**Acts of the Apostles: A Summary**

**Introduction: Luke’s Theological Geography**  The author’s geographical selections are theologically driven, not historically comprehensive.

* Acts begins in **Jerusalem**, the capital of Israel (1:4), and ends in **Rome**, the capital of the whole empire (28:14b-31).
* **Acts 1:8** seems to give a geographical outline of the whole book: “*Jerusalem*, in all *Judea and Samaria*, and to *the ends of the earth*."

**An Outline/Survey of Acts**

***Acts 1–7*** **Beginnings among the Jews**. Describes the preaching of the apostles and the growth of the Christian community in ***Jerusalem***. The Church gets established among the Jews. The Pentecost (Acts 2) breaks the barriers. Peter stands out as the leader in the early period of the apostolic Church. The Church was persecuted by Jews. The early Christian community practises Table Fellowship and sorts out internal tensions. Stephen becomes the first martyr of the Church.

***Acts 8–12*** **Time of Transition**. Focuses mainly on the spread of the church to other parts of ***Judea*** *and* ***Samaria***(and nearby *Syria*). It is a period of transition (8:4-11:18). So far the Church was growing among the Jews only. But in ch.8, Philip goes to Samaria with the Gospel. The conversion of the Ethiopian Eunuch is also a mark of transition. Ch.9 records the conversion of Paul who in turn would become the apostle to the gentiles. Conversion of Cornelius (ch 10), a now-Jew, was an eye-opener to Jewish Christians.

***Acts 13–28*** **Gospel to the Gentiles; the Pauline Programme**. Deals with the expansion of Christianity to "the ends of the earth," esp. through *Asia Minor*, *Greece*, and eventually *to* ***Rome***, the capital and largest city of the Roman Empire.

The following table provides us some approximate dates to remember.

AD

c.33 The conversion of Saul

c.47-48 Paul’s First Missionary Journey (Acts.13-14)

c.49 The Council of Jerusalem (Acts.15)

c.50-52 The Second Missionary Journey (16:1-18:22)

c.52-56 The Third missionary Journey (18:23-21:17)

c.57 Paul's arrest in Jerusalem (21:27-23:30)

c.57-59 Paul's imprisonment in Caesarea (23:31-26:32)

c.60- 61 Paul under house arrest in Rome (28:14-31)

a) **THE FIRST MISSIONARY JOURNEY** (A.D.47-48) Acts 13-14.

Antioch -- Cyprus (Salamis, Paphos) -- Perga: John Mark returns - Antioch of Psidia : declare that they turn to Gentiles (13:46) - Iconium -- Lystra : Paul and Barnabas were worshipped -- Derbe -- Lystra -- Iconium -- Antioch of Psidia -- Perga -- Antioch in Syria.

The epistle to **GALATIANS** was written probably just after his first missionary journey and before the Jerusalem Council in A.D. 49. Paul had already visited South Galatia and established Churches - Iconium, Lystra and Derbe. The context of the Epistle is '*Judaizing controversy*'. Some Jewish Christians taught non-Jews must become Jews first and keep the law before becoming Christians. Paul presents the Gospel of Grace over against the Judaizing message. According to another theory, this Epistle was written sometime during Paul's third missionary Journey (52-56 A.D.).

b) **JERUSALEM COUNCIL** (A.D.49) Acts.15. Apostles and elders met to discuss the Judaizing controversy. Decided not to compel gentile converts to observe the Law, but to ask them to be sensitive about Jewish customs. James, brother of Jesus, seems to have chaired the meeting. Paul establishes the case for gentiles. Council affirms the sufficiency of Grace.

c) **THE SECOND MISSIONARY JOURNEY** (c.50-52). Acts 16:1-18:22).

Paul takes Silas with him this time.

Antioch in Syria -- Derbe -- Lystra : Paul takes Timothy in his tour in Galatia -- Iconium -- Troas : Paul sees the vision of Macedonian man -- Philippi: Conversion of Lydia; Paul and Silas jailed; jailor converted -- Thessalonica -- Beroea – Athens: Paul was alone; Areopagus Sermon; Timothy and Silas rejoin Paul but Paul sends Timothy to Thessalonica and Silas elsewhere – Corinth: with Priscilla and Aquila; Timothy and Silas rejoins Paul.

**I AND II THESSALONIANS** were written during Paul's stay in Corinth (about 1½ years). First letter was written immediately after Timothy rejoined Paul. In the first letter Paul congratulates the Church on their conversion and growth, and also exhort them toward further progress, with particular emphasis on comfort from the second coming of Christ. "*What happened to those who have already died ?*" was a question that troubled Thessalonians. II Thessalonians was written not long after the first letter, seeing that fanaticism and a desire for deliverance from persecution were growing among the members. It is a corrective letter.

Corinth -- Cenchrea: Paul takes Jewish vow -- Ephesus: Priscilla and Aquila accompany Paul this far -- Caesarea -- Jerusalem -- Antioch in Syria.

d) **THE THIRD MISSIONARY JOURNEY** (c.52-56) Acts 18:23 - 21:17.

Antioch in Syria -- Galatia and Phrygia (Derbe, Lystra, Iconium, Antioch of Psidia) -- Ephesus: John's disciples receives the Spirit; spends two years and three months.

**I CORINTHIANS** was written during this time. He concentrates on the problems in the Corinthian Church. Disunity (chs. 1-4), Immorality and marriage (Chs.5-7), food dedicated to idols (8:1-11:1), head-covering (11:2-34) the Lords Supper (11:34ff), concerning spiritual gifts (12-14) and resurrection (Ch.15).

Ephesus -- Macedonia (Philippi, Thessalonica, Beroea).

