



Overview of Acts

- The Acts of the Apostles details the work of the apostles, especially Peter and Paul after the resurrection and ascension of Jesus.
 - The Church in Jerusalem (1-8).
 - The day of Pentecost. Peter's preaching, miracle and arrest. Stephen stoned.
- The Church Scattered in Palestine and Syria (8-12).
 - Philip the Evangelist. The conversion of Saul/Paul. More of Peter's ministry. The Church at Antioch. James (the brother of John) killed.
- The Missionary Activities of Paul (12-28).
 - Three missionary journeys. Jerusalem council. Imprisonment. Voyage to Rome. Shipwreck.

Slide 4

What does the author say about themselves?

- The author does not name themselves, but we will discuss this more in future.
- Claims that this is the second book he is writing (Acts 1:1). We naturally assume the author is referring to the gospel called "Luke" (Luke 1:1-4).
 - He believes that he has access to eyewitness testimony.
 - He claims to have been careful in keeping up to date with things for some time.
 - Given that the author ends with Paul's imprisonment in Rome (not mentioning his death, as Stephen and James'), it seems strange to think it was written after this time (c. early 60s AD.). He also doesn't allude to the Jewish war (began AD 66) or the destruction of Jerusalem (AD 70).
 - He believes this account should give us certainty about what we have heard.
- Claims (implicitly) to be a companion on some of Paul's travels (Acts 16:8,10)
 - There are four "we" sections - 16:10-17; 20:5-15; 21:1-18; 27:1-28:16

Are the lives of the apostles recorded elsewhere?

- For the most part, no. We do not have other sources detailing the lives of the apostles during this period, but....
- 1 Clement 5:4-6. Describes generally the missionary work and sufferings of the apostles, especially Peter and Paul.
 - "...Peter who by reason of unrighteous jealousy endured not one not one but many labors, and thus having borne his testimony went to his appointed place of glory.
 - By reason of jealousy and strife Paul by his example pointed out the prize of patient endurance. After that he had been seven times in bonds, had been driven into exile, had been stoned, had preached in the East and in the West, he won the noble renown which was the reward of his faith, having taught righteousness unto the whole world and having reached the farthest bounds of the West; and when he had borne his testimony before the rulers, so he departed from the world and went unto the holy place, having been found a notable pattern of patient endurance."
- Polycarp to the Philippians. Affirms that Paul visited Philippi and wrote to them. (Acts 16:11-12)
 - "...Paul, who when he came among you taught face to face with the men of that day the word which concerneth truth carefully and surely; who also, when he was absent, wrote a letter unto you..."
- There are many "apocryphal" accounts of the apostles (e.g., The Acts of Paul and Thecla etc.). While these might presume elements of the story recorded in the biblical Acts, they are generally considered as non-historical, legendary accounts (though many were written as early as the 2nd century). We cannot use them to verify the details of the biblical Acts.
- The Church Historian Eusebius (c. AD 260/265 - c. AD 339) does offer additional information on the lives of the apostles, although not directly verifying the book of Acts (e.g. He tells us that Thomas preached in Parthia, that Peter was crucified in Rome etc.)
- Remember that the books of the bible can be used as independent sources.
- Hebrews 2:3-4. Describes generally how miracles were performed by the Apostles (cm. Acts 3:1-9)
- Paul's letters offer a lot of corroborating evidence, but we will look at this separately.

Claudius Expels the Jews from Rome (Acts 18:1-2)

- Priscilla and Aquila (a Jew) meet Paul in Corinth. They have recently left Italy because of a decree from Claudius (c. AD 41 - AD 54).
- Suetonius (c. AD 69 - 122+). The Lives of the Twelve Caesars. Divus Claudius 25.
 - "[Claudius] banished from Rome all the Jews, who were continually making disturbances at the instigation of one Chrestus".
 - Not only does independently verify the event, but it gives us a reason for it that fits well with the narrative of Acts ("Chrestus" is usually interpreted to be "Christ").
- Paulus Orosius (c. AD 375/385 - c. AD 420). History Against the Pagans.
 - "Josephus [c. AD 37-100] reports, 'In his ninth year the Jews were expelled by Claudius from the city.' But Suetonius, who speaks as follows, influences me more: 'Claudius expelled from Rome the Jews constantly rioting at the instigation of Christ [Christo, or rather xpo].' As far as whether he had commanded that the Jews rioting against Christ [Christum] be restrained and checked or also had wanted the Christians, as persons of a cognate religion, to be expelled, it is not at all to be discerned"
 - The quote preserved from Josephus puts a more clear date of c. AD 49 on the event (though some people might dispute this).

The Proconsul Gallio (Acts 18:11-12)

- After Paul has stayed in Corinth for a year and a half, the Jews bring him to the proconsul Gallio.
- We know a lot about Gallio from Roman historians.
- The Delphi/Gallio Inscription is a letter written by emperor Claudius in AD 52. It was found at the temple of Apollos in Delphi, Greece, which was part of the province of Achaia, the same province as Corinth.
 - "Tiberius Claudius Caesar Augustus Germanicus, invested with tribunician power for the 12th time, acclaimed Imperator for the 26th time, Father of the Fatherland... For a long time have I been not only well-disposed towards the city of Delphi, but also solicitous for its prosperity, and I have always guarded the cult of the Pythian Apollo. But now since it is said to be destitute of citizens, as L. Junius Gallio, my friend and proconsul, recently reported to me, and being desirous that Delphi should retain intact its former rank, I order you to invite well-born people also from other cities to Delphi as new inhabitants....
 - This with other references means that Gallio's role as proconsul can be dated to c. AD 51-52 which makes this the most accurately dateable point in the life of Paul.

The Death of Herod Agrippa (Acts 12:19b-23)

- Herod Agrippa I (c. 11 BC - c. AD 44), not to be confused with Herod Agrippa II who also appears in Acts, dies a painful death after being declared a God by the people.
- Josephus (c. AD 37-100). Antiquities of the Jews 19:8:2
 - "Now when Agrippa had reigned three years over all Judea, he came to the city Cesarea... and there he exhibited shows in honor of Caesar... On the second day of which shows he put on a garment made wholly of silver, and of a contexture truly wonderful, and came into the theater early in the morning; at which time the silver of his garment being illuminated by the fresh reflection of the sun's rays upon it, shone out after a surprising manner, and was so resplendent as to spread a horror over those that looked intently upon him; and presently his flatterers cried out, one from one place, and another from another, (though not for his good,) that he was a god... Upon this the king did neither rebuke them, nor reject their impious flattery. But as he presently afterward looked up, he saw an owl sitting on a certain rope over his head, and immediately understood that this bird was the messenger of ill tidings, as it had once been the messenger of good tidings to him; and fell into the deepest sorrow. A severe pain also arose in his belly, and began in a most violent manner... Accordingly he was carried into the palace, and the rumour went abroad every where, that he would certainly die in a little time... And when he had been quite worn out by the pain in his belly for five days, he departed this life, being in the fifty-fourth year of his age, and in the seventh year of his reign; for he reigned four years under Caius Caesar... and he reigned, besides those, three years under the reign of Claudius Caesar; in which time he reigned over the forementioned countries, and also had Judea added to them, as well as Samaria and Cesarea..."
 - This dates the death of Herod Agrippa I 44 CE.