

# ALSON - Alabama School of Ministry

## THE BOOK OF ACTS

### DATE:

- Jewish Temple was destroyed in 70 AD. Not mentioned in ACTS.
- Paul martyred (beheaded) in 66 AD. Not mentioned in ACTS. Paul is alive at the end of ACTS.
- Rome burned in 64 AD. Not mentioned in ACTS. Paul and Christians still appear to be in good standing with Rome in ACTS.
- Paul was first imprisoned (house arrest) in Rome in 61-63 AD.
- ACTS 28 has Paul in house arrest in Rome, preaching / teaching without hindrance.
- **ACTS was written in 63 AD.**

### AUTHOR

Luke is not named as the author of Acts. But we have many CLUES ...

1. **The first and most obvious clue is how he begins Acts ...**

**Acts 1:1** *In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach*

2. **Another primary clue is the “WE” passages....**

> When Paul is on a missionary journey, the text tells us that he took various traveling companions at various times. Sometimes Barnabas, John Mark, Silas, Luke, etc.

- **EXAMPLES of “we” - ...**

**Acts 16:13** *“On the Sabbath **we** went outside the city gate to the river, where **we** expected to find a place of prayer. **We** sat down and began to speak to the women who had gathered there.*

**Acts 16:16** *Once when **we** were going to the place of prayer, **we** were met by a slave girl who had a spirit by which she predicted the future. She earned a great deal of money for her owners by fortune-telling.”*

3. **More Clues: it is written from the same first person perspective as the opening. ...**

- “I” “my” “we”
- It is straightforward narrative account.
- If the person who wrote the introduction HAD NOT been present, the author would have said “Paul & Titus” or “They went \_\_\_\_\_.”

4. **Refined Greek** ... *Of all the NT writers, Luke has the best Greek, **by far**. (Hebrews also has excellent Greek, and Hebrews uses excellent oratorical and rhetorical techniques.)*

- Common people didn’t just acquire refined linguistic skill because it was not needed for most jobs.

- Many people would have been able to speak Koine Greek – street greek – a bit rough. Not as refined as Classical Greek of Plato, Aristotle, Homer. Not as many would have been able to write with such refined excellence.
- Luke’s Greek IS Koine – but we can see a mastery of the language – it is more similar to classical Greek than any other book in the NT. And when I say “Luke” I am referring to the author – his use of Greek in both the Gospel of Luke and Book of Acts.
- Acts is VERY similar, it is obvious to historians, especially in comparison with other NT books – that the author of the Gospel of Luke is the author of Acts.
- All of these types of evidence has led the church to always attribute the authorship of Luke & Acts to ... **Luke**.
- These are the same types of evidences used to ascertain the legitimacy of non-Christian works of antiquity.

The Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts are normally studied together in the same course in one semester. Luke-Acts is ONE work, a two-volume book by Luke the Physician.

**NOTE:** The overwhelming majority of the NT was written by very well educated men:

1. 28% - Luke the Physician, a scientist of his day, an excellent researcher, thinker, and highly skilled writer using excellent Greek, deeply familiar with the OT.
2. 24% - Paul the Apostle, one of the best educated Jews in the Roman Empire.
3. 20% - John the Apostle, who continued his education throughout his life as can be seen in the language and structure of Revelation, his final book, the most intricately crafted and complex book in the Bible, far superior to any other Jewish or Christian book ever written in the genre of apocalyptic.
4. 14% - Matthew, who was a Jew and a tax collector, a man with an excellent understanding of economics, math, tax law, organization, and the Old Testament.
5. 04% - Author of Hebrews, has the most consistently refined Greek oratorical styling in the NT, and a comprehensive understanding of the OT.

While all of the NT writers would have had an excellent education in the Scriptures because of synagogue school education, their time with Jesus, and continued study with each other, **God chose 5 men with outstanding education for their day to write approximately 90% of the New Testament.** We should value education, particularly education in biblical / theological studies, very highly! **GOD DID!**

### RECIPIENT OF LUKE-ACTS → Theophilus

Let’s break down this name from the Greek. It means:

- “Phileo “ - is a Greek word which means “to love”
- “Theos” - is the Greek word for “God.”

**Theophilus can mean:**

- “Friend of God”
- “One who loves God”
- “One who is loved by God.”

“**Most Excellent**” - In the ancient world, people of higher social classes (nobility) were addressed with titles befitting their social status

- Appears in the Gospel of Luke, but does not appear in ACTS, but that really has no significance because of all the other indicators - and we attribute the same “Excellency” because it is the same person to whom Luke is writing.
- “Why is this important?”
- “**Most Excellent**” – In the ancient world, people of higher social classes (nobility) were addressed with titles befitting their social status or station. Books, Speeches, Pamphlets, Plays, etc. were often dedicated to members of the nobility. Sometimes the author may have wanted to curry favor, sometimes it was because the nobility was a benefactor, financially or politically supporting the author or artist.  
Keep in mind – A Gentile becoming a Christian in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century was controversial, and it often put at risk one’s social standing, circle of friends, wealth, power, etc.

### AN IMPORTANT FACT:

CHRISTIANS from the NT onward were **NOT** primarily slaves or illiterate poor.

WHO WERE THE PEOPLE TO WHOM LUKE WROTE? WHAT WERE THEY LIKE?

#### A. THE POPULATION OF THE EMPIRE WAS STRATIFIED ...

Graeco-roman society was highly stratified into several classes, with a wide base and a very narrow pinnacle; yet there were opportunities for mobility. The church reflected a cross-section of the classes.

##### 1. The Divine Emperor and the Imperial Household

##### 2. Aristocracy:

a. In Rome: the Senate, the fabulously wealthy “600” of the main families, then the equestrian knights

b. Elsewhere: small but very powerful minority of traditionally powerful or newly wealthy landowners, manufacturers, merchants, and traders, and local Roman functionaries (Pilate, Sergius Paulus proconsul of Cyprus, Acts 13:7-12; Annaeus Gallio of Achaia, Acts 12-17) NT Background: Graeco-Roman Page 5

c. **Examples of Christians drawn from this class:** Lydia, Philemon, Gaius, Erastus the Aedile (?) of Corinth, Rom 16:23; Manaen, Acts 13:1; Dionysus of Athens, Acts 17:34; members of Caesar’s own household, Phil 4:22

##### 3. Slaves:

a. One fifth of the population

b. Reasons for enslavement

(1) through war

(2) by birth

(3) punishment by the courts

(4) economic reasons (one could sell oneself into slavery to get ahead)

c. Lifestyle and conditions:

Slaves had little or no legal status, regarded as property and often less than human **but ...**

(1) Imperial slaves could do quite well.

(2) household slaves' conditions depended on the master; they were at least better off than having to provide for themselves as poor freedmen.

(3) in the galleys, the games, or the mines life was harsh and short

d. A fair number became believers (I Cor 1:26-28; 7:21-23; 12:13; Eph 6:5-9; Col. 3:22 - 4:1; I Tim 6:1-2; I Pet 2:18-25).

#### 4. Artisans, freedmen, and working classes: a large intermediate group split into two categories

a. Those of moderate substance or who did well and owned their own homes, farms or businesses,

(1) the silversmith **Demetrius, Acts 19**

(2) rhetors: educated traveling speakers and charlatans (Paul often had to defend himself against charges that he was one of these)

b. Of those working class people who were without property, many were newly-freed slaves, dirt poor, lived in the worst tenements, survived by piece work, as laborers on farms, in construction, or on the docks, as clients on their patron's dole, or as beggars, or thieves. This is why many slaves preferred to remain slaves if they had good masters and a decent situation. (NOTE: This kind of slavery was NOT the same as the chattel slavery practiced by Europe and the United States up until the mid-1800's.)

c. Proportionately, the largest number of the Christians came from the Artisans and Freedmen:

(1) the church tended to be more literate and "upwardly mobile" than the general population

(2) Paul as tent-maker, **Aquila & Prisca, Acts 18; Lydia, Acts 16:14**

(2) Most Christians had a better education, were more literate, were of a somewhat better social standing than the average person living in the Empire at that time.

