



Tom C. McKenney
P.O. Box 413
Marion, KY 42064

WORDS FOR LIVING MINISTRIES

To Encourage... To Inform... To Teach

Visit our Web site at www.wordsforlivingministries.weebly.com

Phone/Fax (270) 965-5060
E-mail: wflm@bellsouth.net
wordsforliving7@gmail.com

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Dear friends, old and new—

Many of you may still have the old farm telephone number (270-965-2174). You need to know that we rarely answer that telephone, and it is frequently out of order, in wet weather. If this has frustrated you, please forgive us.

We can still be reached through the office phone (270-965-5060). Sally checks its voice mail several times a week. If you leave a message, be sure to include your phone number. I have two part-time secretaries—Bonnie and Sally—who each come in once a week to take care of bookkeeping, bills, receipts, mailing list, etc. Please keep Bonnie high on your prayer list, as she continues to battle cancer. She is often exhausted but keeps doing her best and says it is "in God's hands." Sally does her work woven around her job at a hospital in Paducah and other obligations. We may be a little slow to respond, but we do our best; and if you have cell phone numbers for Sally or me, feel free to use them.

Thank you again for your many kind cards, notes, and prayers after Marty's passing.

A Few WFLM Updates and Reminders

I just wanted to let you know that on the WFLM website (wordsforlivingministries.weebly.com) you can find current and archived WFLM newsletters, archived Food for Thought reflections, Christmas Plays (they are free) as well as articles on a number of topics. You can also use the website to listen to some of Tom's teachings and to Randy Cutlip's testimony (our

website may be the only place where Randy's testimony can still be found).

Also, if you'd like to receive the quarterly newsletter and monthly Food for Thought via email, just let Sally know by writing her at wordsforliving7@gmail.com or sumacsally@gmail.com and telling her you'd like to be added to the WFLM email group.

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This newsletter's excerpt from *Daddy's Study Guide to the Entire Bible* is the Introduction to the book of Acts.

Introduction to *The Acts of the Apostles*

The book of *The Acts of the Apostles* is the story of the founding and growth of the Church in the 1st Century AD. More precisely, it is the history of the Church during its first 30 years, covering the period from approximately 30 to 60 AD. In this book, usually referred to simply as "Acts," we will see the birth of the Church as a Jewish Church in Jerusalem, and its rapid expansion, northward through Samaria and Galilee to Syria, thence westward through Asia Minor and Greece to Rome, spreading over what may be thought of as the heart of the Roman Empire.

From there, the apostolic Church further spread outward into the lands of what were then called "the barbarians," on the frontiers of the known World. To study that latter history one would have to go to the Ante-Nicene Fathers, Eusebius, and other ancient histories, because Acts will leave us in Rome with Paul in prison, accompanied by Luke the beloved physician, about 60 AD.

The Book of Acts is a vastly expanded version of the story summarized in the crystalline abridgement of Mark 16:20. In the three decades of the early-to- mid-1st Century covered by this book, the glorious good news of salvation spread like a grass fire, from its amazing beginning in an upper room in Jerusalem, throughout the known World. The gospel was not spread by the sword, nor by clever promotion, nor by lofty argument, nor by demagogues manipulating the masses. No, the Church spread and grew as the simple good news of redemption was told by those whose lives had been transformed by it, and as it was confirmed by the power of the Holy Spirit, exactly as summarized in those 20 words of that 20th verse of Mark 16 (q.v.).

This book opens with the resurrected Jesus, having his last earthly conversation with his closest disciples, and giving them his final commandment. This opening scene is a more complete account of the same, but abbreviated, account found in Luke 24:49-51.

In fact, since Luke was also the human author of Acts, the two books could be thought of as one work, with Luke's gospel as Part I and Acts as Part II; this is made clear in the salutations of the two books and confirmed by other ancient writings, as we are about to see under "**Author.**"

Luke's brilliant history of the birth and beginnings of the Church closes at the end of Paul's first imprisonment (house arrest) in Rome, teaching and ministering to a steady stream of visitors, and writing pastoral letters to the churches he has founded, and prior to his martyrdom during the persecution of Christians under the emperor Nero.

