

## The Book of Acts (Route 66)

All right, let's turn in our Bibles, this morning, to the Book of Acts... We are picking-things-up RIGHT where we left-off LAST week, having looked at '*The Four Gospels*'...

But, '*The Book of Acts*' acts as a VERY NEAT **SEQUEL** to the Gospels—particularly the Gospel of Luke... because LUKE wrote them BOTH...

He says—in the OPENING VERSE of the Book of Acts—: "**The FORMER ACCOUNT I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began... to do and teach...**"

So, that is a REFERENCE **TO** his GOSPEL account... which is ALSO addressed to this man named "**Theophilus**." – By the way: If you've ever wondered where Theophilus got his name...

It's because—when he was born—the doctor looked at him, and said: "*That's THE-AWFUL-LEST looking baby I have ever seen!*" – Just kidding! [that's an old 'Pastor joke']...

But Luke **WAS** a doctor! – He is called "**the beloved physician**" in Colossians 4:14... He becomes a TRAVELING COMPANION to Paul the Apostle in Acts Chapter 16... And, it's EASY to see where this happens, because the LANGUAGE of the text SUDDENLY SHIFTS...

No LONGER do we read: "**When THEY had gone through Phrygia and... THEY were forbidden... to preach... in Asia... and THEY [came down] to Mysia...**"

In Acts Chapter 16, suddenly, it's: "**WE sought to go to Macedonia... WE ran a straight course to Samothrace... WE [stayed] in that city for [many] days.**"

Now, people ask all the time: "*If Luke joined Paul in Chapter 16... how did he know what was happening in Chapters 1—15?*" – And Dr. Graham Scroggie does a GOOD JOB of summarizing this, in his book '*Know Your Bible*'... he says:

*"The 'we' sections [of Acts]... are Luke's... as an eyewitness... Everything from Chapter 13... Luke would get from Paul, **with** whom he **WAS**... at Caesarea, Philippi, Malta, & Rome."*

Theodor Zahn said: "*Nothing is more natural than that the great missionary Paul should've communicated to his... friends the record of his work... in the heathen centers of... [the world].*"

Dr. Scroggie continues: "*What is related in Chapter 12, [Luke] may... have gotten from Mark, to whose house Peter went after his [prison] release, and **WITH** whom Luke was in Rome... Cornelius, who lived at Caesarea, could've given Luke the information for the... parts of Chapters 9—11, because Luke was at Caesarea with Paul. Paul witnessed the martyrdom of Stephen, and would have no doubt given Luke details of Chapters 6—7. Philip, who lived at Caesarea—where Luke was—could have given him the [details] of Chapter 8. What is recorded in Chapters 1-5 may well have been supplied by Peter, Barnabas, and Philip, who also [knew] Luke.*" – Church tradition **UNIFORMLY ACCEPTS LUKE** as the author of this book...

As for the **DATE**... The Book of Acts concludes with Paul imprisoned in Rome for two years, and **NOTHING** is said of his release (and we know that happened in 63 AD)...

One author adds: *"There is no mention of the fall of **Jerusalem** in 70 A.D., or Nero's persecution of the Christians, which started about 64 A.D... Therefore... it is logical to date the writing of the Book of Acts near the end of the Paul's imprisonment [around] 62 AD."*

A scholar by the name of J.B. Lightfoot is the most WIDELY ACCEPTED in this area... And, this is a **CHART** of his **"Dates of Fourteen Events,"** from the Ascension of Jesus to Paul being Martyred in 67 AD.

If we work from this table—there is a period of about 30 years that is covered in the Book of Acts... Which—interestingly—is about the SAME PERIOD covered in the Gospels...

ON THAT NOTE—I'll point-out something ELSE that Dr. Graham Scroggie brings up [just because I think it's interesting]...

We mentioned LAST week that the FIRST 3 GOSPELS—Matthew, Mark, and Luke—are often called the 'Synoptic' Gospels... that's a word that—*LITERALLY*—means "together sight," and THESE 3 GOSPELS ALL share a SIMILAR PERSPECTIVE... He says:

*"There are 3 synoptic gospels, and the Book of Acts is in 3 parts... Matthew was written for the JEWS, and in Acts Chapters 1-7, the church is PRIMARILY **JEWISH**... Mark was written for the Romans, and in Acts Chapters 8-12, the gospel reaches **ROME** through the Jews. Luke wrote to the Greeks, and in Acts 13-28, we see a... protracted Gospel [ministry] in **GREECE**."* – He says: *"As the 4th Gospel: John was written for the 'common man,' and **IT** relates to the **WHOLE** of the Book of Acts... These facts are impressive and important... [and] cannot be accidental."*