## B. THE AUDIENCE OF THE NT AUTHORS: UNBELIEVERS AND BELIEVERS ALIKE

1. Diversity to be sure — from recent and uninformed pagans all the way to expert readers (cf. Stanley)

### 2. LEVELS OF LITERACY AMONG CHRISTIANS: < < < <

a. Early Christians meet in the private houses of elite individuals (house churches);

b. The household heads of these families, given their education and standing, tended to become the leaders of the churches;

c. They were likely to be quite literate and have personal libraries.

d. We know based on the complaints of authors about unscrupulous publishers and booksellers that these elites were regularly engaged in buying and reading books which were rapidly and widely disseminated.

e. **Ratio of artisan, freedman families to elite leaders in the early church**

i. Given 25 three-story apartment blocks for every domicile = 75 families (conservatively) for one elite family (1.3%)

ii. In reality, we could fit about 12 families in a given reception room (8.3%)

iii. **Per capita, the early churches would have been about 600% more literate than the surrounding culture.**

iv. **This might explain the large and rather sophisticated literary output being produced by the small Christian movement.**

f. To whom was LUKE-ACTS written? "Most Excellent Theophilus"

- g. Given the **sophisticated theological** and **literary** nature of the entire NT, it was clearly written to the educated leaders of the churches who are primarily responsible for the teaching and discipleship of the congregations.
- h. **The majority of the Christians would have been a combination of artisans, merchants, freedmen, public officials, people who owned their own homes, farms, or businesses, and the aristocrats or elite in whose homes they often met.**
- i. **The majority of the Christians would have been literate, middle class people, better educated and of better social standing overall than the average person in the Empire. And, given the literary output of the early church, especially from the late 100's onward, they wrote and they read a LOT!!**
- j. These literate believers, guided by the best educated who were their leaders, would have explained and taught the Scriptures, doctrines, creeds, and hymns to working class freedmen and slaves who were illiterate.

### 3. SOCIOLOGY OF EARLY CHRISTIANS

- a. Early Christian communities tended to be found along trade routes or in port cities which are historically more open to change and new ideas than the conservative countryside.
- b. **Far from being a religion of oppressed and mindless slaves, Christian communities were often composed of change agents** (these being the more likely to convert first) who on the whole tend to have greater financial and educational resources (see Stark).
- c. Paul's earliest converts:
- i. Since he begins in the Synagogues where people already regularly hear the scriptures expounded and interpreted (Acts 15:21), one expects that many early converts were already reasonably well versed in the Scriptures. Cf. Sosthenes, who appears to have the well-to-do patron of the Synagogue (1 Cor 1:1; Acts 18:17).
  - ii. **The people of Berea** had the Scriptures and the wherewithal to search them (Acts 17:10-11); what makes them remarkable is not their education or possession of the Scriptures but their nobility in giving Paul a hearing (and searching the Scripture).

### C. THE MINDSET / EXPECTATIONS OF THE NT AUTHORS THEMSELVES:

1. Unlike other first century religions, Israel is truly a people of the book, namely Scripture. **No other religion so tightly bound worship and scripture together.**
  - hence the prominence of Scripture throughout Israel's written heritage
  - THEREFORE, the Christians were from the very beginning a PEOPLE OF THE BOOK, a people who read and wrote a lot, far more literate than average.
2. **Important implication:** Israel already has a long history of Scriptural interpretation, both in content and hermeneutic — Jesus and the NT authors stand within this tradition which includes:
  - the rabbis clearly presuppose a high degree of familiarity with Scripture; Paul comes from this tradition. Jesus himself often engages with the teachers of his day who also stand in this tradition. **This indicates that both Paul and Jesus also have a high degree of familiarity with Scripture?**

**3. The gospel is the historical fulfillment of the promises of this same faithful God:** i.e. the basic Israelite hermeneutic is grounded in the faithful character of a God who is known through his self-revelation in history (narrative), not through autonomous philosophical reflection on abstract universals.

4. By the time of the first century, interpreters are well aware of the need to “respect the context” (i.e. the “mind” or “hypothesis” of a given document or author;

- a. **Paul and Jesus are also concerned that they be understood** (e.g. 1 Cor 5:9-12) and readers assumed that understanding the author was important (1 Pet 3:15-16).

#### D. IMPLICATIONS OF THE NT DOCUMENTS THEMSELVES ...

1. Scripture is clearly central for the NT authors. **Not events, not music, not anything else! FIRST, they declared, we MUST study & understand the Scriptures correctly.**
2. **The NT documents, while often ad hoc (pastoral rather than analytic) in purpose, nevertheless reveal careful structuring:** the authors are aware of the content of their paragraphs, and of where they place them within the context of their own overall argument.
  - a. They frequently cite select Scriptures at key junctures in their arguments.
  - b. They frequently combine part citations in new ways.
3. This does not suggest haphazard thought, *but rather careful synthesis of the OT.*
4. If the NT authors think of their own writings in this way, why would they not read other documents with the same expectation (i.e. overall coherence, development of thought or argument, the entire OT passage and book, other passages related to an argument they are making).

#### LIKE THE OT AUTHORS BEFORE THEM, THE NT AUTHORS (including LUKE) ...

- WROTE TO THE LEADERS (PASTOR / ELDERS / TEACHERS) WELL EDUCATED IN SCRIPTURE, HISTORY, LITERATURE,
- USING BIBLICAL and HISTORICAL ALLUSIONS, and ACCEPTED LITERARY CONVENTIONS,
- CLEARLY EXPECTING THE LOCAL LEADERS TO KNOW THESE HISTORICAL, BIBLICAL, AND LITERARY KNOWLEDGE, AND
- CLEARLY EXPECTING THE LOCAL LEADERS TO UNDERSTAND HOW TO READ THE OT and NT WRITINGS CORRECTLY, AND
- CLEARLY EXPECTING THE LEADERS TO TEACH TO ALL LITERATE BELIEVERS BOTH
  - THE TRUTHS OF THE FAITH, AND
  - THE OT SCRIPTURE, HISTORY, AND LITERARY CONVENTIONS NEEDED TO READ THE OT AND NT CORRECTLY FOR THEMSELVES.

#### THIS IS THE SOCIOLOGICAL / ECONOMIC CONTEXT WITHIN WHICH LUKE WAS WRITING ACTS.

#### HISTORICAL ATMOSPHERE DURING THE EVENTS OF ACTS ... *time span / movement ...*

- *From: Days after the Resurrection      To: Days before Paul's Execution*
- *From: Jerusalem      To: Rome (the greater roman empire is covered)*
- *From: Jews at Pentecost      To: Gentiles of every background (all nations)*

Acts records events that unfold over several decades, beginning in Jerusalem, spreading thru Asia Minor, then West towards Rome.

## What events?

- The Preaching of the Gospel
- The Persecution of the Gospel
- The Centralization the Church
- The Scattering of the Church (*partially, **not** the BIG persecution of 66-70AD when Rome destroyed Jerusalem & the Temple and both Christians & Jews had to flee.*)
- What we see is Christianity taking root & growing amid opposition – in both Jewish and Gentile contexts, in both Jewish cultural centers and Gentile cultural centers. We see the success and strain, of both situations.
- The Preaching of the Word & Power of the Spirit are key.

## The Apostles are:

1. *Studying Scriptures & Praying Together.*
2. *Preaching the Gospel*
3. *Gathering Converts into Local Churches to be Discipled in Life & Doctrine.*
4. *Raising Up Qualified Leadership in the Local Churches*
5. *Repeating the Process*

- Local Churches are like little SPIRIT- FILLED WORD SOAKED outposts of Heaven.
- Paul's Epistles shed great light on the various situations that ACTS references.  
They often give us more detail about what happens on the ground, by showing the situations he has to address in various local churches.

## HISTORICAL CLIMATE OF JERUSALEM - JUDEA

- **Periodic turmoil with the Jewish Religious Leaders**
- **Periodic turmoil with Rome and Rome's Appointed Leaders**
- Jerusalem in particular ...
  - Periodic turmoil with the Jewish Religious Leaders
  - Periodic turmoil with Rome and Rome's Appointed Leaders
  - Turmoil boils up, then simmers down, back & forth for decades.
  - But it never simmers back down as low as it was.
  - IOW – things reach a boil quicker, quicker, over the decades.
  - o In the Early 60's AD, things really take a turn ... and Jerusalem begins heading for the Great Tribulation of 66-70 AD.
  - **66-70 AD** is when Titus & the Armies of Rome laid siege to Jerusalem & destroyed the Temple, as Jesus had prophesied would happen in the Olivet Discourse (Mt 24, Mk 13, Lk 21). Christians (and therefore the Gospel) were scattered thru the Empire. This had already been happening on a much smaller scale ... but THIS was a big event.
- Again, this happens several years AFTER the end of the Book of ACTS.
- Paul is dead & gone by 66 AD ... but it's important to know that the environment in Judea was headed this way for decades. James & leaders in Judea had to deal with it.

