

Acts: Introduction

When we studied the overview of Revelation, we began with its place in the Bible. We shall do the same with the Book of Acts. Most students of the Bible readily teach that Acts is the bridge between the Gospels and Epistles but it is much more than that.

Job: the 10 Questions of Job and the challenge by Satan:

Job 14:4 Who can make the clean out of the unclean? No one!

Words of Satan recorded in the Word of God.

Please remember that the Word of God, the Holy Bible, records the words of man, saved and unregenerate. It records the words of Satan and, of course, the Words of God. So here we have the challenge **Who can make the Clean out of the unclean? Who can make Righteous out of the unrighteous.?** Then Satan answers **No One!** This is in the original Hebrew manuscripts. **No One!** meaning that there is no hope for mankind, sinful man, by Satan's scheme of getting Eve and Adam to sin. So now, sinful man is doomed to remain in Satan's Kingdom of Darkness, where he alone is god. He demands that God remain perfect Righteousness which means that God can have no relationship with unrighteous man. He arrogantly boasts –**Who can take man out of my kingdom of Darkness? That is who can make man clean or Righteous before God? No One!**

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Job and the Books of the Old Testament to Israel (Genesis to Malachi). It is in these books that God takes the challenge from Satan: **Who can make the clean out of the unclean?** God responds **I can, I will, and I will do it without the help of the fallen creatures, without help from angels.**

This is clearly recorded in

Isaiah 43:12 It is I who have declared and saved and proclaimed...

In the books to Israel (Old Testament) and Job, God declares that He accepts Satan's challenge, that He and He alone will make the clean out of the unclean, the Righteous out of the unrighteous.

Then there is the important Prophetic passage of

Isaiah 48:16 "Come near to Me, listen to this: From the first I have not spoken in secret, From the time it took place, I was there. And now the Lord God has sent Me, and His Spirit"

And now at the perfect time in history **the Lord GOD** God the Father;

Remember that God the Father is also your Lord; in fact, the Holy Spirit is your Lord who takes you to your Lord, Jesus Christ who takes you to His Lord God the Father.

has sent Me, Jesus Christ, to make the unclean, clean, the unrighteous, Righteous.

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and His Spirit. this is a reference to the Holy Spirit who was sent by God to save, deliver the believers; make them Righteous in their lives, experientially. Jesus Christ makes us Righteous positionally, by grace through faith. The Holy Spirit makes us Righteous experientially by grace through faith.

So: Job and the rest of the Old Testament (God declares); now the Gospels (He Saves).

Next: **Gospels:** God sending His Servant Jesus Christ to save all mankind in His Incarnation: perfect man, perfect Life — sinless; Death —Spiritual and Physical for payment of all sins of the world. Resurrection—Eternal Life to all who believe and are imputed with God's perfect Righteousness.

Now we are ready for **Acts**, God sending His servant the Holy Spirit; the Second Sending by God for making the clean out of the unclean.

Gospels: God sending His Servant, Jesus Christ, His son

Acts: God sending His Servant, His Spirit, the Holy Spirit

Then **Epistles to the Church.** God Proclaims that He has done it. He has done what Satan boasted could not be done. This is the great privilege we have, to tell the World, to Proclaim to the World that God has done it. God has provided a way to save everyone; by Grace, through His Love by grace

This leaves one other book – out there — Book of Revelation.

This is the Glorious Victory of Jesus Christ. God the Father glorifies His Son.

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So here we have a working outline of 66 books of the Bible

Job: The challenge – Who can make the Righteous out of the unrighteous? No One!

38 books to Israel: God takes the challenge: I can, I will; alone; or I declare, I save, I proclaim. In these 38 books to Israel, God declares that He will do it and How He will do it...by 2 sendings.

Gospels: 1st Sending by God — sending of His Son to save all who will believe.

Acts: 2nd Sending by God — sending of His Spirit to make all spiritual.

Epistles to the Church: God Proclaiming that He has done it!

Revelation: Glorification of His Son.

Book of Acts: Acts of the Holy Spirit written by Luke. While Paul wrote the most letters/books, Luke has a greater volume of writing in the New Testament.

