

The Book of Acts

Authorship: Internal evidence suggest that Luke was the writer of the book of Acts. The Acts prologue (1:1), “*In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach...*” immediately identifies with the book of Luke.

Date: Very likely the same date as the Gospel of Luke (That is, anywhere from AD 65 to AD 80).

Place in Canon: New Testament - History (The book of Acts is history from God's point of view).

Unique Features: Acts is a continuation of Luke's Gospel. It ends with an adverb, *AKOLUTOS* = Unhindered-ly (Not an English word).

Background & Historical Situation: Jesus was born into Pietistic Judaism. In Luke Jesus assaults Judaism. The church was born into Pietistic Judaism. In Acts the church struggles with being free from Judaism.

Purpose: Because Acts is a continuation of an earlier work (Gospel of Luke), the purpose of the earlier work also applies here. The purpose of the second book was to complete/compliment the first already written. As a historian and theologian Luke proposed to pen the story of the birth of a movement. Luke attempts to show the universality of the Gospel. An apologetic purpose is to show that Christianity was not a subversive sect of Judaism.

What is it that Luke is trying to tell his readers in Acts? Well, some say that Luke is trying to tell his readers about ...

1. The Apostles.

Well, if he is trying to tell about the apostles then he fails miserably. It's not really about the Twelve, Stephen & Paul, etc. God is the actor in Acts. Perhaps it would be more accurate to refer to this book as the *Acts of the Holy Spirit* rather than the *Acts of the Apostles*.

2. The Geographic spread of the church.

But it only tells how the church spread north and west. It did spread into Africa and to the East, too.

3. The tale of two cities.

Acts tells how the Gospel got from Jerusalem to “pagan” Rome. God used ordinary people to do extraordinary things because He empowered them with the Holy Spirit.

Key Passage: “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8 NIV).

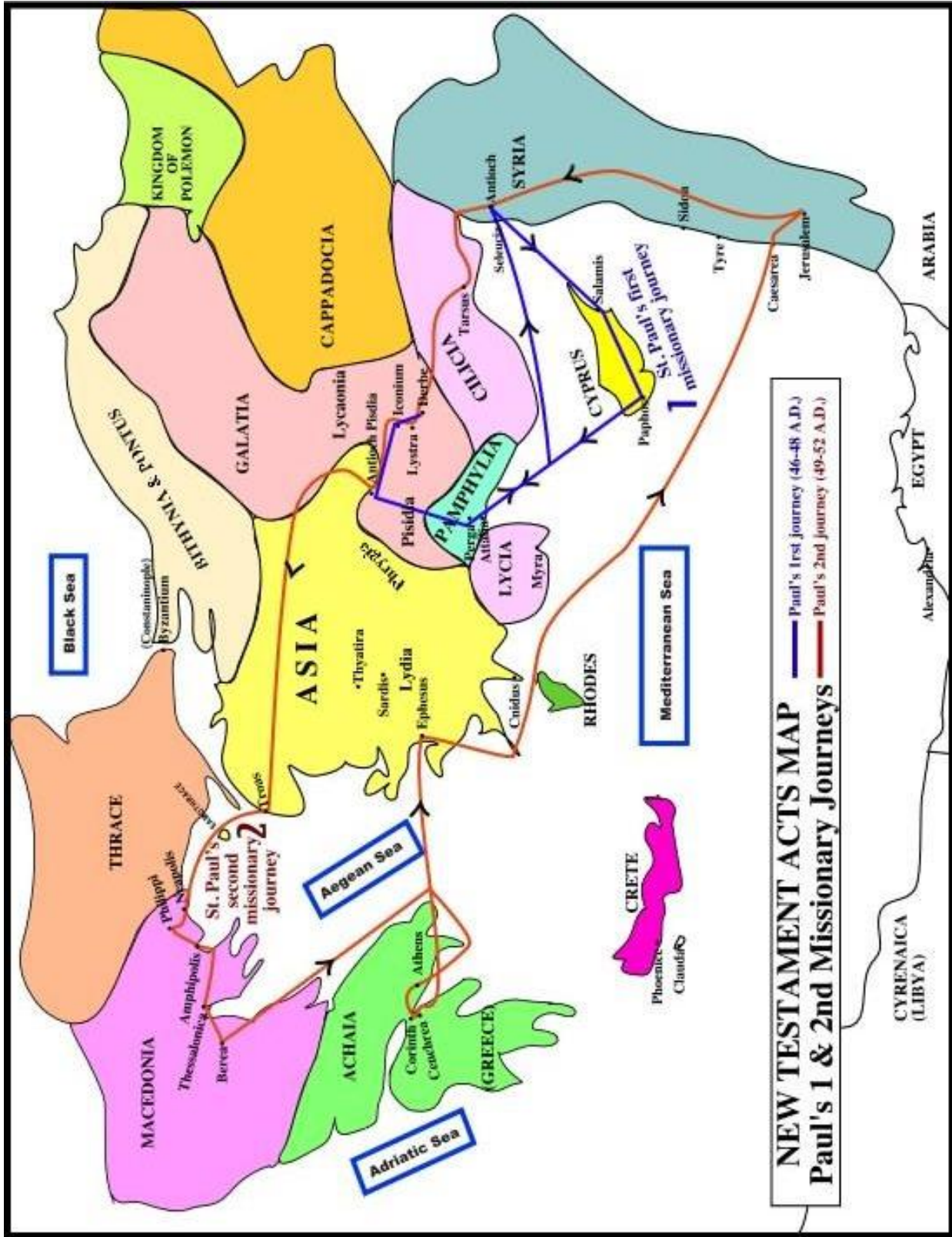
Outline:

- I. The Witness to Christ in and around Jerusalem (1:1-7:60)
 - A. Introduction and Instructions (1:1-8)
 - B. The Ascension (1:9-11)
 - C. The Selection of Judas's Replacement (1:12-26)
 - D. Pentecost: Emergence of the Church (2:1-47)
 - E. First Encounter of the Church with the Religious Leaders (3:1-4:35)
 - F. Ananias and Sapphira: A Case of Discipline (4:36-5:16)
 - G. Second Encounter of the Church with the Religious Leaders (5:17-42)
 - H. The Seven Servants: An Example of Problem Solving (6:1-7)
 - I. Stephen: Fatal Clash with Judaism (6:8-7:60)
- II. The Witness to Christ in Judea and Samaria (8:1-12:25)
 - A. Saul the Persecutor and Philip the Evangelist (8:1-40)
 - B. The Conversion of Saul (9:1-31)
 - C. Peter's Ministry in Judea (9:32-11:18)
 - D. The Antioch Church: Barnabas's Ministry (11:19-30)
 - E. Peter's Miraculous Deliverance (12:1-25)
- III. The Witness to Christ to the Ends of the Earth (13:1-28:31)
 - A. Paul's First Missionary Journey (13:1-14:28)
 - B. The Jerusalem Council (15:1-35)
 - C. Paul's Second Missionary Journey (15:36-18:22)
 - D. Paul's Third Missionary Journey (18:23-21:15)
 - E. Paul's Arrest in Jerusalem and Incarceration at Caesarea (21:15-26:32)
 - F. Paul's Voyage to Rome (27:1-28:10)
 - G. Paul's Ministry at Rome (28:11-31)

Source:

Elwell, Walter A. and Robert W. Yarbrough. *Encountering the New Testament: A Historical and Theological Survey*. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 1998).

Paul's Missionary Journeys



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