

10.1

Content Summary: Expanded Overview of the Book of Acts

A preface addressed to Theophilus identifies this book as the follow-up to a previous work about Jesus; a brief summary recalls his resurrection and promise of the Holy Spirit. (1:1–5)

Jesus ascends into heaven after telling the disciples that they will receive power from the Holy Spirit to be his witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. (1:6–11)

The eleven disciples devote themselves to prayer, along with Mary and the brothers of Jesus. At the instigation of Peter they cast lots to replace Judas with a new apostle, Matthias. (1:12–26)

On the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit fills 120 believers, who speak in tongues (unlearned languages). Peter preaches to the crowd that gathers, and about three thousand people respond to his invitation to repent and be baptized. (2:1–41)

The early church is marked by apostolic teaching, fellowship, signs and wonders, prayer, daily temple worship, the breaking of bread, and a daily increase of those being saved. (2:42–47)

Peter heals a lame man at the temple gate in the name of Jesus and preaches to the crowd that gathers. Peter and John are arrested, and Peter preaches boldly to the religious leaders, who place

them on trial. They are ordered not to teach in the name of Jesus again. (3:1–4:22)

The church prays for boldness, and the place where the believers have gathered is shaken by the power of the Holy Spirit. (4:23–31)

Members of the Jerusalem church hold all things in common.

Barnabas sells a field and gives the money to the church, but a married couple, Ananias and Sapphira, try to cheat the church by holding money back, and both of them are struck dead. (4:32–5:11)

Many signs and wonders are worked through the apostles. When Peter’s shadow falls on people, the sick and the demon-possessed are healed. (5:12–16)

The high priest has the apostles arrested, but an angel lets them out of prison. Guards bring them back before the council, where Peter says, “We must obey God rather than any human authority.” (5:17–32)

Gamaliel (a member of the council) recommends that no action be taken against the apostles, since their movement will die out on its own if it is not of God. The apostles are flogged, but they rejoice to have been found worthy of suffering in Jesus’s name, and they continue to teach daily in the temple. (5:33–42)

A dispute arises between Hellenists and Hebrews concerning provision for widows; the apostles appoint seven men to be in

charge of “waiting tables” and other matters, two of the men being Stephen and Philip. (6:1–6)

Stephen’s ministry arouses opposition, and he is stoned to death after delivering a long speech that recounts the history of Israel and attributes the building of the temple to obstinacy. (6:7–7:60)

Saul (later known as Paul) leads a violent persecution against Christians that scatters the church to different areas. (8:1–3)

Philip evangelizes the Samaritans, and Peter and John come to impart the Holy Spirit to those whom Philip had baptized. One of these converts, Simon Magus, tries to purchase the ability to give the Spirit. (8:4–25)

An angel leads Philip to evangelize an Ethiopian eunuch, and after he is baptized, the Spirit snatches Philip away for other ventures. (8:26–40)

Jesus appears to Saul on the road to Damascus and sends Ananias to baptize him and remove his temporary blindness. (9:1–19)

Now a believer, Saul is introduced to other believers and confounds Jews with his arguments. He evades plots to kill him, at one point being lowered over the wall of Damascus in a basket. (9:19–31)

Peter heals Aeneas in Lydda and raises Dorcas (Tabitha) from the dead in Joppa, (9:32–43)

Peter baptizes a gentile centurion, Cornelius, after receiving a vision of unclean animals accompanied by the command, “What God

has made clean, you must not call profane.” The gentiles speak in tongues, as the disciples did at Pentecost. (10:1–48)

Peter justifies the baptism of gentiles by recounting the story of Cornelius to others. (11:1–18)

The church at Antioch initiates a mission to gentiles, and Barnabas and Saul are summoned to become leaders there. The believers are now called “Christians” for the first time. (11:19–26)

Agabus, a prophet, predicts a famine that inspires a collection on behalf of believers in Judea; it is delivered to Jerusalem by Barnabas and Saul. (11:27–30)

Herod kills James the disciple of Jesus and puts Peter in prison. (12:1–5)

An angel releases Peter from prison, and he seeks refuge in the house of John Mark’s mother, where people are praying on his behalf. A servant, Rhoda, is slow to let him in. (12:6–19)

After an adoring crowd proclaims Herod to be a god, he is struck by an angel, eaten by worms, and dies. (12:20–23)

Barnabas and Saul return to Antioch with John Mark and are then sent out by that church on a missionary journey. (12:24–13:3)

On the island of Cyprus, the proconsul Sergius Paulus believes after Paul curses his magician Elymas, who is struck temporarily blind. (13:4–12)

Paul preaches to Jews in a synagogue at Pisidian Antioch with some success, but eventually he meets with so much opposition from the Jews that he decides to evangelize gentiles instead; this pattern is repeated in Iconium. (13:13–14:7)

After healing a lame man in Lystra, Paul and Barnabas are identified as Hermes and Zeus. They subsequently enjoy evangelistic success in the area until Jews from Antioch and Iconium intervene, stoning Paul and leaving him for dead. (14:8–20)

Saul and Barnabas complete their missionary journey by revisiting some places, appointing elders, and warning of persecutions to come. (14:21–28)

A council is held in Jerusalem to determine whether gentiles may be saved without first being circumcised; James the brother of Jesus presides, and the decision reached is that gentiles need not be circumcised, provided they keep certain other regulations. (15:1–35)

