

NT Overview – Part 2 – Acts to Revelation

Acts

Author, Date and Readership

See comment on Luke's gospel

Main Themes

One of the major themes of Luke's account across the two parts of his story is **Salvation**: -

- Acts 4:12
- Acts 16:30

As with the Gospel he wants to show that ***the good news of Jesus changes lives***

Another major theme of Luke's writing is the work of the **Holy Spirit**. This begins in his first account: -

- The Spirit's central role in birth of John the Baptist and Jesus – Luke 1:15, 35, 67, 80
- The Spirit's anointing of Jesus – Luke 3:21-23
- Spirit anointed ministry – Luke 4:18-19; 10:21
- Gift of the Spirit – Acts 2
- The Spirit's central role in the ***birth of the Church*** – Acts 2; 4:8, 31; 6; 9:17; 10:44-47
- Link between conversion and the Spirit – Acts 2:38; 9:17

Acts – a Key to Understanding Paul's Letters

As we read the journey's of Paul, we are introduced to the churches that he later wrote to – we discover how they received the message, some of the challenges Paul and his companions faced, and we get some background to these churches.

Paul's Letters – Romans to Philemon

Romans

Paul hadn't visited Rome yet (1:11; 15:23-24) - A letter of introduction and teaching
Written from Corinth - Phoebe – Cenchreae – a port for Corinth (16:1); Timothy – with Paul in Corinth (16:21)

1 & 2 Corinthians

It appears there were other letters: -

Letter A – 1 Cor. 5:9 – now lost but generated a response from Corinth (1 Cor. 7:1)

Letter B – Our 1 Corinthians

Letter C – 2 Cor. 7:5-12 – the 'Severe' letter – now lost

Letter D – Our 2 Corinthians chapters 1-9 – to encourage them after responding

Letter E? – Our 2 Corinthians chapters 10 onwards – Paul defends his ministry

Alongside this correspondence various visits were made – 1 Cor. 16:10, 12, 17
Titus especially key in 2 Corinthians – 7:13; 8:6, 23

Galatians

Written soon after Paul's visit because they have deserted their faith (Gal 1:6)
Commonly accepted as the first of Paul's letters

Ephesians

Questions over Paul's authorship because of language used which appears nowhere else in Paul's writing – but possibly a different scribe. Early Church accepted this was Paul's letter

One of the 4 "prison epistles" (3:1, 13; 4:1; 6:20)
Similarities with Colossians

Philippians

Another of the 4 "prison epistles" (1:7, 13-14)
Perhaps written from Caesarea rather than Rome

Colossians & Philemon

Paul had not visited Colossae – the Church was planted by Epaphras (1:7). Understood that he was converted through Paul's ministry in Ephesus (Acts 19)

Tychicus delivers this letter along with the letter to Philemon, and also takes along Onesimus, the escaped slave, with him (4:7-9)

Philemon addressed to Onesimus' master asking him to receive Onesimus back as a 'brother in Christ'. Perhaps came to faith through Paul's ministry in prison (10)

The other "prison epistles" (Col 4:10, 18; Phil 1, 23)

1 & 2 Thessalonians

First letter – Timothy sent by Paul from Athens and his report prompted the letter (3:2, 6)
Second letter – although doubts over Paul’s authorship 2:15 seems to indicate this is a follow up – dealing with the issue of Christ’s second coming (as does the First letter)

1 & 2 Timothy, Titus

The “pastoral epistles” written after Paul’s release from house arrest in Rome

Paul went back to Crete (the 1st visit was on route to Rome) with Titus (Titus 1:5)
These three letters mainly deal with issues of Church Leadership and Structure, and Paul encouraging the next generation of Church leaders – (1 Tim 1:2; Titus 1:4)
Timothy was based in Ephesus (1 Tim 1:3)

Hebrews

The letter gives no clue as to the author – could have been Paul, Barnabas, Luke and Apollos

Likewise, we have no indication of the recipients - the title “To the Hebrews” was adopted in the 2nd Century.