Charles Reade—who was a British novelist and playwright—said: *"The Book of Acts is one of the most graphic and forceful bits of writing anywhere to be found. Only by reading it in **ONE SITTING**—and in reading it **OFTEN** in this way—can one appreciate its power."*

It is **FILLED** with history, adventure, doctrine, courage, biographies, narrow escapes, miracles, healings, shipwrecks, imprisonments... but it's also an INCREDIBLY PRACTICAL BOOK...

This is a Book that DESCRIBES what it's like to live under the **POWER** of the Holy Spirit... **AND** it SHOWS what it **LOOKS** LIKE to live in TRUE CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP...

In fact, one of the things I LOVE about the Book of Acts is that it DOES NOT present the church as some sort of UTOPIA... There are DISAGREEMENTS... DISPUTES... HYPOCRISY... ABANDONMENTS... people deciding to NO LONGER WORK TOGETHER...

But, one author writes—*"Even though the early church had a [fair] share of strong personalities, there was still a willingness to listen to—and submit—to one another."* At the CENTER of it all is the GOSPEL... *"Presented by many, and in varying terms—the message is always the same. Jesus is the promised Messiah, the Son of God, Redeemer of the world. His death is atoning, He rose from the dead, ascended to heaven, and by the Holy Spirit is*

*ever-present with His people. He forgives sins, empowers for holy living & noble service. There is here no attempt to systematize truth. Creedal formation awaited the age of criticism and controversy... But, in the Book of Acts – all is simple, natural, and passionate.”*

So, what I’m gonna do TODAY... is SUMMARIZE LARGE PORTIONS of the Book of Acts... And remember—with these studies—we don’t have time to talk about EVERYTHING...

For that, I ENCOURAGE just READING THROUGH the book, verse-by-verse... You may have seen THIS comment that somebody made on one of our church Facebook posts this week...

It says: “*Pastor Kevin—I enjoyed your overview of the four gospels yesterday! I learned many small and precious truths. Truth be told when you announced the rapid journey through the New Testament I was a bit skeptical because of the timeline. Not anymore. I have already read 15 chapters of [the Book of] Acts with 13 chapters left. I am excited to be on this journey!*”

Now, that was on MONDAY... The DAY AFTER we taught through the Gospels... This person had read 15 CHAPTERS of the Book of Acts by that point, so... IT CAN BE DONE!

]I’ll tell ya... As a PASTOR, I’ll coast off that feedback for a MONTH!... So, just consider this an OVERVIEW of the Book of Acts, this morning...

And it ALL BEGINS with Jesus telling His Disciples to “**NOT depart from Jerusalem, but to WAIT for the Promise of the Father...**” – He says: “**you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.**”

And then—in Verse 8 of Chapter 1—He says that: “**...you will 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.**”

This is one of those Verses that I TELL people... CIRCLE it, STAR it, HIGHLIGHT it, UNDERLINE it... Do WHATEVER IT IS YOU DO to tell yourself this is an IMPORTANT Verse of the Bible... And, FOR MANY REASONS...

For one thing: If you were with us for our study through the Book of Revelation... [If you’ve never studied it, CHECK IT OUT!]... In THAT Book, we mentioned how Chapter 1, Verse 19 provides a “**Divine Outline**” for the REST of that Book...

And, the SAME THING could be said of Acts 1:8... One author writes: “*The geographical references [mentioned here]... provide a simple outline of the [rest of the] book.*” – “*Chapters 1-7 tell of the church’s witness in Jerusalem. Chapters 8-12 tell of the church’s witness in Judea & Samaria... Chapters 13-28 tell of the church’s witness to the uttermost parts of the Earth.*”

But I would say MORE IMPORTANTLY, this Verse tells us what the rest of the Book is all ABOUT... **The Book of Acts is ALL ABOUT the SPIRIT OF GOD working through the PEOPLE OF GOD to CONTINUE THE WORK OF GOD which BEGAN WITH THE SON OF GOD...**

In fact, it's IMPORTANT to RECOGNIZE the RELATIONSHIP between the **Holy Spirit in the Gospels** and the **Holy Spirit in the Book of Acts**... This author writes:

*"Both the public ministry of Jesus in the gospels and the public ministry of the Church in the Book of Acts began with a life-changing encounter with the Holy Spirit: both are essential accounts of the results of that event." – "Jesus is the Prototype of the Spirit-filled, Spirit-empowered life. **The Book of Acts is the [account] of the disciples receiving what Jesus received in order to do exactly what Jesus did.**"*

So, even though the title of this book is—technically—the '*Acts of the Apostles*'... perhaps a BETTER TITLE might be '*The Acts of the Holy Spirit*.' – It's all about "*ordinary people doing extraordinary things*."