## HISTORICAL CLIMATE OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE ABROAD ...

- Christians enjoyed times of relative peace, **and** times of persecution, depending on:
  - o Who the Emperor was, ...
  - o If they were Roman citizens or not, ...
  - o How much a local city or culture might be affected.
- Christians enjoyed times of relative peace, and times of persecution, depending on:
  - o Who the Emperor was
  - o If they were Roman citizens or not.
  - o How much a local city or culture might be affected. (Think Paul in Ephesus – things didn't go well at first. Things went better in Philippi)
- For a time, Christianity was considered a sect of Judaism, but less so over the decades.
- Conversion to Christianity affected one's social status, circle, etc.
- Christianity was in no way a dominant religious movement, nor dominant political force.
- There were many mysterious religions in that day.
- As long as you didn't rock the boat – politically or economically – Rome was not extremely concerned how you worshipped.
- Cornelius, a Roman Centurion, converted to Christianity – we never hear that he forsook his military duties.
- **NOTE:** CE = Common Era (formerly called AD, Anno Domini / Year of our Lord)
  - o BCE = Before Common Era (formerly called BC, Before Christ)
- **FROM THE YEAR 14 CE through 68 CE (54 years) there were only 4 Roman Emperors ...**
  - 18 Sep 14 CE - 16 Mar 37 CE → Reign of **Roman Emperor Tiberius.**
  - 18 Mar 37 CE - 24 Jan 41 CE → Reign of **Roman Emperor Caligula.**
  - 25 Jan 41 CE - 13 Oct 54 CE → Reign of **Roman Emperor Claudius.**
  - 13 Oct 54 CE - 11 Jun 68 CE → Reign of **Roman Emperor Nero.**

**Q:** Think of the reasons Early Christians (be it Peter or Paul or whomever) were arrested, beaten, etc. What were those reasons mentioned in ACTS?

- Disturbing the Public Peace, Economic Turmoil
- Even Rome was mistaken about Christ's claims to be a "king." That's all they cared about – Rome tolerated NO threats to its power – Pontius Pilate determined Jesus wasn't a threat and was determined to release him. (He wasn't a threat in the way they traditionally thought).
- ROME wanted law abiding peaceful citizens, economic prosperity.
- It was often other people's RESPONSES to the Gospel that caused problems
- **It was NOT the Apostles themselves. They never sought confrontations.**
- **The Apostles preached the Gospel, planted messianic synagogues and house churches, and made disciples.**

### **HISTORICITY OF ACTS: IS LUKE-ACTS RELIABLE IN THE FACTS IT REPORTS?**

**Acts is not just a "novel" or work of "fiction" like other ancient works.**

- Most novels of the Ancient World were in a category called "Romance," and you see virtually none of the same characteristics in ACTS.

**Even the "Historical Novels" of the Ancient World were very different from ACTS.**

- They embellished events & people.
- ACTS does not.
- *ACTS was written during the lifetimes of almost everyone mentioned.*
- *ACTS was based on interviews of living people. WHAT DOES THAT MEAN? ...*
  - Living people can correct your version of historical events
  - The Community can correct what you write, and reject it if it does not meet a high level of accuracy – accurate about the event, the place, the people involved.
  - **IN the Ancient world**, when you publicly say “THIS happened, THIS is what it means, THIS is where we were, and THIS is who was present” – *THAT is a public invitation for anyone reading or hearing the message to FULLY investigate the claims.*
  - So, Luke would have been EXTREMELY careful in his investigation of the facts, and in his recording of the trips HE was actually involved with. **AND, LUKE was a physician, a scientist of his day, trained to investigate, interview, analyze, and write his findings in a carefully chosen literary genre!!**
  - **FINALLY, THE SPIRIT GUIDED LUKE IN CAREFUL INVESTIGATION – LIKEWISE, OUR STUDIES SHOULD BE SPIRITUAL ACTS OF WORSHIP, CAREFUL, THOROUGH, SOAKED IN PRAYER.**

**External History Corroborates ACTS .... Luke Mentions Major Historical Characters, of various kinds, in very specific locations, and very specific times ...**

- Christian
- Jewish
- Roman, Gentile
- Felix was a Roman Governor, married 3x's, but married to Druscilla at the time the Book of ACTS was written.
- Herod Agrippa I & Agrippa II
  - **A point specific to Agrippa II** ... - Acts 25-26 " His sister Bernice is with him.
  - *She only visited him during very specific times.*

Authors of romances & novels didn't bother with this type of historical research nor calendrical accuracy . ... **Only Historians did.**

**HOWEVER, one area where precision is almost never to be expected in the literary genres of the ancient world is in the use of large, rounded numbers.**

- Large numbers are at best usually approximations.
- Large numbers, and numbers that have inherently symbolic meanings, are often used symbolically AND/OR rhetorically ... as a literary convention or rhetorical device to make a point.
- FOR EXAMPLE: 10, 100, 1000, or 1000's, or multiples thereof, are often used to make the point that something was successful, growing, impressive, surprising, etc., rather than to indicate exact precision of counting.
- Other numbers, though having symbolic meanings, can be considered as precise when associated with specific places, names, etc. (EXAMPLE: 12 Apostles).

### AN IMPORTANT RELATED NOTE: ... SIZE OF THE NT CHURCH BY 100 AD ...

- Working forward from the 120 on the Day of Pentecost (plus other disciples who quickly got back into the Jesus Movement after Pentecost), AND ...
- Working backward from the number of Christians in the Empire by the time of Emperor Constantine (325 AD), AND ...
- Using the writings of the Church Fathers and of the opponents of the Church from 100 AD through the 300's, ... AND ...
- Using the best research of historians specializing in Christian and Roman history of the period, including all archaeological findings, ... AND ...
- Using all of the statistical parameters we know to be reliable regarding new religious movements, with a healthy 40% decadal growth rate, ... AND ...
- Using what we know about the sizes of all the cities into which the Christian movement had spread by 100 AD, ... AND ...
- Given a population of between 60-66 million people in the Empire, ...
- **The number of Christians in the Empire would have grown as follows ...**

| o | <u>YEAR</u> | <u># OF CHRISTIANS</u> | <u>PERCENT of POPULATION</u> |
|---|-------------|------------------------|------------------------------|
|   | 40          | 1,000                  | 0.0017                       |
|   | 50          | 1,400                  | 0.0023                       |
|   | <b>100</b>  | <b>7,530</b>           | <b>0.0126</b>                |
|   | 150         | 40,496                 | 0.07                         |
|   | 200         | 217,795                | 0.36                         |
|   | 250         | 1,171,356              | 1.9                          |
|   | 300         | 6,299,832              | 10.5                         |
|   | 330         | 17,286,739             | 27.9                         |
|   | 350         | 33,882,008             | 56.5                         |

**Edict of Milan 313 AD**  
Christianity is an officially tolerated religion.

- The Christians were very unevenly distributed. They were concentrated first in Asia Minor (Galatia, etc.), Greece, Rome, and then the larger cities of the Empire. The rural areas and smaller towns remained unevangelized and unconverted the longest. The word "pagan" comes from the Latin "paganus" meaning "villager" or "rustic."
- **Many Christians mistakenly assume there were hundreds of thousands of Christians by 100 AD. *That is certainly not the case.***
- **The Christians met almost exclusively in homes**, particularly the larger homes of the more affluent leaders of the churches, occasionally in rented halls, out of doors, and very early on in any synagogues that became predominantly Messianic (this declined quickly after 100 AD).

### Paul's Epistles Corroborate ACTS ...

- Paul's traveling itinerary match up with ACTS
- Paul's traveling companions match up with ACTS

- The various historical situations & local troubles he experiences in different regions – Ephesus – Silicia – etc., matches up with ACTS.
- Imprisoned, beaten, being let down thru a wall.

