

St. Paul's Lutheran Church
Minot, ND
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The Acts of the Apostles

The Ministry of the Gospel in a Messy Church and Conflictive World

Introduction:

Martin Luther once wrote of Acts, saying,

“Contrary to what has sometimes been the practice, this book should not be read or regarded as though St. Luke had written about the encounters work or history of the apostles simply as an example of good works or good life. ... Rather, it should be noted that by this book St. Luke teaches the whole of Christendom even to the end of the world, that the true and chief article of Christian doctrine is this: we must all be justified alone by faith in Jesus Christ, without any contribution from the law or help from our works.”

Date Written: 60-63 A.D.

Words: 18,450 Words

Author: Luke

Purpose:

The Book of Acts shows the Gospel of Jesus at work in the early church through the missionary work of the Apostles, which includes the Apostle Paul.

The Flow of the Book:

Acts 1:8 describes the outline of the book.

Acts 2:1-ff: Local

Acts 8:14-ff: National

Acts 10:44-ff: World

Mistakes Made When Reading Acts

The Book of Acts is quite different than the Book of Romans. Romans is considered a prescriptive book – it prescribes what is and what should be. However, Acts is not

prescriptive. But instead, the Book of Acts is descriptive – it describes the events as they occurred, some good and some bad. And so, we cannot read the history of the church in the Book of Acts and try to make the modern church how it was in the first century. That is not the purpose of Acts. The Book of Romans prescribes and shapes the modern church. The Book of Acts describes and shares about the ancient church.

What do we see, though, when we read the Book of Acts? Generally speaking, the New Testament Church begins not united – as many religious teachers foolishly teach - but divided. The Epistles that come after the Book of Acts were written to bring about unity and fight against heresy that infected the early church. And so, the modern church should not try and become like the ancient church but learn from the ancient church.

Conflict in Acts?

With respect to conflict, it is worth noting that every time there is conflict in the Book of Acts with the early church, the Gospel goes forth, and the church grows. And so, we do not see a peaceful and delightful church in the Book of Acts but a church that is experiencing conflict, division, and persecution. And despite the conflict, the Gospel goes forth!

Miracles & Speaking in Tongues?

The Book of Acts records many miracles and supernatural events. Many of these instances were given to Paul to get him through his ministry. Furthermore, most of the divine interventions were directly related to the spreading of the Gospel – to ensure that the Gospel went forth in the very early years of the church. And so, it becomes very problematic when modern-day preachers try to apply historical events to the modern church. Remember, the Book of Acts is describing the history of the early church and not prescribing how the modern church should be. We have other books such as Romans that teach the church how to function and be.

Enjoy the study of Acts – the ministry of the Gospel in a Messy Church and a Conflictive World!

