



# Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States



## The Acts of the Apostles

### Chapter 1

Bishop Youssef



# Introduction

- The book of Acts provides a detailed, orderly, eyewitness account of the birth and growth of the early church and the spread of the gospel immediately after the resurrection of Jesus Christ
- Its narrative supplies a bridge connecting the life and ministry of Jesus to the life of the church and the witness of the earliest believers
- The work also constructs a link between the Gospels and the Epistles
- In Acts, as St. Luke describes the spread of the gospel and the ministry of the apostles, he focuses primarily on two, St. Peter (the key figure in the first half) & St. Paul (the key figure in the second)
- This book is the only record the events of the first 30 years of the church



# Introduction

- In the Gospels we see Christ purchasing the Church with His own blood: here we see the Church, so purchased, rising into actual existence; first among the Jews of Palestine, and next among the surrounding Gentiles, until it gains a footing in the great capital of the ancient world—sweeping majestically from Jerusalem to Rome
- It also reflects the early persecution of the Church
- The conversion of Saul of Tarsus and Cornelius
- The three missionary journeys of St. Paul, his arrest and his journey to Rome
- Some Scholars called it the Book of the Holy Spirit
- The Holy Spirit is very much an active participant throughout the book



# Author

- The author is undoubtedly St. Luke, physician and frequent traveling companion of the apostle St. Paul
- From 1:1-3, we learn Acts is the second historical account to Theophilus the first being the gospel universally attributed to St. Luke Lk 1:1-4)
- Within the writing itself there are some clues as to who the author was (16:10-17; 20:5 -- 21:18; 27:1 -- 28:16)
- He was a Greek and the only Gentile Christian writer of the New Testament
- It is evident St. Luke was very careful to provide a historically accurate account in the both the gospel and Acts (Lk 1:1-4,5; 2:1-3; 3:1-2)



# Recipients

- Both the gospel and Acts were written to one man: Theophilus (Lk 1:3; Ac 1:1), whose name means “the lover of God”
- The use of "most excellent" (Lk 1:3) was a title like "Your Excellency" and that Theophilus was a government official of high rank
- Theophilus was a Roman official in charge of administering St. Paul's case before Caesar, and that the gospel and Acts were written to help him understand the facts of Jesus Christ and St. Paul's role in the history of the church





# Date & Place

- The book ends abruptly with St. Paul under house arrest awaiting trial in Rome (28:16,30-31)
- This may indicate that the book was written before St. Paul's trial and eventual release
- The dates for St. Paul's first imprisonment in Rome are 60-62 A.D
- If the book was just before or after St. Paul's release, then it was likely written around 63 A.D. from Rome



# Purpose

Why did St. Luke write Acts?

What purpose was the Spirit leading him to fulfill?

- The original purpose of both the gospel and Acts may have been to assist Theophilus in learning about Jesus and His apostles
- To record the establishment and early growth of the church
- Provides examples of conversions to the gospel of Christ
- The ministry of the Holy Spirit in the apostles and the early church
- Provides the historical framework for the epistles found in the New Testament
- Without Acts, the gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John would be left without a satisfying answer to the question, "What happened next?"



# Theme

## Witnesses for the Lord Jesus Christ

“But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”, (Acts 1:80)

- The book begins in Jerusalem and ends at Rome
- It describes the establishment and growth of the Lord's church throughout the Mediterranean world through the work of the apostles and other Christians under the direction of the Holy Spirit
- It shows the faith and efforts of those charged to be witnesses of the Lord and of His resurrection from the dead





# The Book Outline

- Their Witness in Jerusalem (1:1-8:3)
- Their Witness in Judea and Samaria (8:4-12:25)
- Their Witness to the End of the Earth (13:1-28:30-31)



# Chapter 1: Outline

- The Prologue (1-8)
- The ascension of Christ (9-11)
- The waiting in Jerusalem (12-14)
- The Selection of Mattias (15-26)



