

# Week 16

## Acts (part one) - Praxaeij Apostolwn

### *Praxeis<sup>1</sup> Apostolon - Acts of the Apostles*

Acts is our only early church history. Tradition attributes its authorship to Luke (a co-worker with Paul - Col 4:4). If we compare the first paragraph of The Gospel of Luke with the first verses in Acts, we find that Luke and Acts were written to the same individual (Theophilus). Which makes Luke/Acts a two-volume book or a two-book history written by the same author. The prologue of Luke serves as introduction to Luke and Acts. This connection with the Gospel of Luke is not self-evident, as Acts does not follow Luke in our Bibles.

Though Acts is not theological or ethical, like the epistles, we observe theology and ethics unique to Christianity from the outside looking in. Nor does Acts have the practical advice giving that is found in the pastoral epistles, but we see the church finds its identity and way, again as if from the outside. Acts is written to an individual as 1 Timothy<sup>2</sup> was, but that is where the similarity with 1 Timothy ends. It is likely Theophilus was a patron to Luke, and the book was written for a general audience, for the purpose of encouraging faith and grounding that faith in an ordered, eyewitness-dependent memory.

Acts of the Apostles could also be called the Acts of the Holy Spirit, as the Spirit is mentioned 58 times by my count, only exceeded by references to Paul (135x). In this book we get to see how God works with us, or at least them. We can compare their experience with ours, but it is important to remember we live in very different times, separated by customs, languages, situations. The church today is not vulnerable, or young, or without a Bible the way it was then, so it is probably not wise to assume we should experience God as they did. However, we (who live on the margins of a secular society) might have more in common with the 1st century church (who also lived on the margins of their society), than we do with the 16<sup>th</sup> century church of the reformation (who lived out their faith in a world that was barely secular, God was assumed by almost all in 16<sup>th</sup> century Europe).

**Sunday, Feb 6** Acts 1:1-11 and 2:1-13 – Promises Fulfilled / The Gift Given

**For Reflection:** *1:8 How/Where do you experience the power of God? The Holy Spirit is utterly essential to this community of faith. Is the Spirit essential or peripheral today? 2:11 gives us hints to at least one of the purposes for the gift of the Spirit.*

**Lagniappe:** Joel 2:28-29 & John 14:15-17

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<sup>1</sup> You know this word - praxis which is the root from which we get practice, pragmatic and practical. In education the word praxis is still used to differentiate theoretical knowledge from applied knowledge.

<sup>2</sup> Week 14

- Monday, Feb 7** Acts 2:14<sup>3</sup> – 2:47 - Peter Slept in a Holiday Inn Last Night  
**For Reflection:** As the gospels conclude the disciples are afraid, uncertain, and almost in hiding, in Acts 2 Peter is unafraid,<sup>4</sup> bold, quoting scripture with facility, and certainly not candy-coating his message. *How do you explain the change?*  
**Lagniappe** Psalm 27:1
- Tuesday, Feb 8** Acts 3:1-4:4<sup>5</sup> – More of the Same  
**For Reflection:** I smile every time I read 3:8. Make it a priority to bring someone joy today. *Sometimes we see seemingly joyless Christians – How do you explain this?*  
**Lagniappe:** 2 Samuel 6:16
- Wednesday, Feb 9** Acts 4:5 -37 – Trouble / Trouble  
**For Reflection:** The authorities threaten Peter and John. Thinking the threat would control them. It does not. *What is your greatest fear? How does that fear impact your faith?*  
**Lagniappe:** Luke 21:12-15
- Thursday, Feb 10** Acts 8 – The Gospel Leaves Jerusalem the Hard Way  
**For Reflection:** In chapter 8 we see how God turns a persecution into something good (redeems the bad). *What is the last disappointment that God redeemed powerfully for you?* God is super involved in creating opportunities to share/spread the gospel (vs 26). Look for opportunities today that God is providing for you to share the gospel.  
**Lagniappe:** Genesis 50:20
- Friday, Feb 11** Acts 9:1-31 – The Gospel Reaches Someone Who Hated the Church  
**For Reflection:** This is Saul/Paul's story of coming to faith. *How did God break through to you? What's your story?* Every story is wondrous. *Many of us have had someone who believed in us, an Ananias or Barnabas, who is yours? Who are you fulfilling that role with? Verse 15: For what purpose has God chosen you?*  
**Lagniappe:** Jeremiah 1:10, Isaiah 49:6
- Saturday, Feb 12** Acts 10 - The Gospel Heads Out in a Big Way  
**For Reflection:** *Who do you consider unclean?*  
**Lagniappe:** Jonah 1:1-3

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<sup>3</sup> In this one day the church grew from 120 (1:15) to over 3000 (2:41). Can you imagine the growing pains?

<sup>4</sup> So different from the Peter who denies Jesus (Luke 22:54-62)

<sup>5</sup> Now the church has grown to over 8000 (4:4) but it is still limited to Jerusalem – remember Acts 1:8