### Luke Mentions Minor Historical Characters ...

- Christian
- Jewish
- Roman, Greek, Gentile

### **IN SHORT: LUKE THOROUGHLY and INCONTROVERTABLY GROUNDS HIS WRITING ...**

- BY MENTIONING SPECIFIC FAMOUS INDIVIDUALS, PLACES, AND TIMES THAT WOULD BE KNOWN TO ALMOST ANYONE WHO READ OR HEARD LUKE-ACTS (**UNIVERSAL ATTESTATION**), and
- HE MENTIONS HIGHLY SPECIFIC, GRANULAR DETAILS THAT ONLY EYEWITNESSES AT MANY VERY PRECISE PLACES AND TIMES COULD HAVE KNOWN (**PARTICULAR ATTESTATION**), and
- HE WRITES IN ...
  - THE WELL-KNOWN GENRES OF **APOLOGETIC BIOGRAPHY** (GOSPEL OF LUKE) TO EXPLAIN AND DEFEND THE ORIGIN AND LIFE OF A PERSON, and
  - **APOLOGETIC ETHNOGRAPHY** (BOOK OF ACTS) TO EXPLAIN AND DEFEND THE ORIGIN AND LIFE OF A PEOPLE (FOLLOWERS OF JESUS), and
- HE WEAVES A HIGHLY INTEGRATED STORY SHOWING A COMPREHENSIVE KNOWLEDGE OF THE OT, JEWISH CULTURE, GREEK and ROMAN CULTURE, and
- DOES ALL OF THIS TO ILLUSTRATE JESUS IS THE FULFILLMENT OF GOD'S OT PROMISES AND PROPHECIES RECONSTITUTING ISRAEL IN HIMSELF FROM BELIEVING JEWS AND PEOPLE FROM EVERY NATION.

### **THE IMPORTANCE OF THE BOOK OF ACTS ... ACTS Teaches Critically Important Theology ...**

- In Acts we see the principles of fulfillment and Providence.
- God will fulfill everything He has promised.
- God is providentially guiding history according to his plan.
- IN ACTS we see the fulfillment of Jesus' teachings and life.
- IN ACTS we see God's OT purposes for Israel fulfilled in Renewed Israel, the Church, Jew and Gentile.
- IN ACTS we see the ONE NEW PEOPLE, Jew and Gentile, whom God has planned to claim for Himself before the beginning of time. Everyone who believes is welcome.
- IN ACTS we see God's original promise to call the nations to become a part of his People fulfilled.
- IN ACTS we see the Spirit lead the Apostles to rightly interpret the OT as Jesus taught them between his resurrection and ascension, and begin writing the NT.
- IN ACTS we see a pattern for Christian belief, practice, preaching / teaching, and ministry.
- IN ACTS we see the Kingdom of God BEGIN to spread across the known world, as God had promised it someday would.

## Characteristics of LUKE-ACTS ...

### Types of Language ...

- Narrative (used as Apologetic Biography and Apologetic Ethnography)
- NT use of OT
  - Allusions to OT passages
  - Fulfilled Prophecy
    - o Moses is quoted
    - o Messianic Prophecies – fulfilled in unexpected ways
    - o Davidic Covenant referenced
    - o Prophets ...
      - o Light for Gentiles
      - o Coming of the Spirit
    - o Apocalyptic Language – highly symbolic, not literal.

*Everything in LUKE-ACTS, and the OT passages alluded to, must be interpreted according to its nature, its genre, the kind of OT literature it is.*

## **GENRE - Why is this so important?**

**BECAUSE, if you read a book or passage wrongly, you will NOT understand what God's Word is actually saying.**

### EXAMPLE:

1. If you read the gospels as straight narrative history, you must assume that everything occurred in the order and manner the gospel writer(s) wrote it down. *That will create "errors", causing the 4 gospels to contradict themselves.* They tell the story of Jesus in differing chronological orders, they report different numbers at times, they record some things as happening at different locations. If they are all straight narrative chronological history, then the gospels have many errors in them.
2. **HOWEVER, the gospels are actually a genre (a kind of literature) known as "Apologetic Biography" (AB) ...** (from "apologia" – a defense of something)
  - a. a biography of a person written to explain and defend his life, work and teaching. Some events, words, and deeds are included, many are omitted.
  - b. The author selects facts, events, and words from the person's life, then writes and arranges them in a particular way in order to highlight particular aspects and meanings of the person, his life, and his work.
  - c. **It is a creative telling, written creatively to better communicate the true meaning of the person, some particular emphases of the person, etc.**
  - d. Readers in the Roman Empire understood this and knew how to read it.
3. THEREFORE, the gospels were *never intended* to be read as if they were strictly a chronological narrative history of the life of Jesus.
4. IF YOU DO NOT ACCEPT THIS, you will NOT understand how to read the gospels correctly, you will misinterpret, miscommunicate, and misapply God's Word.
5. *This is true with everything written in the Bible!*

**THE BOOK OF ACTS is an APOLOGETIC ETHNOGRAPHY - A DEFENSE OF GOD'S ONE PEOPLE**

It is ...

- **The Story of who these people are:**

- o They are people from backgrounds that should not even get along, so how and why they get along, how and why they consider themselves ONE NEW PEOPLE, must be explained. ...

- Ethnic divisions could be fierce in the Roman Empire.
- Much hatred / hostility always simmering beneath the surface.
- Every city had “ghettos”, neighborhoods or parts of the city where most members of each particular ethnic group lived ... Thracians, Gauls, Greeks, Italians, Jews, etc.
- Each group had their own gods, customs, businesses, guilds, etc.
- There were sometimes riots between hostile groups.
- **BUT, people from every ethnic group (the nations) were coming into this new group called “Christians.”** They were abandoning their old gods, they were meeting together to worship their new god, they were eating together, they helped each other out, loved one another, they considered themselves the ONE TRUE PEOPLE of GOD...

- **The Story of how this People came to be:**

- ACTS is written to explain how JESUS – by his life, death, resurrection, ascension, and pouring out of the Holy Spirit – fulfilled all of the OT promises and prophecies by renewing God’s People as he forgave their sins and gave the Spirit to all who repented and believed the Gospel of Jesus.
- ALL people – Jews and Gentiles.
- ACTS is a Defense (Apologetic Ethnography), an explanation for the People called Christians.

- **For the Christians it is A Defense against Division:**

- **ACTS is - for the Christians - a defense against division ..**

- o Luke writes a living reminder to the Church – this is what God has done, the life God has called you to, now live up to what you are, so the world will see the SON. WE NEED THE SPIRIT TO HELP US DO THIS – TO HELP US LIVE THIS, TO LOVE ONE ANOTHER ACROSS DIFFERENCES – AND TO AFFIRM OUR IDENTITY IS CHRISTIAN FIRST, EVERYTHING ELSE IS FAR LESS IMPORTANT..

**THE BOOK OF ACTS is an APOLOGETIC ETHNOGRAPHY**

- *The Story of who these people are ...*
- *The Story of How these people came to be ...*
- *A Defense of God’s One True People*

**ORGANIZATION / STRUCTURE OF ACTS and  
REPEATED THEMES to WATCH FOR**

**Repeated Themes and Words communicate an author’s theological intent (meaning):**

- **ACTS is marked by the Theme of MOVEMENT ... Geographic and Ethnic Movement:**
  - JERUSALEM, Judea, Samaria, Empire, ROME.
  - Jews (Judean), Hellenistic Jews, Fallen Jews, Samaritans, Gentiles.
- Luke narrates this Movement by dividing ACTS into Six Sections or Panels.
  - Luke inserts a summary statement at each point where the Movement changes.
- Throughout the Six Panels the other themes mentioned above are mentioned ...
  - Promise / Fulfillment, the Nations, Holy Spirit, etc.

## KEYS TO READING ACTS: WATCH FOR REPEATED THEMES / EVENTS ...

### 1. SPEECHES or Sermons:

- a. Peter – 2:14f, 3:11f, 10:27f
- b. Stephen – 7:1f
- c. Paul – 13:16f, 17:22f, 20:17f.
- d. The speeches are summarized following proper literary custom.
- e. **Occur at key points, always focused on the person and work of Jesus ...**
  - i. Fulfilling OT promises, Redemptive work, Sending the Holy Spirit
  - ii. Agrees with Gospels and with the Epistles of Paul, Peter, John, Hebrews
  - iii. **NOTE: HOW DOES THIS COMPARE TO PREACHING TODAY?**
    1. Do we consistently preach the OT *like* the Apostles did?
    2. Do we consistently preach the person and work of Jesus as fulfillment of OT?
    3. OR, do we preach hype, motivation, life coaching skills, goofy prophecy speculation, self-centered self-help, politics, etc.?
- f. **The sermons of ACTS are our God-given Pattern! We have NO authority to depart from this pattern and preach however we want to preach!!**
- g. **These are the only examples we have of what it means to truly PREACH THE GOSPEL and PREACH the WORD OF GOD.**

### 2. JESUS and the SPIRIT.

- a. Repeated emphasis on the connection between Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit.
- b. The Holy Spirit is somehow ultimately responsible for “every major turning point in the narrative.”
- c. Christ was the bearer of the Spirit (Acts 10:38) and the one who would receive from the Father and pour out upon God’s People the Spirit (Acts 2) which would mark Jesus’ followers as God’s People / Restored Israel / the Temple of God.
- d. The Spirit demonstrates God’s faithfulness to Israel through Christ Jesus,

