

how Jesus changed the world

BEAUTICIAN

sermons and studies in the Book of Acts (chapters 1-11)

What's coming up?

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| Weekly | Monday 1-2pm: Weekly Church Prayer Meeting Monday 3:30-4:15pm: QT's for teens (years 9-10) Wednesday 9:30-11:30am (term time): St Matt's Playgroup Wednesday 3:30-4:15pm: QT's for year 7-8's Thursday 9:30-11:30am: Women on Thursday (term time) Friday 4:30-6pm (term time): FISH Friday 7-9pm (term time): Youth Group |
| Fortnightly | Tuesday 11:30am-1pm: Midweek service and lunch Thursday 6-8:30pm: Friends of Jesus (term time) |
| Monthly | First Monday of the Month: Monthly Parish Prayer Second Tuesday of the Month: Prayer for Healing Service |

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| Sun 2 Feb | Vision 2020 "Kick-Off" – all services followed by Connect Meals |
| Wed 5 Feb | Simply Christianity (first of five weeks) |
| Fri 7 Feb | Newish Coffee & Dessert Night (7pm) |
| Fri 14-Sat 15 | CMS Canberra Mission Focus – "God revealed" |
| Sun 16 – Fri 21 Feb | CMS Link Missionary Deputation – Sarah & Robin Kinstead |
| Fri 21-Sat 22 Feb | 24-hour Prayer Vigil 6pm Friday to 6pm Saturday |
| Sat 29 Feb | Weekend-IN with Andrew Lubbock |
| Sun Mar 8 | Parenting Afternoon Tea |
| Sat 14 Mar | St Matt's AGM (2pm) |
| Sun 15 Mar | Picnic in the Park |
| Sun 29 Mar – Sun 5 Apr | SMBC Mission @ St Matt's |
| Thur 9 Apr | Maundy Thursday Service |
| Fri 10 Apr | Good Friday Service |
| Sun 12 Apr | Easter Sunday services |
| 17-19 Apr | KYCK Youth Camp |
| Mon 20 Apr – Fri 24 Apr | Wanniassa Kids Club |

Introduction to the Book of Acts¹

Author and date

Acts is a sequel to the Gospel of Luke. Both were written by Luke, a physician who travelled with the apostle Paul. Acts ends with Paul under house arrest, awaiting trial before Caesar, c. AD 62. Many scholars assume Acts was written then because it does not record Paul's defence, release, and further gospel preaching.

Message

Acts is the story of God's grace flooding out to the world, from the cross and resurrection of Jesus in Jerusalem to the ends of the earth. Nothing is more prominent in Acts than the spread of the gospel. Jesus promises a geographic expansion at the outset (1:8), and Acts follows the news of his death and resurrection as it spreads from Jerusalem to Judea, Samaria, and the faraway capital of Rome.

The narrative centres around the movement of the gospel from:

1. Jerusalem and Judea – Chapters 1-7
2. Samaria – Chapters 8-12
3. Ends of the earth (first Asia & Europe, then Rome) – Chapters 13-28

The gospel draws people in, constitutes them as the church centred on the grace of Jesus, and then sends them out in mission to the world. The new group of believers is marked by the Holy Spirit, who creates such a distinctive community that others are drawn in, experiencing God's grace. At the same time, they take the gospel message to new people and new lands, making God's grace known to the ends of the earth.

The gospel's expansion is the culmination of what God has been doing since the beginning. Luke consistently grounds salvation in the ancient purpose of God, which comes to fruition at God's own initiative. Acts shows that the new Christian movement is not a fringe sect but the culmination of God's plan of

¹ Edited from Introduction to Acts, the Gospel Transformation Bible, Crossway Publishers, 2019

redemption. What was seen only as shadows in the Old Testament God reveals finally and fully through Jesus Christ. The book of Acts does not primarily provide human patterns to emulate or avoid. Instead, it repeatedly calls us to reflect upon the work of God, fulfilled in Jesus Christ, establishing the church by the power of the Holy Spirit. We are invited to enter and participate in a story that is much bigger than we are.

In Acts, the gospel expands not through human strength, but through weakness, opposition, and persecution. Demonic forces, worldly powers and authorities, governmental opposition, language and cultural barriers, intense suffering and bloody persecution, unjust imprisonment, unbelief, internal disunity, and even shipwrecks and snakes all threaten to slow down the gospel's advance. But opposition and suffering do not thwart the spread of Jesus' grace; rather, they fuel it.

The gospel spreads despite barriers of geography, ethnicity, culture, gender, and wealth. Many of these barriers appear so inviolable that when the gospel is preached to a new segment of society, riots ensue. But Luke makes clear that no one is beyond the scope of God's saving power, nor is anyone exempt from the need for God's redeeming grace.

All people receive the grace of God through one man, Jesus Christ. Jesus' gospel goes out to all places and all types of people, because Jesus is Lord of all.