The book of Acts is sometimes called the fifth Gospel, which is most befitting for it combines the two sendings by God to save all mankind and to make believers spiritual. (filling of the Holy Spirit).

“Sir William Ramsay after making a critical study of Luke’s writings, declared that Luke was the greatest of all historians, ancient or modern.” (James Vernon McGee). I totally agree, for Luke wrote a historical account of the Two Sendings by God, to save all mankind. Luke was an eyewitness to the two greatest events in human history: The sending of the Son of God and the Sending of the Spirit of God.

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McGee records the relationship between Acts and each of the gospels. “The last recorded fact about Jesus in the Gospel of **Matthew** is the Resurrection which is recorded in Acts 1. In the Gospel of **Mark** the last recorded act of Jesus is the Ascension, which is also recorded in Acts 1. In the Gospel of **Luke**, the last recorded fact is the promise of the Holy Spirit. That is also in Acts 1. And in the Gospel of **John** the last recorded fact is the second coming of Christ. You guessed it—that is also in Acts 1.” It is as though all four of the gospels lead right into the book of Acts.

Everyone who does an analysis of the books of the bible pick one verse that presents the theme of the book. I agree with McGee that the key to the book of acts is found in

Acts 1:8 but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and then you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.”

This verse actually gives the best outline to the entire 28 chapters of the book of Acts and the historical effect of the Sending of the Holy Spirit.

The first 7 chapters record the work of the Head of the Church, Jesus Christ, by the Holy Spirit through the apostles in Jerusalem.

Chapters 8-12 record the work of Jesus Christ by means of the Holy Spirit through the apostles in Judea and Samaria.

And the remainder of the book of Acts:

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Chapters 13-28: How Jesus Christ used the Holy Spirit through the apostles unto the remotest part of the earth.

OK, there is your simple outline in grasping the 28 chapters of Acts. And you will notice the three involved. **First** the head of the Church **Jesus Christ** directing the **Holy Spirit** in proclaiming the Good News throughout the earth and then the use of **believers**. And all through Church Age history, Jesus Christ is the head of the church, and nothing is done without the power of the Holy Spirit. Jesus Christ has chosen to use believers. The distribution of Spiritual Gifts by the Holy Spirit and then the functioning of these gifts in the power of the Holy Spirit, throughout Church history, right up to today.

McGee then points out some special features of the book of Acts:

1. Prominence of the Lord Jesus Christ. (Like our study in Colossians where the 1st two chapters presented the Preeminence of Jesus Christ) The Lord Jesus has left His disciples now. He is gone. He has ascended in the first chapter of Acts. But He still at work! He has just moved His position, His location. He has moved His headquarters. As long as He was here on this earth, His headquarters were in Capernaum. Now His headquarters are at the right hand of the Father. The Lord Jesus Christ is prominent. He is at work from the vantage place of heaven itself.” add here that as long as He remained on earth the Holy Spirit could not come. Why not?

John 7:38 “He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, ‘From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.’ ”

39 But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet *given*, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

This brings us to McGee’s second point.

2. Prominence of the Holy Spirit. Christ promised to send the Holy Spirit. This promise is mentioned in the Gospel of John four times (1:33; 7:37-39; 14:16-17; 20:22). The same promise is given in the Book of Acts (1:8). You and I are living in the age of the Holy Spirit. The great fact of this age is the Indwelling of the Holy Spirit in believers.
3. The Power of the Church. There is a power in the Church. Of course, this is the working of the Spirit of God. That power of the early church is not manifest in churches today. Why? Because the early Church operated on high spiritual level which has not again been attained in any age since then. However, it is the Holy Spirit working through the believer when any service brings honor and glory to the Lord Jesus Christ
4. Prominence of the Church, visible and invisible. The Church is a new institution. It has come into existence in the Book of Acts. Before, God worked through a new race, Jews and a new Nation,

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Israel. But today, He works through the Church, throughout the world.