### 3. GOD WILL PERMIT NOTHING TO HINDER THE SPREAD OF THE GOSPEL and the CHURCH.

- a. Not Jewish secular or religious leaders in JERUSALEM – Acts 3-5
- b. Not unbelieving Jews like Saul – Acts 8
- c. Not the Jerusalem Church – Acts 11 (v17)
- d. Not secular leaders like Herod – Acts 12
- e. Not Judaizers in the Church – Acts 15

- f. Not secular or religious opposition from Greeks – Acts 16, 19
- g. Not the natural world ... sickness, storms, shipwrecks, snakes – Acts 13, 27-28
- h. Not ROME itself – Acts 28:31 ... Paul is preaching there with boldness, w/o hindrance.
- i. THE REDEMPTION OF THE NATIONS HAS BEEN GOD'S ULTIMATE PLAN FROM THE CREATION OF THE WORLD, **AND IT WILL NOT BE STOPPED!!!**

#### 4. THE UNIVERSAL NATURE and MOVEMENT of the GOSPEL

- a. In the Gospel of Luke, the universality was seen to be VERTICAL, as the poor and outcast of every kind were included in the Good News of salvation.
- b. In ACTS, the universality is seen to be HORIZONTAL (as well as Vertical) as the Good News will include people from every nation.
- c. The Gospel moves out from the center ...
  - i. Israel is restored through Christ by the Spirit – Acts 1:6, Acts 2, 3:25, Acts 8
    - 1. Judean Jews – Acts 1-2
    - 2. Hellenistic / Diaspora Jews – Acts 2
    - 3. Fallen Jews / Samaritans – Acts 8:4f, 8:25f
    - 4. Gentile “God-Fearer” – Acts 10
    - 5. Gentile idol worshipers – Acts 13-28
    - 6. Paul always tries to preach first to Jews and Gentile “God-fearers”.
    - 7. Luke and Paul are saddened as Jewish response declines and persecution from Jews against Jesus Followers increases.
  - ii. ACTS ends with Paul saying, “God’s salvation has been sent to the Gentiles and they will listen!” Acts 28:28
- d. The Church is becoming increasingly Gentile throughout ACTS.
- e. **NOTE:** By the time of Jesus, there were numerous groups within Judaism each claiming to be TRUE ISRAEL: the remnant subset of Israel that was the true to the faith of Abraham, Moses, and David. Each group DENIED that the other groups were true to the ancestral faith, true to Yahweh.
  - i. Pharisees – Saducees – Essenes – Zealots, to name only 4.
  - ii. Judaism was not united in faith, life, doctrine, or Temple worship.
  - iii. JESUS and HIS FOLLOWERS came: Jesus in HIMSELF was the ONLY truly faithful authentic Israelite, perfect keeper of the Covenant, offering up the only perfect life ever lived, only perfect sacrifice ever made.
  - iv. THEREFORE, God kept covenant with Jesus the Son, raised him from the dead, seated him on David’s eternal throne, reconstituted Israel IN CHRIST JESUS, and MARKED God’s True Israel – JESUS’ FOLLOWERS – as the True People of God among whom and IN whom GOD’S PRESENCE dwells by pouring out the HOLY SPIRIT on them.
  - v. All people outside of Christ – whether Jew or Gentile – are NOT a part of TRUE ISRAEL, the true People of God.

#### 5. WATCH FOR THE “WE” PASSAGES and NOTE WHEN THEY OCCUR.

- a. These are the points at which LUKE joins the Paul’s apostolic team.

- i. Acts 16:10-17
- ii. Acts 20:5 – 21:19
- iii. Acts 27:1 – 28:16
- iv. NOTE these things about these occurrences ...
  1. The writer – LUKE – “without fanfare” simply begins writing that way. Luke had such standing in the Church that he did not have to announce himself. Though a Gentile, he was an early believer in Jesus and at the very heart of the infant Church.
  2. In all of the “we” sections, the details “are far more abundant and vivid, suggesting that the he may be using something like a diary.”
- b. Again, Luke’s first-person presence at key points in this story adds to the degree of trustworthiness of ACTS. That to which he was an eyewitness confirmed all of the information gathered by careful investigations, interviews, and analysis.

### LUKE’S ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE FOR ACTS ... SIX PANELS (SECTIONS)

Luke intentionally structured ACTS in this way to emphasize the **Promise-Fulfillment Theme** that permeates both volumes (Luke-Acts):

- Jesus and the Church fulfill all of the OT promises God made to Israel-Abraham-David.
- Jesus was the only authentic, perfectly faithful, covenant keeping, Seed of Woman, Seed of Abraham, Son of David, the only True Israelite, and therefore was IN HIMSELF True Israel.
- God was faithful to his promises he made to faithful Israel, for he was faithful to raise Jesus from the dead
- God was faithful to his promises to Abraham by raising Jesus and through the Gentile mission to make Abraham’s descendants a countless multitude.
- God was faithful to David by raising Jesus from the dead and seating him on David’s throne forever.
- God was faithful to his promises to restore Israel by reconstituting / renewing / restoring Israel IN and THROUGH JESUS: In Jesus those who repent and believe the Gospel are raised with Christ, reborn through the Holy Spirit, marked by the Spirit with the Law on their hearts, and marked by the Spirit with the covenant sign of “spiritual” circumcision of the heart, marked as God’s final temple on the Earth by the Spirit’s Presence in power.
- Luke structures ACTS in Six Panels (or Sections) of **MOVEMENT**, showing all of these fulfillments as Jesus through the Spirit accomplishes these things from Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the nations throughout the Earth.

#### 1. The Good News Begins in JERUSALEM ...

- a. **ACTS 1:1 – 6:7** - The gospel moves from the Aramaic speaking Jerusalem / Judean Jews to the Hellenistic Greek-speaking Jews.
- b. **TRANSITIONAL VERSE: ACTS 6:7** “So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith.”

## 2. The Good News Spreads to Judea and Samaria ...

- a. ACTS 6:8 – 9:31 – The Hellenistic Jews become increasingly receptive, and some begin to move into a few leadership roles, and begin to lead the story in this Section (under the authority of the Apostles and Apostolic doctrine) ...
  - i. The Hellenistic Jews ...
    1. Stephen, Philip, the Seven “deacons”
    2. Stephen’s speech notes that the Law and the Temple are old wineskins that cannot contain the New Wine of the New Covenant and the Holy Spirit.
    3. Stephen’s speech notes that MOSES was rejected by Israel and prophesied that Yahweh would someday send another prophet like himself who would also be rejected: Jesus, a greater than Moses, has been rejected.
  - ii. The Samaritans and a Gentile proselyte (convert to Judaism) ...
    1. Philip preaches the Gospel to the Samaritans, it is confirmed by the Spirit’s power, many are gathered into the People of God.
    2. The Spirit leads Philip to a Gentile proselyte (Ethiopian), who believes the Gospel, is baptized in water, and enters God’s People.
  - iii. Saul of Tarsus, brilliant Hellenistic Jew who is opposing the Gospel and persecuting Christians is miraculously converted.
    1. Paul will become largely responsible for the movement of expansion in the next two Sections (into Asia and Europe).
- b. **TRANSITIONAL VERSE – ACTS 9:31** “[Then the church throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria enjoyed a time of peace and was strengthened. Living in the fear of the Lord and encouraged by the Holy Spirit, it increased in numbers.](#)”

## 3. The Good News Spreads to the Gentiles

**ACTS 9:32 – 12:24** – Luke begins and ends this Panel with two Peter stories, emphasizing the continuing foundational role of the 12 Apostles, and ensuring the acceptance of Gentiles into Restored Israel (the followers of Jesus).

- a. The inclusion of the Gentiles is so important that Luke records it TWICE ...
  - i. ACTS 10:1F, ACTS 11:1F
  - ii. They are accepted because the Spirit directed Peter and confirmed it with signs following.
  - iii. This would have been doubted if the Hellenistic Jewish Christians had taken the lead.
- b. The Antioch church is founded by Hellenistic Jewish Christians, and later leads in the Gentile mission through Paul who is a Hellenistic Jew and part of the Antioch church.
- c. This sequence unites the Jerusalem Believers and the Hellenistic Believers in the founding of the Gentile mission, leaving no room for division at the foundational level.
- d. The Peter story concludes this Panel, emphasizing with Herod’s death the “nothing can hinder the Gospel” theme.