Note about the following study

The following study questions were compiled by Steve Nation, Connect Pastor at St Matt's. The questions are a mix of his questions, and questions from *Teaching Acts* by David Cook (Christian Focus, 2007) & *Acts: Seeing the Spirit at Work* by John Stott (IVP Connect, 1998)

Intro to Acts – Overview (Jan 26)

Sermon notes

Study 1 – Acts 1:1-8; Luke 1:1-4; Luke 24:44-49

Kicking off: What do you know about the Book of Acts? How would you introduce it to someone who has never heard of it?

This first study in the book of Acts aims to help us put the book in its historical and biblical context and as well, reminds us that this is Luke's 2nd volume of one book. We will look at the introductions of both Luke's Gospel and Acts, seeking to establish his purpose in writing this 2nd volume and then examine the links between the end of Luke and the beginning of Acts.

Read Luke 1:1-4 and Acts 1:1-3

What reasoning does Luke give for writing? What specifically has Luke provided for Theophilus so that he might have certainty of the truth?

Why do you think it is significant that Luke writes about 'things being fulfilled' (or accomplished) in Luke 1:1?

How does Luke consider the book of Acts to be related to his Gospel (Acts 1:1-2)?

Having established that the book of Acts is meant to be understood as a continuation of the gospel of Luke, let's turn back to it now and see where Luke left off. In Luke 24, the final chapter of the gospel, Jesus has risen from the dead and has appeared to his frightened and struggling disciples. He has 'opened their minds so that they could understand the scriptures' (Luke 24:45).

Read Luke 24:44-49

What is significant about Jesus' use of the phrase, 'This is what is written...' in Luke 24:46? According to Luke 24:44-49, what must happen in order for the purposes of God to be fulfilled?

What role do you see yourself playing in this? How do you/can you do this?

➔ Read Acts 1:1-26 at home in preparation for next week

Changing, yet the same - Acts 1:1-26 (Feb 2)

Sermon notes

Study #2 – Acts 1:1-26

Kicking off: What is the loudest message you are hearing from those around you today? How is this message being communicated?

Read Acts 1:1-8

In Luke, Jesus spent a considerable amount of time teaching about the Kingdom: how we inherit it, who we inherit it through, and what it means for this life and for eternity.

Why is it so crucial for the disciples and us to understand what God's kingdom is like?

What does Jesus promise to his disciples in verses 4-8? What is this gift intended to help them do?

Each person in the group can read one or more of the following Bible verses. For each reading, answer these questions:

- What is the promise of God in each verse?
- Who are the recipients of the promise/s?
- What role do people have in the fulfilment of the promises?

1. *Genesis 12:1-3*

2. *Exodus 9:15-16*

3. *Deuteronomy 4:5-6*

4. *Isaiah 49:6*

5. *Jonah 3:1-10*

6. *Matthew 9:36-38*

7. *John 20:21*

8. *Romans 10:14-15*

9. *Revelation 7:9*

“God uses the mission of His people to fulfil His purpose, as first foreshadowed to Abraham, as accomplished in the Lord Jesus Christ, and as proclaimed by Paul and many others since, namely, to draw from every people of the earth worshippers of God and the Lamb, gathered together with Him in His eternal kingdom.” (Peter O’Brien)

What role do we at St Matt’s have in the fulfilment of these promises?

What role do you have as an individual?

How are you, and how will you, play your role in the fulfilment of God’s promises to the nations? Think concretely.

Pray together that God will transform you as you study this book.

Big idea: It’s God’s purpose that His gospel be preached to the ends of the earth by Holy Spirit-empowered witnesses.

➔ Read Acts 2:1-13 & 8:14-17 at home in preparation for next week

Fully equipped - Acts 2:1-13 & 8:14-17 (Feb 9)

Sermon notes

Study #3 - Acts 2:1-13 & 8:14-17

Kicking off: What difference do you think it would make if the Holy Spirit was withdrawn from your life and Christian community (church/Life Group)?

The Old Testament festival of Pentecost (Pentecost means ‘fifty days’) was a God-given celebration that Israel was to have at the end of the barley harvest. It also commemorated the rescue of God’s people from slavery in Egypt and the giving of God’s good and life-flourishing law to Moses on Mt. Sinai.

Read Exodus 19:16-19

What visible, physical events accompanied God’s act of giving the law?

Now read Acts 2:1-13.

What do you think the physical events that occurred in these verses were meant to signify to the apostles and the crowd?

What they heard (v.2). *See John 3:8.*

What they saw (v.3). *See Exodus 3:2.*

What happened (v.4). *See Ezekiel 36:25-27; Jeremiah 31:33 and Luke 3:16.* How are the events of Acts 2 a fulfillment of the promises God made through the prophets?