And so, here the Disciples are—in Acts Chapter 1—there's about 120 of them... they're gathered together in an upper room and they're just WAITING... and PRAYING...

Now... In Chapter TWO, something amazing happens... **ANOTHER** IMPORTANT PASSAGE OF SCRIPTURE... We read – in Verse 1 – that: "**When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.**"

[The idea of being "**in one accord**" is emphasized throughout the Book of Acts. It's mentioned about a DOZEN times... It's an IMPORTANT COMPONENT to church life]...

Verse 2 says: "**Suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing, mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. And... there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the spirit gave them utterance.**"

So, this is CLEARLY a SUPERNATURAL EVENT... The mighty, rushing wind from heaven, the flames of fire appearing... the speaking in other tongues...

This wasn't something that had been **SCHEDULED**... It wasn't posted in the church **BULLETIN**... It wasn't **MANIPULATED**... They weren't even **CALLING** on the Holy Spirit... They were just gathered together **PRAYING**... And they were all in **ONE ACCORD**

This is something I think the MODERN CHURCH has MOVED-AWAY FROM... It seems like there's always an attempt to DRUM-UP supernatural occurrences like this...

And yet, we're **DIS-CONTENT** with just gathering together to pray, and exist in one accord with each... But so often—in the Book of Acts—its THESE TWO THINGS that give way to some of the most AMAZING DEVELOPMENTS in the life of the early church...

By the way, there's different descriptions of this particular **EXPERIENCE** one can have with the Holy Spirit ALL THROUGHOUT the Book of Acts...

Sometimes it's the **BAPTISM** of the Holy Spirit, other times it's the Holy Spirit **COMING UPON** someone... sometimes it's **being FILLED** with the Holy Spirit, or **ANOINTED** with the Holy Spirit... But they all describe the same thing...

It is a **UNIQUE EXPERIENCE** that one can have with the Holy Spirit that is **SEPARATE** from the **IN-DWELLING** of the Holy Spirit that happens at our moment of conversion.

Anytime someone is born again, the Holy Spirit comes to live inside of us [scripture makes that clear]... But there is a **subsequent experience** that one can have with the Holy Spirit... [it CAN happen at your moment of conversion, but oftentimes it comes LATER]...

We see it **BEST** in these 3 different GREEK PREPOSITIONS... In John 14:17, Jesus said that **“the Spirit of truth... dwells WITH you and [He] will be IN you.”**

Those are the two Greek prepositions: **‘WITH’**—**‘PARA,’** means **‘ALONGSIDE’**... and **‘IN’** **‘EN,’** means **‘INSIDE’**... And so—at our moment of conversion—the Holy Spirit goes from ministering **ALONGSIDE** of us to living **INSIDE** of us...

But NOW we read of the Holy Spirit coming **‘UPON’** someone... That's a **THIRD GREEK PREPOSITION**, **‘EPI’**... It's when the Holy Spirit comes UPON a person, uniquely endowing them with **POWER** for a particular occasion...

Think of it **THIS** way... If I had a **PITCHER** of water, it would be **ALONGSIDE** an **EMPTY GLASS**... But I could **TAKE** that water and pour it **INSIDE** the glass... That's **PARA** and **EN**...

But—if I were to **KEEP POURING**—the water would eventually **OVERFLOW** the glass, and spill down the side... Now the water is **UPON** the glass... That's what we're reading about an Acts Chapter 2... It's an **OVERFLOW** of the Holy Spirit... for **POWER**...

I should also mention, too... There are several occasions in this Book where we read of this happening, and in not **ALL** of them do we read of people speaking in tongues...

SOMETIMES that happens, sometimes it doesn't... So—in other words—you can experience the filling of the Holy Spirit—or the **BAPTISM** of the Holy Spirit—and **NOT** speak in tongues!