- e. **TRANSITIONAL VERSE: ACTS 12:23-24** “Immediately, because Herod did not give praise to God, an angel of the Lord struck him down, and he was eaten by worms and died. But the word of God continued to spread and flourish.”

#### 4. The Good News Spreads to Asia ..

**ACTS 12:25 - 16:5** ... There are several critically important pivotal matters in this Panel.

- a. The Antioch Church gradually becomes the new center: 12:25-13:3, 14:26-28.
- b. Paul becomes the most important figure in expansion: 13:4-12.
- c. The sermon in the Pisidian Antioch synagogue illustrates Diaspora preaching: 13:16-41.
- d. Spread of the Gospel to the Gentiles brings the first open breach with Judaism, with Isaiah 49:6 used as the basis: 13:47.
- e. **NOTE:** Paul’s first visit to Galatia was because he became ill and could not get better. They knew to take him from the lowlands up to the Galatian highlands. (Galatians 4:13). It was not God’s will to immediately heal Paul, but it WAS God’s will for the Gospel to be preached in Galatia. Paul’s sickness was enough to require care by others. (NOTE: Never let anyone tell you that failure to receive supernatural healing is because of sin or lack of faith. That is heresy!)
- f. ACTS 14: Reinforces these themes, especially the growing breach between Diaspora Judaism and the early Church, including Jewish persecution of Christians.
- g. THE JERUSALEM COUNCIL – ACTS 15
  - i. Led by Peter and James, it affirms a “Law free” Gospel for the Gentiles.
- h. **TRANSITIONAL VERSE: ACTS 16:5** “So the churches were strengthened in the faith and grew daily in numbers.”

#### 5. The Good News Spreads to Europe ...

**ACTS 16:6 - 19:20** ... Paul’s second and third missionary journeys.

- a. The mission is based out of a local church, Antioch. Paul returns to report to the Pastors and leaders of that church.
  - i. *God intended his People to be gathered into local churches with called, gifted, and properly equipped Pastors, to reach others, make disciples, plant new churches.*
- b. The Holy Spirit is always guiding the missions, but Paul moves strategically as well, to key cities ... ports, trade route crossings, political centers, or large cities.
  - i. *As new churches are planted the image of the Creator is being taken throughout the Earth, the Presence / Glory of the Lord is filling the Earth.*
- c. Diaspora (Hellenistic) Jews who refuse to believe the Gospel always persecute Paul and the believers or instigate trouble with the authorities.
  - i. *Jesus has become a stone of stumbling, and as he prophesied his followers are being hated / treated exactly like he was.*
- d. The secular authorities end up not intervening or apologizing to Paul and his team.
  - i. Luke has theological and political reasons for everything mentioned.
    1. He is demonstrating the innocence and loyalty of the Christians.
    2. He is demonstrating their antiquity as True Israel.
    3. He is preparing for the day they shall stand before Caesar with their case.
- e. **TRANSITIONAL VERSE: ACTS 19:20** “In this way the word of the Lord spread widely and grew in power.”

## 6. The Good New (and Paul) Reaches ROME ...

**ACTS 19:21 - 28:30 ...** The story of how Paul got to Rome, going through a series of trials similar to those of Jesus (again fulfilling what Jesus said would happen to his People).

- a. At the beginning and end of this Section, Paul still tries to reach out to the Jews with the Gospel: 21:17-26, 28:17-28.
  - i. The Jews are settled in their rejection of Jesus as Messiah, Savior, and Son of God, and in so doing they actually reject Yahweh as did their forefathers.
  - ii. **Therefore, the final word to the Jews is one of JUDGMENT as the OT predicted:**
    1. Isaiah 6:9-10 “He said, “Go and tell this people: “‘Be ever hearing, but never understanding; be ever seeing, but never perceiving.’  
<sup>10</sup>Make the heart of this people calloused; make their ears dull and close their eyes. otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed.”
    2. Compare this with Luke 8:10 “(Jesus) said, “The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of God has been given to you, but to others I speak in parables, so that, “‘though seeing, they may not see; though hearing, they may not understand.’
- b. Although Jesus died as a state criminal, Pilate found him “not guilty”, and tried to set him free. Just as Jesus was found “not guilty” three times, Paul and the Church have been found “not guilty” three times of crimes against Rome: 22:29, 23:26-30, 26:32.
- c. In telling the story of Paul’s shipwreck, Luke makes it clear that it is ultimately GOD who brought Paul to Rome, GOD who is responsible for the growth and expansion of the Church. THE PROVIDENTIAL INTERVENTION OF GOD to FULFILL all of God’s OT promises is emphasized. ACTS 27:1 - 28:16.
- d. **TRANSITIONAL VERSE: ACTS 28:30-31** “ For two whole years Paul stayed there in his own rented house and welcomed all who came to see him. <sup>31</sup>**He proclaimed the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ—with all boldness and without hindrance!”**
- e. **To the end of ACTS the Word of God and Gospel of Jesus is being preached and taught with boldness and without hindrance, moving ever more deeply into all the nations of the Earth.**

### **THE DAY OF PENTECOST: THE IMPORTANCE OF THE SPIRIT’S OUTPOURING for THE FULFILLMENT OF GOD’S PROMISES in the OT**

**What is God’s Promise?** He will pour out his spirit and offer salvation to whom he pleases - young, old, male, female, close to God, far from God, priests, peasants, Gentiles, the lame, every ethnic group, even Roman Soldiers.

BUT THIS IS NOT A NEW CONCEPT - IS IN AMOS. Even though the Jews had a difficult time accepting it.

And GOD moves people perfectly into place according to His Plan – Providence.

- THIS IS WHAT THEOPHILUS IS LEARNING ...
- PROMISE & FULFILLMENT, FAITHFUL PROVIDENCE, INCLUDING THE OUTSIDERS ...

**Acts 1:8** “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.”

Every sermon preached, every city visited, every page of the Book of Acts is Fulfillment of God’s Promises ... in His Faithful Providence.

This is a BIG STORY. Humanity is beginning to live as God Intended.

**Consider WHY God had originally set apart OT Israel for Himself, and what it involved. ...**

- To be His Witnesses.
- He chose Abraham from among the nations
- So Abraham and his descendants would be separate from the nations
- Separate in what sense?
- The One True God made himself known only to them.
- The One True God made a covenant with them at Sinai.
- The purpose is to deliver them from wrong worship into right worship.
- Deliver from idolatry into doxology.
- The One True God instructs them on building a Temple that LOOKS like a Garden. (*Reminding them of humanity’s original calling to walk with Him*)
- What vocation or job does God give Israel in the OT?
  - o To be the people who rightly walked with Him
  - o SO THAT ... the nations would have a witness, the nations would know Him.
  - o Israel was to be a light shining into the dark heart of idolatry.
  - o Israel was to be a shepherd helping guide lost sheep into the fold.
  - o The Mosaic Law elevates the status of women, elevates the status of slaves – it dignifies & values these categories over & above what the pagan nations observe.

NOW COMPARE THAT CALLING – AT WHICH THEY UTTERLY FAILED – COMPARE IT WITH THE LIFE & MINISTRY OF JESUS.

- Does he fulfill Israel’s calling? YES HE DOES!
- This is why he calls himself “True Israel.”
- And this is why, IN CHRIST, the Jew-and-Gentile is the fulfillment of Israel.
- The job of OT Israel ... is STILL the high calling of God’s People: Christ’s Church.
- PROMISE & FULFILLMENT, FAITHFUL PROVIDENCE – Luke writes it down
- THIS IS WHAT THEOPHILUS IS LEARNING ...
  - o BIBLICAL THEOLOGY, How it all fits together.
- ACTS is Apologetic Ethnography: The Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How or these people called Christians. The explanation and defense and IDENTITY.

**A NEW WORD – FOR A NEW NATION**

**Acts 2:1** “When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place.  
 2 Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting.  
 3 They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them.  
 4 All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.  
 ... we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!”

### What was the purpose of the speaking on Pentecost?

1. The People upon whom the Spirit descended ... began declaring the wonders of God.
2. People of different cultures all heard them in their own language. God always wanted a nation of prophets, IOW – people who would rightly proclaim His Word.
3. And this is precisely what happens – the disciples are rightly proclaiming WHO God is and WHAT He has done. This was God’s desire for OT Israel.