5. Prominence of places. The book begins at Jerusalem, and ends in Rome. Sir William Ramsey checked all the places mentioned by Dr. Luke and found them to be accurate.
6. Prominence of Persons. Dr. Luke mentions 110 persons by name, besides the references to multitudes or crowds. I believe by the end of the first century there were millions of believers in the world. The church had a phenomenal growth in those first two to three hundred years. It certainly has slowed down today, exactly as our Lord said it would.
7. Prominence of the Resurrection. The Resurrection is the center of gospel preaching. In too many churches today, we have one Easter sermon once a year. As a pastor I have featured Easter in August. However, in the early church the resurrection of Jesus Christ was the very center and heart of the message. No sermon was preached without it. The theme of Peter on the Day of Pentecost was the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. He explained that what was taking place was because Jesus was now in heaven at the right hand of God and had sent His Holy Spirit into the world. It was all due to the Resurrection. You will find that the Resurrection is the very heart of the messages of Paul.” Col. 3:1-2.
8. There is the Prominence of Peter in the first section of the book and of Paul in the last section. The title McGee prefers: The Lord Jesus Christ at Work by the Holy Spirit through the Apostles.

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OUTLINE

- I. The Lord Jesus Christ at Work by the Holy Spirit through the Apostles in Jerusalem, Chapters 1-7** 1-7
- A. Preparation for the Coming of the Spirit, Chapter 1
 - 1. Introduction, Chapter 1:1-2
 - 2. Forty Days Post-Resurrection Ministry of Jesus, Chapter 1:3-8
 - 3. Ascension and Promise of the Return of Jesus, Chapter 1:9-11
 - 4. Waiting for the Spirit, Chapter 1:12-14
 - 5. Appointment of an Apostle, Chapter 1:15-26
 - B. Day of Pentecost (Bethlehem of the Holy Spirit), Chapter 2
 - 1. Coming of the Holy Spirit, Chapter 2:1-13
 - 2. First Sermon in the Church Age by Peter, Chapter 2:14-47
 - C. First Miracle of the Church; Peter's Second Sermon, Chapter 3
 - 1. Healing of Lame Man, Chapter 3:1-11
 - 2. Appealing and Revealing Address of Peter, Chapter 3:12-26
 - 3. Believing Five Thousand Men (Results), Chapter 4:4
 - D. First Persecution of the Church; Power of the Holy Spirit, Chapter 4
 - E. Death of Ananias and Sapphira; Second Persecution, Chapter 5
 - F. Appointment of Deacons; Witness of Stephen, a Deacon, Chapter 6
 - G. Stephen's Address and Martyrdom (First Martyr), Chapter 7
- II. The Lord Jesus Christ at Work by the Holy Spirit through the Apostles in Judea and Samaria, Chapters 8-12** 8-12
- A. Conversion of Ethiopian Eunuch (Son of Ham), Chapter 8
 - B. Conversion of Saul of Tarsus (Son of Shem), Chapter 9
 - C. Conversion of Cornelius, Roman Centurion (Son of Japheth), Chapter 10
 - D. Peter Defends His Ministry; Gospel Goes to Antioch, Chapter 11
 - E. Death of James; Arrest of Peter, Chapter 12
- III. The Lord Jesus Christ at Work by the Holy Spirit through the Apostles to the Uttermost Part of the Earth, Chapters 13-28** 13-28
- A. First Missionary Journey of Paul, Chapters 13-14
 - B. Council at Jerusalem, Chapter 15
 - C. Second Missionary Journey of Paul, Chapters 15:36-16:40
 - D. Second Missionary Journey (continued)
Paul in Thessalonica, Athens, Chapter 17
 - E. Second Missionary Journey (concluded)
Paul in Corinth; Apollos in Ephesus, Chapter 18
 - F. Third Missionary Journey, Chapters 18:23-21:14
Paul in Ephesus, Chapter 19
 - G. Third Missionary Journey of Paul (continued), Chapter 20
 - H. Paul Goes to Jerusalem and Is Arrested, Chapter 21
 - I. Paul's Defense before the Mob at Jerusalem, Chapter 22
 - J. Paul's Defense before the Sanhedrin, Chapter 23
 - K. Paul before Felix, Chapter 24
 - L. Paul before Festus, Chapter 25
 - M. Paul before Agrippa, Chapter 26
 - N. Paul Goes to Rome via Storm and Shipwreck, Chapter 27
 - O. Paul Arrives in Rome, Chapter 28
(Last seen preaching to Gentiles)

From Dr. J. Vernon McGee, Outline and Notes for Acts