# Key Concepts in Acts of the Apostles

1. Luke – or whoever the actual author of the third Gospel is – is the accredited author of Acts. Its title: Acts of the Apostles – could signal the activities/deeds of the apostles – though the only apostle really presented is Peter; Paul (formerly Saul) “becomes” an apostle/refers to himself as an apostle – though isn’t called one by Luke;

2. Acts was likely written after Luke’s Gospel (85-95 CE); the Letters (most attributed to Paul) were likely written in the 50s CE; Luke likely knew Paul; Luke presents Paul as one “subject to Jewish law”; Luke was writing though in years long after Paul’s death and in the reality of his (Luke’s) time. One major issue – the acceptance of Gentiles who become Christians and don’t follow all the “requirements” of Jewish Christians

3. Acts “tells a dramatic story of the birth and expansion of the church from the time of the ascension of Jesus until the arrival of Paul in Rome” (Christopher R. Matthews from the Introduction to Acts of the Apostles)

4. Structure: Chs. 1-7 – portrays the life and growth of the early community in Jerusalem up to the death of Stephen; Ch. 8 – the missionary (to non-Jews) of Philip; Ch. 9 – conversion of Saul; Ch. 10.1-11.18 – Peter’s role in the inclusion of the Gentiles; Chs. 11.19-14.28 – the missionary activity of Paul (formerly Saul) and Barnabas (includes in Ch. 12 Peter’s miraculous escape from death); the center of the book, Ch. 15, recounts how an Apostolic Council determined the acceptance of the Gentiles; Chs. 15.36 – 21.26 continue the story of Paul’s missionary travels in Philippi, Thessalonica, Athens, Corinth, Ephesus, Miletus, Caesarea, and eventually Rome; Chs. 21.27-28.31 – the uplifting image of Paul, while under house arrest, continuing to preach and teach

5. the genre of speeches/ the role of interpretation of Tanakh

6. the influence of the Holy Spirit—how the presence of the Holy Spirit changes the apostles/disciples; note Peter and Philip

7. the presence and roles of women: particularly Mary, mother of Jesus; others include Tabitha (Dorcas),

8. Cornelius/Peter/ the clean and the unclean

9. “Bringing in the Gentiles”

10. Literary style of Luke: dedication of the work to Theophilus; integration of speeches conveying what Luke saw as the significance of the occasion and way of presenting what Christianity is and was to be; more of an influence on history than a strictly historical account;

11. Ch.1.1 – the dedication to Theophilus – a Hellenistic (Greek) literary convention; vs. 6-11: the ascension of Jesus; vs. 12-14: those gathered awaiting the coming of the Holy Spirit; vs. 15-26: Peter speaking about Judas and the selection of Matthias (as 12th apostle)

12. Ch. 2 – Pentecost, the coming of the Holy Spirit; speaking in many languages (reversal of Tower of Babel); vs. 6-13: people reacting to the Apostles’ abilities; vs. 14-41, Peter’s first speech including numerous references to Joel, Psalms, and Tanahk

13. Ch. 3 – Peter and John and a cure of a lame man; vs. 6 – repeated phrase “in the name of Jesus Christ…”; vs. 12-26: another major speech of Peter; vs. 16: repetition of “faith in the name”

14. Ch. 4 – Peter and John arrested; challenges from the rulers, elders, and scribes; vs. 16-22; another speech of Peter with interruptions, giving the consternation of the leaders of Jerusalem; vs. 24-32 – prayer for “boldness”; vs. 32-37 – description of the early Christian community

15. Ch. 5 – vs. 1-11: the case of Ananias and Sapphira; vs. 14 -16: more believers and cures/wonders; Peter and the apostles arrested; miraculous deliverance; vs. 29: “We must obey God rather than any human authority…”; vs. 33-39: words of Gamaliel, a Pharisee, “but if it is from God…”

16. Ch. 6 -- the institution of deacons – specifically Stephen

17. Ch. 7 – vs. 2-53: Stephen reviews the history of the Israelites and their ‘hardened hearts”; vs. 54-60: Stephen’s death, parallel words/prayer to Jesus on the cross

18. Ch. 8 – persecution of the church in Jerusalem; baptism of the Holy Spirit – and a man named Simon who wants to “buy the powers”; the activities of Philip – specifically with the Ethiopian eunuch

19. Ch. 9 – first account of Saul/converted to Paul and his role; vs. 23-30: threats on Saul/Paul’s life; vs. 32-43: accounts of Peter’s miracles: Aeneas and Tabitha/Dorcas; Ch. 22 – Paul’s first person account of

20. Ch. 10 – Cornelius, a Gentile, and Peter – leading to the acceptance of Gentiles into the Jewish/Christian community; Peter’s speech – vs. 34-48;

21. Ch. 11 – Peter recounts the story of the “canvas and the animals”; vs. 9: “What God has made clean, you must not call profane.”; vs. 36: the first reference to “Christians” (previously “followers of the Way”)

22. Ch. 12 – arrest and miraculous release of Peter; vs. 12: maybe a reference to the Mark of the Gospel

23. Ch. 13 – Saul (vs. 9 name change reference) and Barnabas set apart for missionary work; vs. 16-47 – speech of Paul;

24. Ch. 14 – Paul cures a crippled man; the people acclaim Paul as “Hermes” and Barnabas as “Zeus”’

25. Ch. 15 – the “Council of Jerusalem”; Paul and Barnabas separate;

26. Chs. 16-28 –Paul and Silas’ stories of missions to the “Gentiles”; accounts of Paul’s numerous persecutions/attempts on his life