Don't let somebody tell you that the tell-tale sign of being filled with a spirit – or worse, being **SAVED** – is speaking in tongues... **NOT TRUE!**

But, what **DOES** happen from this point forward... is we see a **SHIFT** in the **POWER** of the ministry of these early Christians... Here—on the Day of Pentecost—Peter preaches a sermon...

[I'd like to mention that his sermon is based ENTIRELY UPON SCRIPTURE... I mean, he's quoting JOEL, and PSALM 16, PSALM 110]... But, because Peter has been filled with the Holy Spirit, he preaches this powerful sermon and 3,000 people get saved! – The church just explodes!

And then, we read this **BEAUTIFUL DESCRIPTION** of the life of the early church down towards the end of Chapter 2... Beginning in Verse 42... it says: **“they continued steadfastly in**

**the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.”** – Those things should make up ANY CHURCH'S REGULAR LIFE... “THEN...”

**“Fear came upon every soul, and signs [and wonders] were done through the apostles... Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, and [they] sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need.”** – And “**So continuing daily with one accord in the temple and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.**”

That's what we want! – In Matthew 16, Jesus promised **“I will build My church.”** – And here—in the Book of Acts—we see Him DOING it...

Now—in Acts Chapter 3—in ANOTHER instance of this “POWER OF THE SPIRIT” that has come upon them... Peter and John heal a man whose been lame since BIRTH... Once more, Peter takes the opportunity to PREACH, and—by Chapter 4—2,000 more people get saved!

Now—as you can IMAGINE—the religious leaders are NOT happy about this and they arrest Peter and John... In Acts Chapter 4, Verse 7—they ask him: **“By what power or by what name have you done this?”** – Meaning: HEALING the LAME MAN...

And, in Acts Chapter 4, Verse 8 (one of my FAVORITE SECTIONS of the Bible)... We read: **“Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them: ‘Rulers of the people and elders of Israel: if we this day are judged for a good deed done to a helpless man, by what means he has been made well, let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, who you crucified, who God raised up from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole.’”**

Now, wait a minute! – PETER! – BUDDY! – What's going on??? Have you been taking those self-assertive classes? You've been reading that book on how to live your best life now???

No... Peter... this simple fisherman... Who used to speak out of turn, and get made fun of a lot... who was so afraid that he DENIED KNOWING JESUS in front of a little servant girl!

NOW, he stands before the PEOPLE who arrested Jesus and HAD HIM EXECUTED... and who had the AUTHORITY to do the SAME THING TO PETER! – Yet, Peter BOLDLY PROCLAIMS the name of Jesus... What happened?

The “answer” is back at the beginning of Verse 8... **“THEN PETER... FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT...”** – Peter experiences the POWER that Jesus PROMISES to give ALL HIS DISCIPLES... That is what the Book of Acts is about...

One of the GREAT TRAVESTIES in the modern-day church is that Satan has convinced MANY BELIEVERS to be CONFUSED about, or—WORSE—AFRAID OF the HOLY SPIRIT...

The Holy Spirit is NOT GIVEN to us to PUT ON A SHOW, or DRAW ATTENTION to ourselves, to BARK LIKE A DOG, or CLUCK LIKE A CHICKEN, or LAUGH UNCONTROLLABLY, or ROLL AROUND THE FLOOR...

The Holy Spirit is given to us to BOLDLY PROCLAIM THE GOSPEL... and LIVE HOLY LIVES... and DEMONSTRATE GOD'S POWER in a way that we could NEVER on our own...

And – in a way – I could stop HERE because what we've read up-till-now is a good “snapshot” of what the ENTIRE Book of Acts is all about...

Peter and John are RELEASED... They go back and have a prayer meeting with the rest of the church... Listen to this prayer that they pray towards the end of Chapter 4... It says:

**“They raised their voice to God with one accord and said: “Lord, You are God, who made heaven and earth and the sea, and all that is in them...Now, Lord, look [upon] their threats, and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word... And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.”** – This is what the modern-day church is LACKING!... The POWER of the Holy Spirit!

Now, it wasn't all “rosy” in the early church... As I mentioned, one of the things that I LOVE about the Book of Acts is that it DOES NOT present the church as some sort of utopia...

As of THIS year, I have been involved in full-time **church** ministry for 30 YEARS... And, I've served in the State of Georgia... I've gone to Ireland, Hungary... England, Scotland, Italy, Spain, France, Austria, Sweden, Denmark, Slovenia, Ukraine, Germany, Haiti, Mexico...