Paul wrote **II CORINTHIANS** from Macedonia. After the first letter he had made a '*painful visit*' to Corinth from Ephesus in which he failed to accomplish his purpose [ 2 Cor: 2:1]. Then Paul sent a "*sorrowful letter*" [ 2 Cor: 2:4]. II Corinthians was written after Titus brought the news that the majority in the Church had submitted to Paul's authority. This Epistle is known as the *Epistle of Paul's ministry*. He explains his personal conduct and defends his ministry. II Corinthians in the present form seems to be an assemblage from four original letters. One of these letters was prior to the present I Corinthians (See I Cor.5:9)

Macedonia -- Greece or Achia (Athens and Corinth).

The letter to **ROMANS** was written while Paul was at Corinth, as a preparation for his first visit to that city. The theme is justification/reconciliation of the world in Christ. Man's problem: sinfulness (1:18-3:20), God's remedy: Justification (3:21-Ch.5), Christian living (Chs.6-8), Israel's problem (Chs.9-11), Practical exhortations (Chs.12-16). For Paul, theology always leads us to ethics.

Corinth -- Macedonia -- Troas: Eutychus incident -- Miletus: Farewell to the Ephesian Church -- Tyre -- Caesarea -- Jerusalem: presents a report before the Church.

e) **PAUL'S ARREST IN JERUSALEM AND IMPRISONMENT IN CAESAREA**

(c.57-57). Acts. 21:27 - 26:32.

**The Arrest** (21:27 - 23:30). The Roman commander arrests him. He speaks to the crowd; presented before the Sanhedrin. The commander sends him to Felix at Caesarea.

**The Caesarean Imprisonment** (23:31 - 26:32). Trials before Felix and Festus. Hearing by King Agrippa-II. As Paul makes an appeal to Caesar, Festus decides to send Paul to Rome.

f) **PAUL'S JOURNEY TO ROME** (Acts.27:1 - 28:10).

Caesarea - Crete - Malta -- Rome.

g) **PAUL'S IMPRISONMENT IN ROME** (c.60-62). Acts. 28:14-31.

While waiting for the trial before Caesar, Paul was enjoying some amount of freedom. He was allowed to have visitors and to preach tje Gospel to them.

It seems that three of his letters - **PHILIPPIANS**, **PHILEMON** and **COLOSSIANS** were written during Paul's Roman imprisonment.

We do not have the details about the last two years of Paul's life in the NT. Paul was put to death by Romans in AD.64/65.

**Parallels between the Apostles and Jesus:**

The portrayal of the apostles in Acts is very similar to the portrait of Jesus in Luke's Gospel.

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| **The Apostles in Acts** | **Jesus in Luke's Gospel** |
| The Holy Spirit descends on the apostles at Pentecost (2:1-4) | The Holy Spirit descends on Jesus at his baptism (3:21-22) |
| Peter preaches, quoting from the prophet Joel (2:16-36; quoting Joel 2:28-32) | Jesus preaches, after reading from the prophet Isaiah (4:14-30; quoting Isa 61:1-2) |
| The apostles call people to join them (2:37-41, 47b) | Jesus calls his first followers (5:1-11, 27-32) |
| Peter and John heal a lame beggar (3:1-10) | Jesus heals a blind beggar (18:35-43) |
| The high priest arrests several apostles and questions them before the council (4:1-22) | Jesus is arrested and interrogated by the council (22:47-71) |
| The narrator summarizes the "signs and wonders" of the apostles, especially their healings and exorcisms (5:12-16; 8:6-7, 13) | The narrator summarizes the miraculous activity of Jesus, esp. his healings and exorcisms (4:40-41; 6:17-19) |
| The sick are healed through Peter's shadow (5:15) and Paul's handkerchiefs (19:11-12) | A woman is healed when she touches the fringes of Jesus' clothing (8:43-48) |
| The Jewish leaders want to kill the apostles, because of their teachings (5:17-42) | Jewish leaders plot to kill Jesus, partly due to his teachings (19:45-48) |
| Peter raises Tabitha (a.k.a. Dorcas) from the dead at Joppa (9:36-42) | Jesus raises a widow's son from the dead at Nain(7:11-17) |
| The apostles encounter a pious Roman centurion (10:1-48) | Jesus heals the son of a faithful Roman centurion (7:1-10) |
| Paul feels compelled by the Spirit to go to Jerusalem, despite the dangers that await him there (19:21; 21:8-17) | Jesus is determined to go to Jerusalem, despite the dangers that await him there (9:51; 13:33; 19:11-28) |
| Paul is welcomed in Jerusalem by the believers, and soon goes to the temple (21:17-26) | Jesus is welcomed in Jerusalem by large crowds, and soon goes to the temple (19:28-48) |
| Paul is seized by a Jewish mob that wants him killed, but later stands trial before Roman governors (21:30-36; 23:23**–**26:32) | Jesus is arrested by a Jewish mob, but is later turned over to the Roman procurator for trial (22:47-54; 23:1-25) |
| Paul argues against the Sadducees, who do not believe in the resurrection (23:6-9) | Jesus is questioned by some Sadducees, who deny the concept of resurrection (20:29-38) |
| Paul takes bread, gives thanks, breaks it, and eats (27:35; cf. 20:7-11) | Jesus takes bread, blesses it, breaks it, and gives it to his disciples to eat (27:35; cf. 24:30) |
| As he is being stoned to death, Stephen hands his spirit over to the Lord Jesus and forgives his executioners (7:59-60) | As he is dying on the cross, Jesus forgives his executioners and hands his spirit over to God (23:34, 46) |