

Acts of the Apostles *A Bible Study*

Grace's OASIS (On-line Adult Study in Spirit)
Class/Discussion

Fall, 2021

*Week 1 (9/12):
Introduction, Chapters 1 and 2*

September 12, 2021

What do we know about Acts?

The full title is "**The Acts of the Apostles**", although we could add "...Under the Influence of the Holy Spirit"

Companion volume/continuation of the **Gospel of Luke**, believed to be written by Luke, "a physician and associate of Paul (Col 4.14; 2 Tim 4.11; Philemon 24)."

Probably written at the same time as Luke, ~80-90 CE, although actual date not definitive

It chronicles the early church from Jesus' small group of disciples in Jerusalem to Judea and Samaria and to the 'ends of the earth'

Why was Acts written?

It is a continuation of the Gospel of Luke, who wrote...

“I too decided, after investigating everything carefully from the very first, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know the truth concerning the things about which you have been instructed.” [Luke 1:3-4]

Acts follows the continuation of Jesus’ work by the Spirit through the church.

“Luke-Acts is unfinished because its author was seeking not only to inform but also to invite.... The grand narrative is thus an invitation, a reminder to readers of who they are; and within that grand narrative the various smaller narrative units must be seen as a calling and an invitation.” [*Belief:*

Theological Commenary... Luke, p. 4]

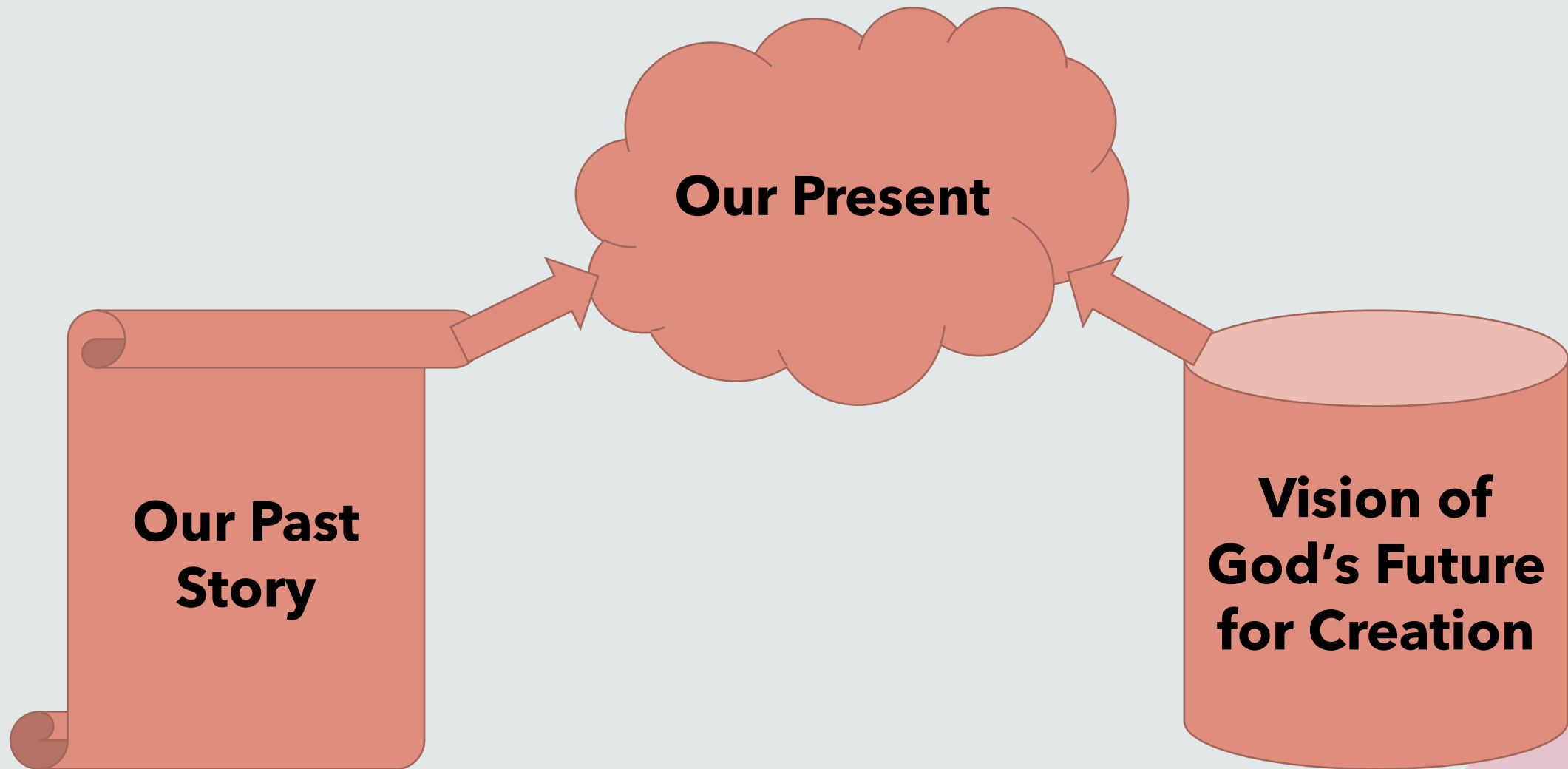
But what do we really know about Acts?

