

ACTS: QUICK SUMMARY
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- Acts 1 Prelude: In the experiences of the forty days, the ascension, and the upper room, the disciples are prepared for a new vision of the people of God, the prelude to the story of the church as the on-going story of Jesus. The Spirit begins to empower messianic Israel (Acts 1–12), beginning with Israel’s renewal promised in the prophets (Acts 1–5).
- Acts 2 Pentecost: The church is born and empowered to the new vision of the people of God. Peter’s sermons trace the development of this vision.
- Acts 3–4 Lame Man: A healing miracle points to God’s forgiveness formally offered to Jerusalem and to her leaders concerning the death of Jesus.
- Acts 5 Ananias and Sapphira: A premonition of the church’s resistance to God in Ananias and Sapphira shadows the resistance of Jerusalem’s leaders to God’s purposes in the gospel as these leaders harden to the good news.
- Acts 6–8 Hellenist Cycle: As the heart of Israel hardens, the gospel’s steady movement to the Gentiles begins, a historical development characterized by two themes in Stephen’s Speech, the heart of the Hellenist cycle. The Spirit empowers messianic Israel’s Hellenists (Acts 6–12).
- Acts 9 Damascus Road: The central figure in the gospel’s Gentile movement is introduced, Saul of Tarsus, the preeminent Apostle to the Gentiles called “to bear my Name” in bringing to realization the new vision of the people of God. Paul’s life and work also best illustrates the themes of the Stephen Speech.
- Acts 10–11 Cornelius: Peter sees the new vision of the people of God as the first Gentile is converted; he functions to show divine approval on the gospel movement outward and to connect this movement to the very mission of Jesus. However, the Jerusalem church shows resistance to God’s will—the spirit of Ananias and Sapphira casting its ominous shadow on the story of the church.
- Acts 12 Agrippa I: The church is persecuted by the king after her movement to Gentiles is noticed, with possible echoes of Matthew’s nativity story of Jesus, but God protects his own.
- Acts 13–14 1MJ: Paul’s first mission effort generates strong synagogue resistance, but great success with Gentiles, which also has the result that no longer is Gentile church membership one token family—a dangerous flash point for Jerusalem. The Spirit empowers messianic Israel’s world mission (Acts 13–28) beginning with the world mission journeys traced in the work of Paul (Acts 13–21).
- Acts 15 Jerusalem Council: Ananias and Sapphira-like resistance to God’s will from conservative Jewish elements in Jerusalem’s church tests God’s Spirit as the church narrowly avoids a judgment disaster triggered by Paul’s Gentile success.
- Acts 16–18 2MJ: Paul stubbornly derails himself spiritually, but God’s grace sets him back on track at Troas to launch the Gentile mission to Europe.
- Acts 19–20 3MJ: The church at Ephesus is born, Paul’s crown jewel in his mission enterprise to Gentiles, proof-positive that Gentiles successfully can be incorporated into the people of God. With the Miletus Speech, Luke challenges his own church with the Pauline vision.

- Acts 21–23 Jerusalem: Paul stubbornly insists on going to Jerusalem, which is: (1) an unintended detour in God's divine itinerary west, and (2) an unfortunate decision that gets Paul into serious trouble, ruins the purpose of the collection, and jeopardizes God's will that he reach Rome, heart of the Gentile world, with the gospel, while Jewish leaders show they are hardened fully to the gospel. The Spirit empowers world mission destiny as the character of Paul becomes an obstacle for that destiny (Acts 21–28).
- Acts 24–26 Caesarea: Paul's two-year detention in Caesarea is: (1) totally uncharacteristic of typical Roman administrative response to Paul and a political disaster for the church, (2) a miscarriage of Roman justice that forces Paul to appeal to Caesar when he fears for his life, (3) the sad consequence of Paul's resistance to God.
- Acts 27–28 Voyage to Rome: God gets Paul to Rome finally, but whose story is Paul's story? Just what is the mission of the church and why is this hard for the church to visualize? What is the hidden message of the Ascension story? What does Luke present in writing Luke-Acts that goes beyond the gospel stories of others?