However, the text indicates a good acquaintance with Jewish tradition and knowledge of the scriptures. It was a gathered group – the writer hoped to be restored to them (13:19). It is also clear that the recipients had experienced persecution (10:32-34).

It could well have been written between AD64 (persecution by Nero – 10:32?) but before the fall of Jerusalem in AD70 (10:1-3 implies sacrifices are still being offered)

The over-riding message is an encouragement to keep persevering in faith (13:22)

James

Written by James, the brother of Jesus – the leader of the Church in Jerusalem (Acts 15)

An unbeliever during Jesus ministry (John 7:2-3), Jesus appeared to James (1 Cor. 15:7). He was in the Upper Room at Pentecost (Acts 1:14)

Written with a wide audience, this letter seeks to be more practical and earthy in its application. This is not a theological commentary, but a guidebook for daily living.

1 & 2 Peter

The Apostle Peter writes from Rome (‘Babylon’ - 1 Pet 5:13) shortly before his death. The First letter probably about AD64 as the persecution kicks in under Nero, and the second letter shortly before he is martyred.

Similarities between 2 Peter and Jude indicate one borrowed from the other

First Letter is written to a wide area – Asia Minor – churches struggling with persecution or preparing them for the oncoming persecution

The recipients of the Second letter are not known although it is likely to have been a similar readership. Here Peter addresses the issue of False Teachers

1, 2 & 3 John

Generally accepted as being written by the Apostle John ('the Elder' - 2 John 1 and 3 John 1) – written in a very similar style to John Gospel. The 3 letters read similarly too.

Also generally accepted as being written later in the 1st Century

Tradition tells that John spent his later years in Ephesus – may have been the 'Elder' there. These letters probably written to the Churches in that region

The issue of false teaching needed to be addressed again – the writer reminding his readers of the message received from Christ

Jude

Brother of Jesus and of James (1) addressed this letter to believers he knew well (3, 17 & 20)

Although originally intending to write a general letter (3) it had become important for him to be much more direct addressing those who were seeking to lead the believers astray (4)

One of the unusual things of Jude is he quotes from at least two sources outside of scripture – Book of Enoch (14-15) and Testament of Moses (9) – both Jewish Apocryphal literature

Revelation

Although in John's gospel and the letters, the author is not named, here he is 'John' (1:9) In spite of this, it is widely accepted that it is the apostle John who receives this revelation.

Written to the seven Churches in Asia Minor (1:4) as persecution increases

Apocalyptic style language – very poetic and pictorial. It is not a chronological order of the end times, but a reminder that victory belongs to Christ and in the midst of persecution for this to be an encouragement.

	Paul's Letters	Written
Paul's 1st Journey		
Antioch		
Cyprus		
Perga (Pamphylia)		
Pisidian Antioch (Galatia)]	
Iconium (Galatia)]	
Lystra (Galatia)] - Galatians	
Derbe (Galatia)]	
Lystra, Iconium, Pisidian Antioch		
Perga (Pamphylia)		
Attalia		
Antioch		
		Galatians
Paul's 2nd Journey		
Antioch		
Areas of Syria, Galatia, Mysia		
Troas		
Philippi	Philippians	
Thessalonica	1 & 2 Thessalonians	
Berea		
Athens		
Corinth	1 & 2 Corinthians	1 & 2 Thessalonians
Ephesus	Ephesians	
Caesarea		
Jerusalem		
Antioch		
	Colossae (Colossians) birthed by Epaphras converted in Ephesus	
Paul's 3rd Journey		
Antioch		
Areas of Galatia & Phrygia		
Ephesus		1 Corinthians
Area of Macedonia		2 Corinthians
Corinth		Romans
Philippi		
Troas		
Assos – Miletus		
Miletus – Phoenicia		
Phoenicia - Jerusalem		
Paul's Arrest in Jerusalem		
and imprisonment in Caesarea		Philippians
and house arrest in Rome		Colossians, Philemon and Ephesians
After Paul's release		1 & 2 Timothy, Titus