# Prologue (1:8)

## The Former Account to Theophilus (1-3)

- To do and teach - These two words comprise his miracles and sermons
- St. Luke switches over from the history of the Gospel, that is from the history of the sayings and doings of Christ, unto the Acts of the Apostles
- To whom He had shown Himself alive, He is a living Savior
- Eleven appearances are recorded
- Christ did not immediately ascend into heaven after his resurrection in order to thoroughly prove his resurrection, and with his presence strengthen and encourage his Apostles in the doctrine which they had heard



# Prologue (1:8)

- He called those things infallible proofs which are otherwise termed necessary: now in that Christ spoke, and walked, and ate, and was felt by many, these are sure signs and proofs that he truly rose again



# Prologue (1:8)

## The promise of the Holy Spirit (4-8)

- They were dispersed here and there, but He gathers them together so that all of them might together be witnesses of his resurrection
- Jerusalem: Because, right in the citadel of his enemies, where He had been slain, the Risen Lord was to be first proclaimed, his Gospel preached, the Holy Spirit shed forth, and his kingdom established
- Because, too, the prophet Isaiah had declared that Jerusalem should be the place where the Gospel should be first preached (Isa 2:3,5)





# Prologue (1:8)

- This would be a baptism by the Holy Ghost, giving them power to work miracles, and enlightening and sanctifying their souls
- Only ten days after these words were spoken
- The apostles question Jesus concerning the kingdom
- They were earnest in asking about that which their Master never had directed or encouraged them to seek
- Our Lord knew that his ascension and the teaching of the Holy Spirit would soon end these expectations, and therefore only gave them a rebuke; but it is a caution to his church in all ages, to take heed of a desire of forbidden knowledge.



# Prologue (1:8)

- Ye shall receive power, Not temporal power, such as they dreamed of, but spiritual and moral power
- This order of apostolic preaching and success supplies the proper key to the plan of the Acts, which relates first the progress of the Gospel "in Jerusalem, and all Judea and Samaria" (the first through ninth chapters), and then "unto the uttermost part of the earth" (the tenth through twenty-eighth chapters)

# The Ascension of Christ (1:9-11)



- When He had spoken these words, while they watched
- A cloud received Him out of their sight
- Following Him with their eager eyes, in rapt amazement
- Not, however, as a mere fact is this recorded, but as a part of that resistless evidence of their senses on which their whole subsequent testimony was to be borne.
- Lest it should be thought He had disappeared when they were looking in some other direction, and so was only concluded to have gone up to heaven

# The Ascension of Christ (1:9-11)



- "as if your now glorified Head were gone from you never to return:

He is coming again; not another, but 'this same Jesus'; and 'as ye have seen Him go, in the like manner shall He come'—as personally, as visibly, as gloriously; and let the joyful expectation of this coming swallow up the sorrow of that departure."

# The Waiting in Jerusalem (1:12-14)



- From the mount called Olivet
- About a Sabbath day's journey
- The traditions defined the distance that might be traveled on the Sabbath; it was a little less than a mile
- Bethany is nearly two miles, but St. Luke here is stating the distance of the Mount of Olives from the city
- In an upper room where they were staying
- All the apostles are named except Judas Iscariot, who had fallen away and was now dead
- God can find hiding-places for his people



# The Waiting in Jerusalem (1:12-14)



- They made supplication
- All God's people are praying people
- It was now a time of trouble and danger with the disciples of Christ; but if any is afflicted, let him pray; that will silence cares and fears
- They had now a great work to do, and before they entered upon it, they were earnest in prayer to God for his presence
- They were waiting for the descent of the Spirit, and abounded in prayer
- Those are in the best frame to receive spiritual blessings, who are in a praying frame

# The Waiting in Jerusalem (1:12-14)



- Christ had promised shortly to send the Holy Spirit; that promise was not to do away prayer, but to quicken and encourage it
- “and Mary the mother of Jesus”, distinguished from the other "women," but "so as to exclude the idea of her having any pre-eminence over the disciples
- This is the last mention of her in the New Testament

# The Selection of Mattias (1:15-26)



## The Counsel of St. Pater (15-22)

- To about 120 disciples, of the need to replace Judas
- It is remarkable that this was the number which the Jews required to form a council in any city
- They formed a complete council in presence of which the important business of electing a person in the place of Judas was to be transacted
- His betrayal prophesied by the Spirit through David
- This is a strong attestation to the inspiration of David, and accords with the uniform testimony of the New Testament, that the sacred writers spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit, 2 Peter 1:21

