

Summary of the Book of Acts
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H. Van Dyke Parunak

Overview

1. Three sections, patterned on 1:8. 1:1-14 is prologue to the entire book, setting out two overarching themes:
 - a) Empowerment by the HS--Don't Leave Home Without Him!
 - b) Successive expansion of the gospel.
2. Each begins with a glimpse at the life of the early church.
3. Each has a distinctive theological lesson.

A. Ch. 1-5, Jerusalem

Organizational insight: basic activities of the church: doctrine, fellowship, bb, prayer.
Theological emphasis: the power of the HS through believers.

1. 1:15-2:41, Organizational Insight
 - a) 1:15-26, Appointing Matthias (valuable before and after contrast with ch. 6)
 - b) 2:1-13, Receiving the HS
 - c) 2:14-41, Gathering the kernel of the church
2. 2:42--four characteristics, amplified immediately in 43-47, and in more detail throughout in following chapters; opening bracket, corresponding to 5:32.

Between these two, there are two series of incidents,

- a) each beginning with prayer (3:1; 4:24-30)
 - b) each leading to their discharge from the Sanhedrin (4:23; 5:40-41). (Anticipates the split with the Synagogue described in the next major section.)
 - c) each involves three of the four items in 2:42
 - 1) Doctrine: 3:12-26; 5:21)
 - 2) Fellowship (charitable giving): 3:6; 4:34-37
 - 3) Prayer: 3:1; 4:24-30
3. 4:29-30--three requests, amplified in following sections:
 - a) 29a, "supervise their threatenings." Answered in 5:17-42 (direct, then indirect supervision)
 - b) 29b, "give us boldness to speak." Answered 4:31,33a.
 - c) 30, "grant healings, signs, and wonders." Answered in 5:12-16.
 - d) 4:32-5:11, Two issues that must be resolved if God is to grant these blessings: love and discipline within the church.
 4. Set-up for the next section:
 - a) Incipient separation from the synagogue.
 - b) What about "breaking of bread"?

B. Ch. 6-12, Judaea and Samaria

Organizational insight: Multiplicity of gift.

Theological emphasis: rejection by Jewish orthodoxy. Stories draw on the Elijah/Elisha cycle, emphasizing apostate Israel.

1. ch. 6 Stephen: cf. 1 Kings 21, Naboth's vineyard.

2. ch. 8 Philip: 2 Kings 5, Elisha (Philip), Gehazi (Simon), and Naaman (the Eunuch).
 3. ch. 9, Saul and Ananias: 2 Kings 6, High priest & Saul = king of Syria and his army; Ananias = Elisha.
1. 6:1-7, Organizational insight (+ fills the missing "breaking of bread" slot from 2:42).
 2. 6:8-7:60 Stephen: sets up the persecution that spawns everything else. Leads to three summaries and their amplification.
 - a) 8:1-4, Saul and scattered believers
 - 1) ch. 8, Philip as example of scattered believer
 - 2) ch. 9:1-30, salvation of Saul
 - b) 9:31, peace in the church after salvation of Saul
Amp'd in 9:32-11:18, Peter and salvation of Cornelius
 - c) 11:19 extent of the diaspora
Amplified in 11:20-12:25, growth of the church in Antioch (ch.12 is external inclusio, thus footnote to finish off transition from Peter to Paul)
 3. Again, set up for next section:
 - a) Antioch as launch point for the gospel
 - b) Peter phased out to introduce Paul.

C. Ch. 13-28, Uttermost Parts of the Earth

Organizational insight: techniques for extended outreach and growth of the church: commendation, teams, strategy.
Theological emphasis: two Jerusalem conferences, determining the relative standing of Jews and Gentiles in the church.

1. 13:1-3, Commissioning of Barnabas and Saul.
2. 13:4-19:20, Church Planting
 - a) 13:4-14:28, in Asia Minor
 - b) 14:27-15:35, First Jerusalem Conference--Gentile believers don't have to become Jews.
 - c) 15:36-19:20, Greece
3. 19:21-28:31, Church Establishing (19:21 as summary)
 - a) 19:22-41, Riot in Ephesus--sets up the accusation of Ephesian Jews (21:27) that gets him out of Jerusalem and on to Rome.
 - b) 20:1-21:16 journey to Jerusalem
 - c) 21:17-25, Second Jerusalem Council--Jewish believers don't have to become Gentiles.
 - d) 21:26-23:10, events in Jerusalem
 - e) 23:11-26:32, events in Caesarea
 - f) 27:1-28:31, to and in Rome

Hymn: The Church's One Foundation