The Use of "Christ" and "Jesus" in Acts, the Epistles, and Revelation.

In the gospels the Lord is often referred to simply as "Jesus" (his given name), and less often as "Christ" (his title)¹. This is because

¹ Christ is the English form of the Greek title *Kristos*. and it means "God's anointer [One]." In Hebrew He is called

the Subject of the gospels is Jesus, the man, the Messiah who becomes the risen Christ.

Beginning here in Acts, however, and continuing through the rest of the New Testament, we are dealing with the risen, glorified Lord Jesus Christ, the Divine Son, who sits at the right hand of the Father in Heaven. Thus, we should not be surprised that, beginning here, we will find Him more often referred to as "Christ," as "Jesus Christ," or as "Christ Jesus," rather than simply as "Jesus."

A. Author. Although he doesn't identify himself by name in either book, Luke is almost certainly the author of both the gospel that bears his name and Acts. The obvious continuity of the salutations of Luke's Gospel and Acts argues for this, as do the numerous "we"/"us" passages in Acts, in which he includes himself in the events described².

Since earliest times Luke, whom Paul called "the beloved physician," has been recognized as the author of both his gospel and Acts. Dionysius, Bishop of Rome (ca 260 AD) quotes from Acts 1:1 and attributes it to Luke³. An ancient Syriac document in the British Museum dated ca 275 AD, in which the author identifies himself as "Addaeus the apostle," says, "Luke, moreover, the evangelist, had such diligence that he wrote the exploits of the Acts of the Apostles, and the ordinances and laws of the ministry of their priesthood, and whither each one of them went. By his diligence, I say, did Luke write these things, and more than these; and he placed them in the hand of Priscilla and Aquila, his disciples, and they accompanied him

Yeshua [Joshua] *Hamashiah* [the Messiah]. It is extremely important to remember that Jesus was his given name and Christ is his title. More correctly he would be called "Jesus the Christ of God."

² The "we"/"us" passages can be found in Chaps. 16, 20, 21, 27 & 28.

³ ANF, Vol 7, Constitutions of the Holy Apostles, Book II, Sect II, vi, p 398.

up to the day of his death⁴.” Eusebius (ca 250-300 AD), called "the Father of Church History," declared this document to be authentic.

According to Eusebius, Luke was a native of Antioch, the location of the church that sent out Paul and Barnabas (Acts 13). He was probably a convert of Paul; he traveled and ministered with him, and was with Paul at the time of his execution. Luke was probably a gentile and, if so, he is the only gentile writer of any part of the Bible. For more information concerning Luke, see the introductory material in the study guide to Luke's gospel.

B. Place and Date. The salutations of Luke's gospel and Acts, as well as the subject matter, tell us that Acts was written after Luke's gospel. Acts was written about 60 AD, shortly before Paul's execution⁵. Had it been written after Paul's execution, that event would surely have been included in this book, as are the executions of Stephen, the first martyr, and James, son of Zebedee and the brother of John the Beloved, one of the Lord's inner circle.

The place of writing is unknown.

***NOTE:** There is some reason to speculate that Theophilus may have been Paul's advocate at his first trial before Nero, and that Luke and Acts were sent to him to acquaint him with the facts of Paul's beliefs and activities. Things giving plausibility to this speculation are Luke's addressing Theophilus as "most excellent," and the terms "evidence," "infallible proofs" and "setting things in order." This is interesting conjecture, but still conjecture, however; and we know from Acts that Paul was not at all reticent or unskillful when it came to defending himself, beginning with his rescue from the murderous mob at the Temple (Acts 21-23), and he had plenty of practice during his years of*

⁴ ANF Vol 8, Book VII, Ancient Syriac Documents, The Teaching of the Apostles, x, p 672. We shall meet Aquila and Priscilla in Chapt. 18.