### On the Day of Pentecost, those who heard consisted of 2 types of people:

1. **Jews** – from all the regions to which they had been historically scattered, now gathered in Jerusalem.
2. **Gentile Converts to Judaism** – Gentiles (like Ruth, like Rahab) who had decided to serve the One True God.
3. Jew-and-Gentile – “God-fearers”, Gentile proselytes / Gentiles who were becoming Jews, from many nations were present (ACTS 2:5f);
4. God gathers “scattered Israel” AND
5. The nations stream not just to physical Jerusalem and a physical Temple (which no longer held God’s Presence / Glory), **BUT to JESUS and HIS PEOPLE, the NEW and PERMANENT dwelling place of God’s Presence / Glory, and the only access to the Father.**

### God was Resurrecting / Renewing (giving life to) / Restoring / Rebuilding ISRAEL ...

- Jesus was the only Jew who was perfectly faithful to the Father and the covenant
- Jesus was the only perfectly True Son, True Seed of Abraham, True Son of David
- God kept all of his promises to Israel by raising Jesus – True Israel – from the dead
- Those who would repent, believe the Gospel, and be born from above would be baptized (placed) “into” Christ.
- By being “In Christ” (a phrase used repeatedly by Paul) these adopted children of God are acceptable to the Father, and they become True Israel by being “In” Jesus.
- Paul would call that being “grafted into the true vine”
- Jesus had called HIMSELF – not ethnic Israel – the TRUE VINE, and all who believe in him the Branches.
- Jesus had appointed the 12 Apostles to become the Foundation of his Renewed People (it is no longer the patriarchs who are foundational; see Revelation where the 12 Apostles are the foundation of the Heavenly Jerusalem, not the 12 patriarchs of Israel)
- AT PENTECOST, God begins gathering “scattered Israel” but he includes Gentiles also.

- o God is recreating IN Christ and THROUGH the Holy Spirit his People
- o All who believe become the true children of Abraham by FAITH, with the sign of circumcision / the new covenant becoming the circumcision of the heart by the Spirit (forgiving / washing away of sins)
- o God begins writing the Law on hearts by his Spirit (Jer
- **THE TRUE AND FINAL COVENANT PEOPLE BECOME A LIGHT TO THE NATIONS -**
  - o Precisely what God told OT Israel they should be but knew they couldn't.
  - o Precisely what Jesus told His Disciples they would be.
  - o Precisely what the Spirit makes us.
  - o ***Pentecost is greater than Sinai***
  - o ***A New & Final People of God are formed - in wind, fire, & glory.***
  - o God is not a respecter of persons because of their:
    - Age, Sex, Social Status, Wealth, Ethnicity, Disability, Culture, Ancestral Idolatry.
- The OT drew in converts with a Centripetal Force (drawing in) ...
  - o Calling the Nations TO Jerusalem ... "Look here!" "Come worship in OUR Temple!
  - o The first 7 chapters, shares this drawing power, centralized to Jerusalem.
- BUT, the rest of ACTS And of Christian History has a Centrifugal Force -
  - o Meaning Force PUSHING OUT & AWAY from the Center - a "Sending Out."
  - o Those Jews (from all nations) & Gentile Converts who became Christians on the Day of Pentecost return home, spreading back across the Empire.
    - After the Martyrdom of Stephen, we see The Scattering of the Church as Seed of the Gospel, as One New People (Ephesians 2), Light to the Nations.

### CRITICALLY IMPORTANT:

### THE DAY OF PENTECOST: THEOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE of the

### THE SPIRIT'S OUTPOURING ACTUALLY HAPPENING on the DAY of PENTECOST

#### The Day of Pentecost Portrays God's Renewed People IN CHRIST as GOD'S FINAL TEMPLE

1. IN Christ and THROUGH the Holy Spirit, the People of God become the Temple of God (1 Cor 3) COMMUNALLY in their Local Communities of Faith (churches)
2. IN Chris and THROUGH the Holy Spirit the People of God become the Temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 6) INDIVIDUALLY.
3. Just as the WIND and FIRE came when the OT Tabernacle / Temple were dedicated, the same thing happens at Pentecost, clearly designating GOD'S PEOPLE as the final, permanent Temple / Dwelling Place of God's Presence upon the Earth.
4. Just as God the Wind / Breath of God blew in the OT ...
  - a. Into Adam ... at Pentecost God's RECREATION of humanity begins as God's fiery breath gives LIFE
  - b. Into Adam ... at Pentecost God's People are empowered to take GOD'S IMAGE to the nations, to the ends of the Earth, showing the world what Christ (the

express image of the invisible God) looks like, proclaiming him as the TRUE KING who is coming to rule the nations.

c.

5. The Presence no longer dwells only at a Temple in Jerusalem but is now dispersed over ALL THE EARTH through Christ's People, as the glory of the Lord covers the Earth.

6.

### **The Day of Pentecost Reveals a DECISIVE FULFILLMENT from LAW to SPIRIT ...**

1. Pentecost – Greek, meaning “50”. Celebrated 50 days after Passover.
2. *PENTECOST ORIGINALLY CELEBRATED THE GIVING OF THE LAW AT SINAI ...*
  - a. It was associated with SINAI and the GIVING OF THE LAW.
  - b. God's people had travelled 40 DAYS after being delivered from slavery through the blood of the Passover lamb.
  - c. The people saw MOSES ascend to the mountain of God, and then WAITED at the foot of the mountain for 10 DAYS while Moses communed and interceded with God.
  - d. Exodus describes God's Presence coming down as “fire, glory, winds, ...”.
  - e. God gave the Law, written in stone, to symbolize GOD'S RULE, GOD'S KINGDOM and PRESENCE COMING TO RULE ON EARTH.
  - f. God's Presence and Law would enable Israel to be a light to the nations.
  - g. SINAI and the LAW was for ISRAEL IN THE LAND.
3. *THE SPIRIT'S COMING AT PENTECOST FULFILLED GOD'S PLAN ...*
  - a. Christ's disciples had walked with him 40 DAYS after the Resurrection of Christ the Passover Lamb.
  - b. They saw JESUS ascend into heaven to God's right hand – to David's throne – to intercede for us.
  - c. They WAITED 10 DAYS in Jerusalem for the Promise Jesus had said would come.
  - d. On the DAY of PENTECOST, God's Presence came with wind, fire, glory ...
  - e. The promised HOLY SPIRIT is given, fulfilling the promises and prophecies, replacing the Law of stone tablets with the Law written on human hearts, as GOD'S PRESENCE / KINGDOM / RULE comes into the HEARTS of humans.
  - f. God's Presence and Power would empower God's People to be a light to the nations.
  - g. PENTECOST as for GOD'S PEOPLE OF ALL NATIONS as the move throughout the WHOLE EARTH.
4. **Pentecost FULFILLS God's Promises and Prophecies ...**
  - a. Luke wants us to see the nations – all ethnicities – living, eating, worshipping ONE TRUE GOD together.
  - b. Luke wants us to see these people now treat one another differently in the everyday marketplace.
  - c. BECAUSE THAT IS HOW THE WORLD WILL SEE JESUS and THE FATHER.
  - d. Luke's Agenda is to show Theophilus – likely a Roman Citizenship, with money,

High social status – (IOW, a lot to lose) – and to show the Church, and to show the World, **what LIFE TOGETHER looks like, LIFE AS ONE AUTHENTIC REDEEMED HUMANITY, with all dividing walls of hostility broken down!**

**And that this is what God always wanted. ...**

- **At Sinai**, God creates a Covenant of Law written on stone, and it is that Law that Constitutes the People Israel as His Nation IN THE LAND.
- **At Pentecost**, God writes a New Covenant by the Spirit on the hearts of His People, and He Re-constitutes a New People from EVERY NATION as His Nation IN THE EARTH.
- OT Israel finds its fulfillment with all the Nations IN ISRAEL'S MESSIAH, AS the RENEWED ISRAEL, Jew-and-Gentile-In-Christ, the Church.

**The Day of Pentecost fulfills GOD'S PLAN by fulfilling Christ's Promise to send the Spirit. It is NOT the LAW that marks God's People, it is the SPIRIT, the PRESENCE, as God promised Moses would be the case *before Moses descended from Mount Sinai.* (Exodus 33:14-17)**

## **THE DAY OF PENTECOST: THE TRAJECTORY OF GOD'S PRESENCE**

**PENTECOST CONTINUES AN ESSENTIAL PART OF REDEMPTIVE HISTORY:  
GOD'S REVELATION OF THE PROGRESS and GOAL OF HIS DIVINE PRESENCE**

LUKE-ACTS ... ESPECIALLY ACTS ... ESPECIALLY PENTECOST and the CONTINUING POWER OF THE SPIRIT ... PLAYS A CRITICAL ROLE IN THE PROGRESSIVE REVELATION OF GOD'S PRESENCE  
**THE DIVINE PRESENCE**

**Q: How are we to view this in the Big Picture of the Bible?**

**Q: How are we to see this in the chain of history unfolding by God's Providence?**

### **1. CREATION**

IN GENESIS, the Spirit hovers over the waters and calls forth New Life, culminating in humanity. Humans are told to cultivate this New World – Scripture says they are to “work and serve” in this creation, and to walk with God.