And NOW, Yuba City California... One thing I can tell you is wherever there is the church, there will be PROBLEMS... because there are PEOPLE! – Such was the case in the Book of Acts...

In Chapter 5, there's a couple named Ananias & Sapphira who try to LIE to the Holy Spirit... and God STRIKES THEM DEAD...

In Chapter 6, there's “**a complaint against the Hebrews by the Hellenists, because their widows were [being overlooked] in the daily distribution.**” – We see the FIRST CHURCH DEACONS appointed...

ONE of the Deacons—Stephen—is accused of BLASPHEMY, and STONED to death, becoming the first church martyr... In Chapter 12, James the brother of John is BEHEADED by the king...

And—in Chapter 8—we read that “**a great persecution arose against the church, which was at Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria.**”

One of the things that I find most interesting about this... is that—back in Chapter 1—Jesus has TOLD them: “**You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.**”

But AS OF Acts Chapter 8, they had all STAYED TOGETHER in one place—Jerusalem... They wanted that mega-church experience... Right? – There was a buzz about the place!

5,000 people! Come on! Cool things were happening! – *“Are you gonna come hear Peter preach this Sunday?” – “Maybe another THOUSAND people will get saved!”*

But the interesting thing is, they weren’t doing what Jesus had told them... They weren’t **“going into all the world and preaching the Gospel.”** They were all hanging-out in Jerusalem.

So, God **USED PERSECUTION** to **GET HIS PEOPLE** to **GO SPECIFICALLY** where He had **TOLD** them to **GO...** and **DO** what they were supposed to be doing!

I do not believe that it is always a “negative thing” when persecution arises comes the church... **SOMETIMES**, persecution can be the very **MEANS** by which God **GETS** us **INTO** His will...

Just ask yourself: Do we see more Christians in the world today **“going into all the world and preaching the Gospel?”** – Or do we see more Christians content to cloister together and hang out in large crowds where “cool stuff” is happening? – I think we all know the answer...

By the way—there’s a particular individual through whom some of this persecution comes... Saul of Tarsus... Acts Chapter 8, Verse 1, says he was **“consenting to [Stephen’s] death...”** – meaning he **“voted in favor of”** it...

Acts 7:58 says when Stephen was stoned, **“the witnesses laid their clothes... at the feet of... Saul.”** – So, Saul was there, and VOTED IN FAVOR OF, the MURDER of Stephen...

Chapter 9 describes Saul as: **“breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord.”** – Verse 2 says that: **“asked letters from the high priest so that if he found any who were of the way”** – which was an early name for Christianity—**“that he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.”** – So, Saul was rounding-up, and carting-off, Christians to jail.

But in Chapter 9, Saul experiences a **DRAMATIC CONVERSION...** He sees the risen Christ—he gets knocked on his backside... He has a **PERSONAL ENCOUNTER** with Jesus Christ—and his life is changed **FOREVER!**

Saul of Tarsus becomes Paul the Apostle, and SO MUCH of the rest of the Book is about how God **USED THIS MAN** to **BRING THE GOSPEL** to MUCH of the known world at that time.

I think it’s difficult to comprehend how **BIG** of a deal this was, that Saul became a Christian... This would have been like if—someone like—a Saddam Hussein had become a Christian...

People were **INITIALLY SKEPTICAL** of Saul’s conversion... in Acts Chapter 9, they say: **“Is this not he who destroyed those who called on this name in Jerusalem, and has [he] come here for that purpose, so that he might bring them bound to the chief priests?”**

His conversion is **SO SIGNIFICANT** that Luke writes it about in Chapters 9, 22, and 26...

Now, in Chapter TEN... **ANOTHER SIGNIFICANT EVENT** takes place... Peter is up on the rooftop around lunchtime and he has a vision of a sheet being lowered from heaven, and it's got all kinds of unclean animals on it...

And the Lord tells Peter: **“Rise, Peter; kill and eat.”** – And, Peter is like, **“Not so, Lord!”** – [which, I always thought was funny]... And there follows an EXCHANGE where the Lord has to CONVINCE PETER that: **“What God has cleansed you must not call common.”**

But this is all SET-UP... God is about to USE PETER to **BRING THE GOSPEL** to the GENTILES... See—up to THIS point—the church has largely been comprised of JEWISH PEOPLE... But God sends Peter to the home of a Centurion named Cornelius...

Peter preaches... And Acts Chapter 10, Verse 44, says: **“...while Peter was still speaking... the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word. And those of the circumcision who believed”**—the JEWS— **“were astonished, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured... on the Gentiles also.”**

Now, this is kind of LOST on us today, but this is a MAJOR TURNING POINT in the history of the church...