# The Selection of Mattias (1:15-26)



- He became a guide to those who arrested Jesus
- Though he was numbered with the apostles and had a part in their ministry
- His gruesome death described by Luke
- He purchased a field with the wages of iniquity (Mt 27:3-8)
- He returned the bribe money to the priests, who used it to purchase the potter's field
- St. Peter here intends to say that his money bought the field
- The Greek words signify that Judas fell down flat and was torn apart in the middle, with a tremendously great noise

# The Selection of Mattias (1:15-26)



- St. Peter tells some additional particulars, which Matthew omitted
- He probably hanged himself on a tree projecting over the precipices of the Valley of Hinnom, and afterwards, on account of the rope or limb breaking, fell headlong with such force as to burst his body open on the jagged rocks
- This is the traditional account of his death
- The field is called Akel Dama, Field of Blood
- The repentance of Judas, his dying testimony in behalf of our Lord's innocence, and his tragic death, were publicly known, as was also the transaction about the purchase of the field, and hence arose the name by which it was publicly known



# The Selection of Mattias (1:15-26)



- His end and replacement foretold in the Psalms
- "Let his dwelling place be desolate, And let no one live in it" (Ps 69:25)
- "Let another take his office" (Ps 109:8)
- Stipulating requirements for one to be a witness of His resurrection with the apostles
- Having accompanied the apostles all the time Jesus went in and out among them
- Beginning from the baptism of John, until the day Jesus ascended to heaven
- He must be able to testify of all these as an eye witness

# The Selection of Mattias (1:15-26)



## Matthias Numbered with the Apostles (23-26)

- “They appointed two”, Not the apostles, but the brethren
- Literally, they placed two, or made them to stand forth, as persons do who are candidates for office
- These two were probably of the number of the seventy disciples; and, in this respect, well fitted to fill up the place
- Joseph called Barsabas and surnamed Justus
- Matthias, nothing is known of his family or of his character
- That the Lord might choose between them
- A choice of men for any responsible church work ought to be made with earnest prayer

# The Selection of Mattias (1:15-26)



- He knows the hearts, the most secret purposes, intentions, and dispositions of all men; and because he is the knower of hearts, He knew which of these men he had qualified the best, by natural and gracious dispositions and powers, for the important work to which one of them was now to be appointed
- Judas by betraying his Lord he was turned out of his office, and had no longer part in the apostolic ministry
- The expression "to go to his own place" is one which is used by the ancient writers to denote "going to an eternal destiny."
- Lots are cast
- The lot fell on Matthias
- He was numbered with the eleven apostles

# The Selection of Mattias (1:15-26)



- Some have held that the choice of Matthias was unauthorized and that he was never accepted as an apostle
- The reasons for this view are that he is not named again, and St. Paul was finally chosen as an apostle
- To this it may be replied:
  - (1) Neither are more than half the other names in the apostolic band again mentioned, Thomas, Thaddeus and Bartholomew, for example
  - (2) St. Paul was not an apostle to the Jews, but to the Gentiles, and hence, not one of the Twelve

# The Selection of Mattias (1:15-26)



- (3) There is no hint anywhere in Acts, or elsewhere, that the selection of Matthias was not recognized
- (4) In Acts 6:2 the twelve are spoken of, and he must have been one of the twelve, for St. Paul was not yet converted
- These facts show that such speculations as those referred to above are without foundation.





# Conclusion

- What is the importance of the Holy Book of Acts?
- Who is the author of the Holy Book of Acts and in what year it was written?
- In Chapter 28, why the Holy Book of Acts does not end with the word “Amen” as it’s recorded in the rest of the Holy Bible books?
- In Verse 5 “for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit”, what is the difference between John Baptist baptism and the baptism of the New Testament?
- In Verse 26 “And they cast their lots, and the lot fell on Matthias. And he was numbered with the eleven apostles”, mention two other events where the lot was used to reach a decision