**At Pentecost, God is creating a New Humanity ... the breath of God.**

He is helping restore humanity's purpose – to worship him and declare his wonders. To Work and Serve in His World. *To bear his image (formed, conformed to, transformed into the image of Christ), the image of Christ the King, into all the world.*

### **2. NOAH / THE ARK**

What was the purpose of the Ark?

- To preserve a small part (microcosm) of God's Good Creation, so that it might begin anew flourishing throughout the earth.

Likewise, " The Church is an Ark. (one of the ancient Christian symbols for the Church)

- IN The Ark of the Church, a microcosm of God's Good Order is preserved, restored, so that it might flourish throughout the earth.

Consider the wind that blew back the waters ... so that the Ark lands safely.

Consider the Spirit that rightly leads the Church through the ages, navigating a wicked world ... for the preservation of the Gospel.

The point? God's Presence has been, is, and will be with His People.

### 3. SINAI

We have already covered this ... so let's keep moving.

What kind of happens next in the Big Story of the Bible?

### 4. THE TABERNACLE

What was the purpose of the Tabernacle?

A PLACE For the Presence of God to come dwell amongst His People during their Wilderness Wanderings.

### 5. THE TEMPLE

What is the purpose of the Temple?

- a. Similar to the Tabernacle, but different.
- b. One primary purpose was for the presence of God to dwell amongst His People in the Promised Land.
- c. The Temple was supposed to be a reminder of the Garden.  
(Go back and read the descriptions of the architecture & art of the Temple – it is all Garden imagery. Because God was reminding them of how humanity once walked with Him – and He wanted this again.)

### 6. THE PRIESTS and the PROPHETS

**1Pet. 1:10** “Concerning this salvation, the **prophets**, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care, 11 trying to find out the time and circumstances to which **the Spirit of Christ in them** was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. 12 It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you, when they spoke of **the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven**.”

If we are considering a Theology of Presence – Peter tells us – the OT prophets longed to know what has now been revealed thru the coming of Christ and sending of the Spirit. Let's harmonize Moses with Peter ...

**Ex. 19:6** “... you will be for me a **kingdom of priests** and a **holy nation**.’ **These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites**.”

**1Pet. 2:9** “But you are a chosen people, a **royal priesthood**, a **holy nation**, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.”

Peter takes the promise made to OT Israel thru Moses ... and says it has been fulfilled in Jesus and thru Jesus by the power of the HS.

**Q: Upon whom did the HS rest in the OT? ANSWER: Prophets, Priests.**

**Q: Where do priests serve? ANSWER: In Temples**

The OT uses 2 primary Hebrew words to describe the priests going about their sacred duty in God's Temple: "work & serve."

- a. Before any priestly or prophetic passage is ever written down ... Moses uses these same words about Adam & Eve – they were to "work & serve" in [God's Garden, this new world of Genesis](#).
- b. Why would Moses use these words?
  - o The HS was inspiring Moses to give us clues, "Adam & Eve, walking with God, ordering His World ... were performing priestly duties."
  - o On the Day of Pentecost, God is restoring a Priestly People, who will walk well, work & serve well in his world ... the world which is STILL HIS TEMPLE.

## 7. INCARNATION

Jesus is the true Temple.

- a. The place where God & Man walk together in one body.
- b. John says, "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us."
- c. That Greek word he chooses for "dwelt" is literally "tabernacled" or "tented" among us.
- d. *John is directly linking Jesus to the Divine Presence of YHWH which dwelt in the Tabernacle and then the Temple. John is saying "Jesus is HIM!"*

## 8. RESURRECTION

Not even Death can stop God from dwelling with His People.

The HS hovers over the body of Jesus, removes the penalty of physical death, and cultivates a New Kind of Life.

Scripture calls Jesus the firstborn of what? **A New Creation.**

***Jesus is a New Creation, an entirely new order of Creation, never before seen in heaven or Earth, still present within the Old Creation for 40 days after Resurrection.***

[So, just as Israel walks for 40 days after the deliverance by the Blood of the Lamb, and then receives a Covenant, Jesus spends 40 days teaching His Disciples how to correctly read the OT, and to prepare them for the Presence which will indwell them... the HS is the seal and deposit of the New Covenant.](#) THEN, he ascends to his throne with God the Father.

## 9. DAY OF PENTECOST

- a. At Sinai, God creates a Covenant of Law, and it is Law that Constitutes the People as His Nation.
- b. At Pentecost, God writes a New Covenant on the hearts of His People, and He Re-constitutes a New People as His Nation.
- c. Israel finds its fulfillment IN ISRAEL'S CHRIST, the ANOINTED ONE, with Jew-and-Gentiles made One Renewed People
- d. The day when God's Presence indwells humans on 2 levels:

- i. Individually, ... and ...      ii. Corporately – as a group  
e. So now ... they become ...

## 10. THE CHURCH

**1 Peter 2:5** “...you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.”

**1 Cor. 6:19** “Do you not know that your body is a temple of the **Holy Spirit**, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own;”

**Colossians 1:18** “And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy.”

**Eph. 1:9** “And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, 10 to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment—to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ. 13 And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, 14 who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possession—to the praise of his glory.

**Ephesians 3:10** “His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, 11 according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

CREATION – TABERNACLE – TEMPLE – INCARNATION – RESURRECTION - PENTECOST  
– CHURCH ... And finally the CONSUMMATION of the Theological Trajectory...

## 11. NEW CREATION – NEW HEAVENS and NEW EARTH

So, you see, God progressively revealing Himself, His Glorious Presence, in more and more VISIBLE and SIGNIFICANT ways ... each time revealing a few more steps of His Theological Trajectory... **all culminating in the New Creation, when Heaven & Earth are joined together in perfect harmony.**

**Sinai & Pentecost are crucial parts of this ...**

And at the Resurrection, the HS raises Jesus from the dead, to New Life.

o Congruent with the Old Creation in that Jesus still had a recognizable human body, he ate, he walked, he talked.

o His Body was not just resuscitated ... it was re-created at a molecular level and MADE NEW.

- THIS IS PRECISELY WHAT GOD IS GOING TO DO TO ALL OF CREATION.
- Jesus is the firstborn of a New Creation.
- One Day, thru the work of Jesus by the Power of the Spirit, God will make all things New and God’s Glory will fill the entire Earth, because Creation IS HIS TEMPLE.

**But we won’t need a Sun ... because HE WILL BE OUR LIGHT.**

- Just as HIS PRESENCE dwelt in the Tabernacle/Temple ... just as His Spirit Dwells within His Church ... Ultimately, we know that JESUS is the radiance of God's Glory and the exact representation of His Being. His Goodness, His very Essence will fill that future fresh new world ... with love, with LIGHT of His GLORY.

**So, AT PENTECOST ... that Final Day IS foreshadowed ... we just aren't there yet.**

- We continue on a trajectory towards this because we see more dominoes of covenant promises fulfilled on the DOP and throughout ACTs
  - o Just as the Spirit hovered over the waters in Genesis, hovered over the body of Jesus ... He hovered over the Disciples & filled them ... as a small foretaste of what is to come when the Spirit hovers over this OLD CREATION and makes it New.

**AND REMEMBER WHAT IS CELEBRATED at Pentecost?**

**THE DIVINE PRESENCE - Wind & Fire.**

The fact that God Dwelled with His People ... IN GLORY.

So it was in the OT, so it was in Acts 2...pulling the past into the present, pointing into the future ! New Creation.

**FROM CREATION TO NEW CREATION, FROM EDEN'S GARDEN TO THE GARDEN CITY of the NEW JERUSALEM on the RECREATED NEW-HEAVENS-NEW-EARTH.**

**ON THE BASIS OF THE REDEEMING WORK OF JESUS CHRIST,**

**GOD WILL ACCOMPLISH THE NEW-HEAVENS-and-NEW-EARTH,**

**THROUGH THE RESURRECTION-LIFE-OF-GOD-POWER of the HOLY SPIRIT.**