⁵ See "New Testament Fragments in the Dead Sea Scrolls!" in the Study Guide, Introduction to the New Testament; for much more information on these fragments see also the same title in Part IV (Selected Topical Summaries).

imprisonment in Caesarea before he finally appealed to Caesar (Acts 24 and 25).

C. Occasion. Luke, a careful and diligent historian, desired that the history of the birth and early years of the Church be carefully and fully recorded, in the same way that he had researched and written his gospel account.

D. Theme. This book might well be called "The Acts of the Holy Spirit," for throughout the book the principal character is the Holy Spirit, Whom Jesus had promised, and for Whom He had commanded the disciples to wait ("...tarry ye in Jerusalem...")⁶. It is the Holy Spirit Whom they received in power at Pentecost, and it was He Who guided and empowered everything that the early Christians accomplished. Throughout the book, the emphasis is on the person and work of the Holy Spirit, Who would be the abiding presence of God on Earth during the Church Age (and still is).

Acts is a book of miracles. There are so many miracles recorded in Acts that Dr. H.H. Halley (Halley's Bible Handbook) has observed, appreciatively, "Take the miracles out of the Book of Acts and there is very little left⁷."



Food for Thought—A Rock of Refuge

Many passages in the Bible compare the Lord to a rock or a great stone, one which provides refuge or safety. Isaiah, for example, describes the Messiah's provision of shelter as being like "the shadow of a great rock in a dry and weary land." If you've ever experienced the

⁶ Luke 24:49.

⁷ Halley's statement reminds me of a similar, but not positive, one by Mark Twain, in commenting on the Book of Mormon: "Take 'and it came to pass' out of the Book of Mormon and there is not enough left to make a pamphlet."

heat of the desert, you know that shade can be crucial. If you've ever even just walked down a hot road in the summer you know that if there is a spot of shade ahead on the other side of the road, it is well worth the trouble to cross over and walk on the other side. The scripture also paints the image of the great rock as a shelter from the wind and from storms and as a stronghold of rock that is higher than we are, toward which we run in need. Being at the top of a rocky defile or peak can protect not only an individual but even protect an army (at least before the development of firearms) not only by giving them the high ground but also by helping them see their enemy approach. The Lord is our refuge, hiding place, shelter, and high ground; and, since we are his followers, he wants us to be like Him in that way. The people around us should see us as a place of refuge; they should see us as someone who will show them mercy, someone who will not say thoughtless things to them, someone who not ridicule them, someone who will speak the truth to them but who will not start gossip about them. He wants us to know the scripture well enough to help one another spot the Enemy from afar but never as fodder for our pride or a glib attitude.

Scripture also gives us one very unusual rock image—the smitten rock. When the Israelites were in the desert and in need of water, God told Moses to do something which must've seemed odd; He told Moses to hit a certain rock. When Moses did so, crucial life-giving water burst out of the rock and become a great stream of water, enough to meet the needs of over a million people and their livestock, and made them able to continue their journey. Paul tells the Corinthians that this Smitten Rock was Christ, and Jesus as man also become the smitten rock again when He was scourged and then nailed to the cross. His self-sacrifice, His willingness to be smitten, brought life—life spiritual and eternal—to our universe for all time. As His followers, we too are called to be selfless for the sake of others, and our sojourn on Earth gives us plenty of opportunities. Every

day there will be some things we would like to do that need to be sidelined or things which we'd like to leave undone which need to be done—for the sake of others. And these choices in large or small ways, can breathe out His type of life and love.

--Sally

Milestones

Jerry Kuykendall, a dear friend who served as a Believer's Retreat Board Member, a Cornerstone Foundation Board Member and missionary (alongside his wife Linda), passed away in September. He will be much missed, and we look forward to the reunion in Heaven.

A FINAL WORD

Treasure and use each day as if it were your last, and never give up hope: God has a limitless supply of new beginnings, and He makes beautiful things out of broken pieces.

