

THE BIBLE IN A NUTSHELL:

THE HISTORICAL BOOK OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

THE BOOK OF ACTS

The Book of Acts is the only “historical” book of the New Testament—that is to say, it is the only book of the New Testament the purpose of which is to keep an accurate record of the events of the early Christian Church (The other books are “historical” in the sense that they happened in history, but keeping the history is not their main purpose).



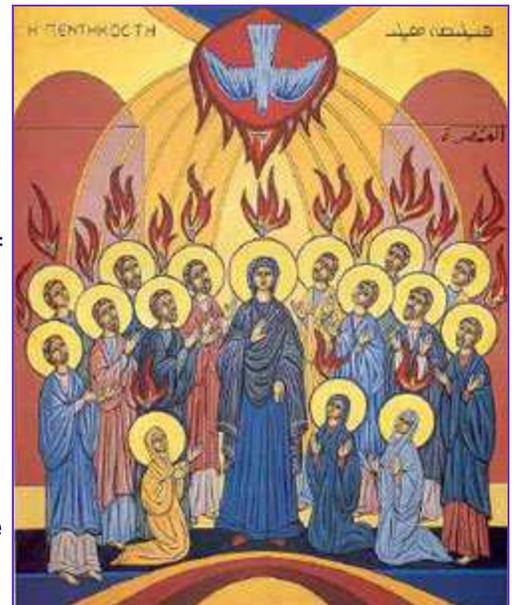
**The Apostle
Luke**

The author of the Book of Acts is Luke, whose Gospel we have read from when covering the Gospels. He is NOT one of the disciples, but rather a Greek physician who joined the early Christian church in Jerusalem, shortly after Jesus’ death and resurrection. Originally, The Gospel of Luke and The Book of Acts were one written work, but the early church fathers split it in two, since one half covered Jesus’ life and teachings, and the other was the origin of the Christian church. Whenever you find the pronoun “I” in the Book of Acts, Luke is referring to himself. He made some travels with Paul, when Paul went on his missionary journeys. Much of what he writes about, he collected from interviews with the 11 surviving disciples, Mary, Jesus’ mother, Mary Magdalene, and many other of Jesus’ followers that lived in Jerusalem in the early years of the church.

The Book of Acts is divided into several sections. The first and most important occurs in Chapter 1—the arrival of The Holy Spirit, just as Jesus promised. The arrival of The Holy Spirit leads to an important date in the church calendar—The Day of Pentecost. This is considered to be the “birthday” of the church, when all the believers were gathered together as one. The rest of chapter 2 gives a very good definition of what it means to be the Church.

From Chapter 3 on, Peter and John begin preaching the Gospel to all who will hear—and encountering the anger of the establishment, which will happen over and over throughout Acts. Of particular interest is the story of Stephen, considered to be the church’s first martyr.

Much of the rest of the book follows Saul—an educated Jewish man who set out to destroy the early church. Following a dramatic conversion, Saul changes his name to Paul, and is called by Jesus to bring the Gospel to the Gentiles (all non-Jewish people). Paul travels all across the Mediterranean starting new churches. He is imprisoned many times, but always is released. He is eventually brought to Rome for trial, where he lives for several years. Acts does not record Paul’s death, indicating the writing was completed before Paul’s death.



Pay particular attention to the names of the cities that Paul visits on his journeys. The names of these cities and their churches are where many of the Epistles get their names (Colossae = Colossians, etc.). Also note that some of these names will come up again, when Jesus calls them out by name in the Book of Revelation.