David Guzik writes: *“Many Jews of Peter’s day believed God loved the Jews while hating the Gentiles. According to William Barclay, it was common for a Jewish man to begin the day with a prayer thanking God that he was not a slave... [or] a Gentile. If a Jew married a Gentile, the Jewish community would have a funeral for the Jew and consider them dead. It was thought that to even enter the house of a Gentile made a Jew unclean. All of this changed with the Gospel. Christianity was the first religion to disregard racial, cultural and national limitations.”* – So important to understand that in the world we live in today...

By the way, this wasn’t a “new plan.” – Passages like Isaiah 60 speak of **“The Gentiles [coming] to your light...”** – Isaiah 42 says: **“in His name the Gentiles will trust.”**

In Ephesians, Paul reveals how this God’s plan all along: **“that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity,”** or HOSTILITY.

But this becomes a MAJOR DISPUTE in the early church... In Chapter 11, they **CONTEND** with Peter, and say: **“You went in to [eat with] uncircumcised men!”** – They said: **“Unless you are circumcised... you cannot be saved.”** – And there was MUCH DISPUTE and DISSENSION among them...

In Chapter 15, an early church council meets to decide WHICH—if any—of the Old Testament laws the Gentiles should keep... And JAMES stands-up, and says: **“Men and brethren... I judge that we should not trouble those from among the Gentiles who are turning to God, but that we write to them to abstain from things polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from things strangled, and from blood.”** – **“For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these... things...”** – And it **“pleased the apostles and elders, with the whole church...”** – But the SCOPE of this development is sometimes LOST on the modern-day church...

And, beginning in Chapter 13, the **REST** of the Book of Acts is, really, about the missionary journeyings of Paul the Apostle, and the various **COHORTS** that God brings AROUND him...

From Barnabas to Silas, Timothy, and Luke, John Mark... Priscilla and Aquila, Aristarchus, Secundus, Gaius, Tychicus [inventor of the wedgie LOL] ... Trophimus...

They travel to places like Cyprus, Crete, Perga, Iconium, Lystra, Berea, Attalia, Selucia, Derbe, Syracuse, Joppa, Miletus... and there's **LOTS MORE!** – Dr. Graham Scroggie writes:

*“Acts takes us over land and sea, north and south, from the Jordan to the Tiber, represent[ing] the intellectual, political, and commercial life of the ancient world. The Book of Acts is the authorized Missionary Manual of the Church—the greatest missionary story ever told!”*

Another author writes: *“The light which dawned in Bethlehem brightens and spreads from Jerusalem to Antioch, Ephesus and Troas, Philippi and Athens, Corinth and Rome... Hilltop after hilltop is caught by the rising sun, until they flame like **beacon** fires from the capital of Judaism to the capital of paganism.”* – *“Acts is a Book beyond all price.”*

And what the Book of Acts DOES is... it introduces a lot of **PEOPLE and PLACES** that the REST of the New Testament is all about... in the letters of Peter, James, John, and Paul... to places LIKE the Romans, the Corinthians, the Galatians, the Philippians, the Colossians...

*“Every ONE of which tells a BIT of the story of the FIRST PLANTING of Christianity.”*

And we begin to LOOK at those letters **NEXT** week in our study of the Book of **JAMES**... which is BELIEVED to be the EARLIEST NEW TESTAMENT LETTER WRITTEN, about 50 AD...

It's a **VERY PRACTICAL BOOK**, only **FIVE CHAPTERS LONG**... So, make sure you **READ AHEAD** and join us for that...

But, this morning, as we close... It's been said: *“The Book of Acts is the one Book of the Bible that is still being written to this day.”*

Because it's **ALL ABOUT the SPIRIT OF GOD working through the PEOPLE OF GOD to CONTINUE THE WORK OF GOD which BEGAN WITH THE SON OF GOD**... And THAT work CONTINUES today...

Have you ever been **FILLED** with the Spirit of God? – Have you ever experienced His **POWER**? – In Luke 11:13, Jesus PROMISES that God will **“give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!”**

If you've never been **FILLED** with the Holy Spirit before, don't LEAVE today... without ASKING GOD to **FILL YOU AFRESH**—or, perhaps for the **FIRST TIME EVER**—with the glorious, anointing **POWER** of His precious Holy Spirit!