While it chronicles the history of the early church, it is best understood as a **theological narrative**.

“It depicts life in the **disrupting presence of the Spirit** of God.” [**Belief: Theological Commentary on the Bible - Acts**]

- New order through the resurrected body of Jesus
- Disruption of political, religious, economic, and social designs
- Not at all what we anticipate – God is directing, not us

The Present coming in contact with the Past and the Vision of God's Future



Guiding questions as we explore Acts

- How is the Holy Spirit at work? How is it described?
- How do the people in that era recognize it?
- What is the response... from the ones through which the Spirit works? From others around them?
- What changes/transformations/upheavals do we see in the community of faith?
- What would be the reaction to this today?
- What might the Spirit look like today?

What to expect each week

We'll cover 2-3 chapters of Acts each week

Start with a brief run ("mad dash") through the chapters

First breakout: What passages jumped out at you?

Second breakout: Explore a particular passage in more depth, focusing on the guiding questions

What if I fall behind?



We all have those weeks
... you can catch up
... or skip ahead
... but don't drop out

Mad Dash:

Acts 1

Jesus promises the Holy Spirit (1:1-5)

- Continued to teach about the kingdom of God for 40 days
- Go and wait

Jesus' ascension (1:6-11)

Life of the disciples in Jerusalem (1:12-14)

Selecting Mathias to replace Judas (1:15-26)

Mad Dash:

Acts 2

Pentecost: the Holy Spirit arrives (2:1-13)

- Speaking the languages of the people - a joining

The Spirit speaks through Peter (2:14-36)

- Israel's story in a fresh light through Jesus

The first converts (2:37-41)

Communal life among the believers (2:42-47)

- Responding to God's divine, untamed love

*Breakout Session 1:
What passage(s) jumped out at you
this week?*

Discuss in breakout sessions for 10-15 minutes

Regroup to share highlights

Breakout Session 2: If we had time

Question(s) here...

Discuss in breakout sessions for 10-15 minutes

Regroup to share highlights

Breakout Option 1:

Breaking the nationalist dream

The disciples expect Jesus to “restore the kingdom of Israel” (v. 1:6) – a dream of controlling their destiny, imposing their will, even if good-intentioned.

Jesus’ redirects them: “you will be my witnesses...” (v. 1:8)

Belief Theological Commentary on Acts: “the book of Acts is a direct, unequivocal assault on nationalism in all its forms.... The Holy Spirit will break open what we want closed and shatter our strategies for protectionism for the sake of a saving God ...” [p. 23]

In what ways to do you see this playing out in Chapters 1 and 2?

Breakout Option 2:

The disrupting force of the Holy Spirit

Belief: Theological Commentary...Acts: "The book of Acts ...depicts life in the disrupting presence of the Spirit of God." [p. 1]

How does that disruption play out in Acts 1-2?

How might we recognize the disrupting presence of the Spirit in our lives today?

Next Week (9/19)

Read Chapters 3-5
(the early church in Jerusalem)