

Into All the World ...



Studies in the Book of

Acts

New Testament Study Commentary - Part 2

Study Series prepared by Graeme Offer

Foreword

The book of Acts stands in the New Testament as a book like no other. It is so rich – full with remarkable detail that shines much light onto the rest of the New Testament. It can be said that before embarking on a study of most of the other books in the New Testament, that you should first study what is said about the church (or the people) in the book of Acts.

Acts stands alone as a “history” book in the New Testament. Indeed, the historical context of the New Testament is nowhere expressed as strongly as it is in the book of Acts.

As we undertake this study of Acts, we want to explore the history of the early New Testament period. For a piece of history to be found to be accurate it must stand the test of other contemporary writings around it – are there other pieces of contemporary history that confirm the things that are said?

In this study, we will “dig” into much supporting information outside of the New Testament writings that will help us to understand the background and culture of the New Testament. This is not to say that we should regard “secular history” as infallible or inspired, or that we should regard the book of Acts as no more than a piece of history with other secular writings. However to ignore the contemporary history of the time is to only receive a part of the picture and miss the importance and sense of meaning of many of the things that are written in the book.

Throughout the studies, I have mostly quoted from the New International Version (NIV) or New King James Version (NKJV), and have attributed the quotations accordingly. Occasionally, I have sometimes used a word or two from another translation where that version (in my opinion) better describes the point Luke is trying to get across. On occasions where quotations appear that are not referenced, they are my paraphrase of what the verse says, and may or may not bear similarity to recognized translations.

My usual teaching style is to hand out the outline for each study at the start of the lesson. I will often discuss last week’s homework, or the background / introduction section as a way of getting the class “into gear” whilst I am handing out the outline at the start. The questions on the outline are designed to help us come to a grasp of the main issues that Luke wants the readers to understand, and to form an outline of the class. They are not designed to identify the micro-issues, although the class discussion may get into some of these. I hand out the notes at the end of the class. They are designed to answer all of the questions that were raised in the outline sheet – often in more detail than what was covered in the class. I almost never hand out the notes at the start of the class, and I have found that where I have done that it always results in people reading what is on the page and feeding that back during the class without really thinking about or sometimes even comprehending what is there. The notes also serve the very useful purposes of allowing those who may miss one of the classes to catch up, as well as providing a review of the material covered for those who were present.

I always set homework, and that includes a few thought-provoking questions that go beyond the things that we have covered in the class.

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My prayer is that those who use this material will find it exciting, edifying, encouraging, and relevant to our present situation as together we travel back in time to the exciting “first days” of the New Testament church, and their struggles to spread the gospel both at home and “into all the world”.

Graeme Offer

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This study series was initially prepared for the Cairns church of Christ, beginning in February 2003, and the notes were written for that 5th time that I had taught the book of Acts. The intention was that I would revise the notes when I next taught the class, and provide the opportunity to improve them. These revised notes are for my class in Cairns beginning in February 2007, and will also enable me to bring in much teaching on the life and epistles of Paul that was missing from the previous work.

Smithfield, Queensland, Australia.

Foreword – Part 2

This study series follows on from the first part of the study of the book of Acts. The reader should refer to the introductory notes contained at that place for more detail on this study series.

The historical context of the New Testament is nowhere expressed as strongly as it is in the book of Acts. As we continue this study of Acts, we continue exploring the history of the early New Testament period, and follow the missionary journeys of Paul. There is much supporting information outside of the New Testament writings that will help us to understand the background and culture of the New Testament.

Throughout the studies, I have mostly quoted from the New International Version (NIV), and have attributed the quotations accordingly. Occasionally, I have used the New King James Version (NKJV) and sometimes used a word or two from the King James Version (KJV) where that version (in my opinion) better describes the point Luke is trying to get across. On occasions where quotations appear that are not referenced, they are my paraphrase of what the verse says, and may or may not bear similarity to recognized translations.

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