preaching and teaching to take care of this, seven deacons were appointed – all of whom had Hellenistic (that it, Greek) names.
26. Who was the first Christian martyr?
	1. Stephen, a deacon of the Church, who was stoned by a Jewish mob.
27. What happened following the stoning of Stephen?
	1. After the stoning of Stephen the Jewish authorities launched an aggressive persecution of Jewish Christians – especially Hellenized Jewish Christians – and so those new believers fled Jerusalem. As they went they took their new Christian faith with them and shared it with others, so widespread evangelization occurred.
28. Why did the Jewish authorities persecute the early Christians?
	* + Christianity was seen as threatening the established religious authority
		+ Christianity was seen as a Jewish heresy to be stamped out
		+ Christianity was seen as having the potential for causing a Roman backlash
29. Who was Saul, what happened to him, and why is he important?
	1. Saul was a young Pharisee who was intent on persecuting the Jewish Christians for the Sanhedrin when – on his way to Damascus to arrest Jewish Christians – he was knocked from his horse, was blinded and heard the voice of Jesus. After this conversion experience he became a Christian evangelist, eventually taking a new name: the Apostle Paul.
30. What was Peter’s vision while on a rooftop in the city of Joppa, and why is it important?
	1. Peter had a vision of a large sheet being lowered from heaven filled with all kinds of animals – both clean and unclean. A voice from heaven told him to “take and eat” and when Peter refused because some of the animals were unclean according to the Jewish Law, God told him not to call anything unclean that God had called clean. This both led to an eventual change in the Jewish dietary laws and – more importantly – prepared Peter to accept Gentiles into the Christian faith.
31. Who were the first Gentile converts?
	1. A Roman centurion named Cornelius – a God-fearing Gentile – and his family in Caesarea; followed by Gentiles in Antioch of Syria.
32. Where was the first Christian Church that was predominantly Gentile, and where the people were first called “Christians?”
	1. In Antioch of Syria.
33. Who was the first of the Apostles to be martyred, and by whom was he killed?
	1. James the brother of John, executed by King Herod Agrippa to try to win favor with the Jews.
34. Where and to whom was Paul’s First Missionary journey, and who were his companions?
	1. The First Missionary Journey of Paul (45 AD) was from Antioch of Syria, by sea to the island of Cyprus, then on to Asia Minor (modern day central Turkey) to plant churches in the towns of the southern portion of the Roman province of Galatia – Perga, Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe.
	2. Paul was accompanied on this journey by Barnabas and – for the first part of the trip – by Barnabas’ cousin, John Mark (who later wrote the Gospel of Mark).
35. What was the special importance and result of the Jerusalem Council (c. AD 48), as recorded in Acts 15?
	1. Following the conversion of the first Gentiles to faith in Christ (in Caesarea and then Antioch) some Jewish Christians were insisting these Gentile converts had to be circumcised and follow the Mosaic Law in order to be Christians.
	2. Based on the testimony of Peter, Paul and Barnabas, the Jerusalem Council (the ruling body for the early church) decided that Gentiles did not have to become Jews or conform to Jewish Law to be followers of Jesus – a decision that was declared by James, the half-brother of Jesus, who had become head of the Jerusalem Council.
36. What were the potential theological ramifications of the insistence by the “Judaizers” that Gentile Christians should be required to be circumcised and follow the Mosaic Law?
	1. It would have meant faith in Jesus was not sufficient to save – that it was necessary to add circumcision and observance of the Law.
	2. It would have meant Moses was needed to complete what Jesus could only begin – in effect making Moses more important than Jesus.
	3. It would have changed the entire understanding of the Gospel because it would have completely reshaped how salvation was to be received.
37. Who was the head of the Jerusalem church, and so moderator of the Jerusalem Council?
	1. James the Just, half-brother of Jesus.
38. At the same time the Jerusalem Council decided Gentile Christians did not have to be circumcised or follow the Mosaic Law, they also told Gentile Christian not to eat food that had been offered to idols, commit sexual immorality, or eat either blood or animals that had been strangled. Why did they insist on these things?
	1. Because these were things many Gentiles did, and which were repulsive to Jews. While obedience to such regulations was not required for salvation, it would be necessary so that Gentile Christians did not offend Jews and so make them unwilling to hear the Good News about Jesus.
39. Where and to whom was Paul’s Second Missionary journey, and who were his companions?
	1. The Second Missionary Journey of Paul (51-54 AD) was overland to revisit the churches in Derbe, Lystra and Iconium; then across central Asia Minor (modern day central Turkey) to the city of Troas on the Aegean Sea; then across to Macedonia (in Europe) and Greece – including (among others) the cities of Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, and Corinth; before returning by sea to Asia Minor; visiting Ephesus before returning by way of Cyprus to Jerusalem.
	2. Paul was accompanied on this journey by Silas, and was later joined by Timothy and Luke.
40. Why did Barnabas not go with Paul on the Second Missionary journey?
	1. Barnabas wanted to again take his cousin, John Mark, with them, but Paul refused because John Mark had deserted them on their first trip together. So Paul and Barnabas parted ways – though they later were reconciled, according to Paul’s letters.
41. What prompted Paul’s first visit to Greece and Europe?
	1. After being prevented (we don’t know how) from visiting some areas in Asia Minor (Turkey), Paul was in the port city of Troas on the Aegean Sea when he had a vision of a man from Macedonian (a province in Greece) asking Paul to come and help them – which Paul understood to be a call to go and preach there.
42. Who were the first converts in Europe?
	1. Lydia, a Gentile business woman and her household in Philippi; followed by the Philippian jailer and his household.
43. What major cities in Greece did Paul visit on his Second Missionary journey?
	1. Philippi
	2. Thessalonica
	3. Berea
	4. Athens
	5. Corinth

1. Where and to whom was Paul’s Third Missionary journey, and who were his companions?
	1. The Third Missionary Journey of Paul (54-58 AD) was overland from Antioch of Syria, through Asia Minor (modern day central Turkey) to Ephesus (where he stayed over two years); then across to Europe to revisit many of the cities in Macedonia and Greece; returning by way of stops on several Aegean islands and ports in Asia Minor; and then back to Jerusalem.
	2. Paul was accompanied on this journey by Timothy and Luke, and perhaps others.

1. What was the cause of the riot in Ephesus?
	1. Ephesus was the site of the Temple of Artemis (one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World), and so a major center for Artemis worship. Many of the citizens worked making and selling small shrines to Artemis and other gods – but Paul’s preaching was converting so many people it began to hurt their business. So they caused an uproar in the city, which eventually was only quelled with threats the Romans might come and suppress it.
2. How and why was Paul arrested?
	1. Upon returning to Jerusalem after his 3rd journey, Paul was in the Temple courts when zealous Jews grabbed him and falsely accused him of bringing non-Jews into the Temple. The uproar caused Roman guards to come from the Antonia Fortress (adjacent to the Temple courts) and arrest Paul for his own protection. Paul tried to address the crowds, but when he said God had sent him to minister the Gentiles, the uproar started again and he was taken into the Roman barracks. There he was about to be flogged when he informed the Roman commander he was a Roman citizen. To protect him from an assassination plot, the Romans later took Paul to the Roman headquarters at Caesarea, where – after appearing before Governor Festus and King Agrippa – he appealed to Rome. He stayed two years in Caesarea before being sent on to Rome.
3. What finally happened to Paul?
	1. The Book of Acts ends with Paul in prison in Rome. Tradition says he was eventually released and took another missionary trip – to Spain and perhaps as far as Britain – before again being arrested and then executed in Rome around AD 67.