

## Overview of Acts

Our lessons this year will be taken from the book of Acts. Acts is the fifth book of the New Testament. Before we actually begin the lessons from our Sunday School book, we thought it would be helpful to get a bigger picture of where the book of Acts takes place in time and what it's all about.

All the events in the Old Testament take place over thousands of years, while the events in the New Testament scarcely take up 100 years. In the Old Testament we read about the lives of Noah, Abraham, Samson, Ruth, David, Isaiah, Daniel, Esther and many many others. But the New Testament focuses only on Jesus, the apostles and Paul.

All the events that happened before the time of Christ have a date with the letters "B.C." after them. Things that happened from Christ's birth and onward have a date with the letters "A.D." after them. For example, Christ's birth began the first year of A.D., so when he was born it was 0 A.D. When he turned 1 year old, the year would have been 1 A.D. The book of Acts is thought to have taken place about 61 A.D. That would have been 60 years after Christ was born. It takes place during the time when the Roman Empire was in power.

Jesus first taught about the Gospel some 30 years earlier. He had planted the seed of the Gospel. The disciples watered the seed,

first preaching the gospel in Jerusalem, and eventually throughout all the Bible world, as we can read in Colossians 1:23.

Even though the book is called “The Acts of the Apostles”, it mainly is the acts of Paul. Paul was the apostle to the Gentiles. The Gentiles are the nationalities that are not Jewish. The main subject then of the book of Acts is spreading the Gospel to the Gentiles. Because of Paul’s efforts many men and women were baptized. These men and women then begin new ecclesias throughout the Bible world.

The Old Testament is the story of God’s age long dealings with the Hebrew Nation for the purpose of blessing all nations through them. The promised seed, Jesus, foretold of by the prophets had finally come. In this book of the Acts this great work among the nations begins. The gospel is spread to the Gentiles. In this time period God’s people change from just a nation, the Jews, to all who would believe in Jesus Christ and follow in his ways and be baptized.

It is thought that Luke wrote the book of the Acts. Not much is known about Luke. He first appears as the one who brings Paul from Troas to Phillippi. Many times Luke uses the word ‘we’, showing that he would have actually been with the apostle Paul during many of the events he describes. He was a leader in the Philippian ecclesia for its first 6 years. He then rejoined Paul and was with him to the end.