Paul sets out on a second missionary journey, parting company with Barnabas, who wants to take John Mark along, and taking Silas as his companion instead. Paul objects to the inclusion of John Mark because he did not complete the previous journey. (15:36–41)

Paul circumcises Timothy so as not to offend Jews, and then the Spirit both restricts and guides their travels so that they will cross over to Macedonia. (16:1–10)

In Philippi, Lydia, a dealer of purple cloth, becomes a believer on the Sabbath day in a place of prayer by a river; she opens her house to Paul and his team. (16:11–15)

Paul exorcizes a divination spirit from a slave girl who works as a fortune-teller. He and Silas are arrested and put in stocks; they sing hymns in prison and, after an earthquake sets them free, baptize the jailer and his household. When Paul reveals that he is a Roman citizen, the magistrates apologize. (16:16–40)

In Thessalonica, Paul has some success evangelizing Jews in a synagogue, but when the opposition grows, an angry mob attacks Jason, with whom Paul's company has been staying. The mob refers to the Christians as those "who have been turning the world upside down." (17:1–9)

The Jews are more receptive in Berea and check the Scriptures to see if what Paul says holds up, but trouble starts when Jews from Thessalonica come to incite the crowds. (17:10–15)

Paul preaches to philosophers on the Areopagus in Athens; most scoff at his mention of resurrection from the dead. Dionysius the Areopagite and Damaris become believers. (17:16–34)

Paul arrives in Corinth and lives with Aquila and Priscilla, Jewish Christians who, like him, make a living as tent-makers. He spends eighteen months there and eventually is brought before the proconsul Gallio, who refuses to rule on matters of Jewish religion. (18:1–17)

Paul has his hair cut as one under a vow and then returns to Antioch by way of Ephesus and Jerusalem. (18:18–22)

Paul sets out on a third missionary journey. Meanwhile, Priscilla and Aquila instruct an eloquent believer, Apollos, to know the way of God “more accurately,” and he becomes a powerful teacher of the faith. (18:23–28)

Paul comes to Ephesus and encounters disciples who know only the baptism of John and have not received the Holy Spirit; he baptizes them in the name of Jesus, and they are filled with the Spirit, speaking in tongues and prophesying. (19:1–7)

Paul continues to teach and work miracles in Ephesus for two years; when handkerchiefs or aprons that touched his skin are brought to the sick, diseases are cured and demons are expelled. (19:8–12)

Seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish priest, try to exorcize demons in the name of “the Jesus whom Paul proclaims,” but the demons overpower them. As a result, those who practice magic burn their books. (19:13–20)

A riot erupts in Ephesus after Demetrius the silversmith convinces people that the city’s economy and honor are threatened by the Christian affront to the temple of Artemis. (19:21–41)

As Paul continues to travel, he ends up in Troas, where he preaches long into the night. A young man, Eutychus, falls asleep and

tumbles out of a third-floor window. Paul embraces him, declares him alive, and continues to preach, (20:1–12)

As Paul continues toward home, he invites the elders of Ephesus to join him in Miletus and preaches a farewell homily to them, claiming that they will not see him again, (20:13–38)

As Paul's third journey comes to an end, he is told through the Spirit not to go to Jerusalem. He stays at the home of Philip, who has four daughters with the gift of prophecy. The prophet Agabus from Judea binds himself with Paul's belt to symbolize what will happen to Paul in Jerusalem. (21:1–16)

Paul goes to Jerusalem and on the advice of James goes through a purification rite to please Jewish believers there. Then Jews from Asia incite a riot by falsely claiming Paul has brought gentiles into the temple. (21:17–36)

The Roman tribune allows Paul to address the crowd, and he tells the story of his conversion. Those in the crowd are angered when he claims that the Lord sent him to gentiles. The tribune, after hearing Paul declare himself to be a Roman citizen, realizes that Paul cannot be flogged. (21:37–22:29)

Paul is brought before the Jewish council, where he exploits the division between Pharisees and Sadducees by claiming that he is on trial for believing in the resurrection of the dead. (22:30–23:10)

The Lord tells Paul that he must bear witness in Rome. (23:11)

Paul is transferred by night to the care of the governor Felix in Caesarea after his nephew informs the Roman officials of a plot by some Jews to murder Paul. (23:12–35)

Ananias the high priest and other Jews bring charges against Paul before Felix, and Paul offers a defense speech. Felix leaves Paul in prison for two years to please the Jews and in hopes of receiving a bribe. (24:1–27)

Paul has another hearing before the next governor, Festus. He appeals to the emperor to avoid being sent to Jerusalem, since the Jews were planning to kill Paul en route. (25:1–12)

Agrippa and Bernice visit Festus and listen to Paul relate the story of his conversion one more time. Agrippa says that Paul could have been set free if he had not appealed to the emperor. (25:13–26:32)

Paul is taken as a prisoner on a sea voyage intended for Rome, but storms and a shipwreck strand Paul and the other travelers on the island of Malta. (27:1–28:1)

On Malta, Paul is unharmed after being bitten by a deadly viper, and he heals the father of Publius, a leading man among the island's friendly natives. (28:2–10)

After three months Paul is brought to Rome, where he is placed under house arrest and argues with Jews over his teachings.

Finally, he announces that the salvation of God has been sent to gentiles because they will listen. (28:11–29)

Paul continues to preach freely in Rome for two years. (28:30–31)