What they said? (vv.5-12). What was the message and why was it in everyone’s own language? (*see Luke 19:37-38*)

The day of Pentecost has been called 'the Birthday of the church'. Why? Was it?

Live it out

When have you seen and experienced the work of the Spirit in your life and Christian community?

What do you need to do in order to more effectively proclaim the truth about Jesus to those who may not yet know Him as the Lord and Christ? Write down two things.

Pray: Praise God for the work and power of His Holy Spirit. Ask Him to teach you to understand and rely on His ministry.

Big idea: The Holy Spirit comes upon the church, enabling those He baptises to speak His amazing message in languages people could hear and understand.

➔ Read Acts 2:14-47 at home in preparation for next week

All about Jesus - Acts 2:14-47 (Feb 16)

Sermon notes

Study #4 – Acts 2:14-47

Kicking off: What sorts of groups have you joined? What did it take to join?

In the beginning of chapter 2 Luke recorded the events of Pentecost, marked by the pouring out of the Holy Spirit and the birth of Christ's body on earth, the church. Peter now seeks to interpret the events in the light of the Old Testament Scriptures for those present.

Read Acts 2:1-40.

How would you describe Peter as he speaks these words? (also reflect on *John 13:38, 18:15-18 and 18:25-27*)

How does Peter explain the amazing events that took place at Pentecost?

vv.17-21

vv.22-23

vv.24-32

vv.33-36

What is the response of the crowd and what does Peter tell them to do? How is the promise to 'your children and for all who are far off' (vv. 37-39)?

Read Acts 2:42-47.

What characterizes the early church?

Overall, what has been the impact of the coming of the Holy Spirit on the church in Acts?

What does this say to us today about what our priorities should be as a church?

Big idea: Jesus is God's Messiah: crucified, raised, ascended. From heaven He has poured out the Holy Spirit. Through repentance towards this Jesus, we are set right with God and join the Spirit-filled, new covenant community.

➔ Read Acts 3 at home in preparation for next week

Triumphant Jesus - Acts 3 (Feb 23)

Sermon notes

Study #5 – Acts 3

Kicking off: What are the biggest needs people have today?

Read Acts 3:1-10.

Imagine that you are a newspaper reporter. How would you report the events of this passage?

Who were Peter and John? What were they doing in v.1?

Who is the man introduced in verse 2 (see also 4:22)? What do we know about him?

What's the response of...

The man?

The onlookers?

Peter explains the healing in vv.11-26.

How does he explain what happened?

How is the healing about Jesus?

What response does Peter expect from people? What three blessings and what warning does he promise them in vv. 17-26?

What has challenged your understanding the most in this study? How will it affect the way you live?

Big idea: Through the healing of a crippled man, God continues to accredit Jesus as the ascended Christ, the apostles as His representatives, and the apostolic message as His gospel.

➔ Read Acts 4:1-31 & 5:17-42 at home in preparation for next week

Speaking truth while Handling Hostility - Acts 4:1-31 & 5:17-42 (March 1)

Sermon notes

Study #6 - Acts 4:1-31 & 5:17-42

Kicking off: Have you ever been opposed, mocked or rejected for living for or talking about Jesus?

In these early days of the church Luke characterizes it as having dynamic growth, bold preaching, and miraculous signs and wonders done “in Jesus’ name”.

Read Acts 4:1-31

The opposition begins! Who were the opponents and why do you think Luke named them specifically (verses 1, 5 and 6)?

Why were they so upset by Peter’s teaching in vv.1-4?

Why was the question in v. 7 so ironic? (Recall that they asked Jesus a similar question in *Luke 20:1-2*)

In his response, Peter stated at least three truths concerning Jesus. What are they? (vv. 8-14)

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

How did the church respond to these threats (vv. 23-31)?

What do we learn from the way they prayed and what does it teach us about prayer?

How does the early church's example challenge the way you face opposition to the gospel – whether real or perceived?

How will the truth from this passage equip you to face resistance?

Big idea: The church must face hostility with bold, Spirit-inspired proclamation, strengthened by the conviction that God will see His purposes triumph.

➔ Read Acts 4:32-5:11 at home in preparation for next week

Lying to God, death in church - Acts 4:32–5:11 (March 8)

Sermon notes

Study #7 – Acts 4:32-5:11

Kicking off: Do you think the church is under attack today? How, and by whom?

Read Acts 4:31-37.

In Acts 4:31 we see that prayer of the believers was answered and they were freshly filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly. What evidence do you see of this filling of the Spirit in verses 32-37?

Read Acts 5:1-11.

What are your initial thoughts having read this passage?

According to Luke, who motivated Ananias and Sapphira? Why is this typical of his work (*see John 8:44*)?

Why was God's judgment so instantaneous in this case? What parallels do you see to the accounts of:

Adam and Eve expelled from the Garden of Eden in *Genesis 3:21-24*?

Moses forbidden from entering the Promised Land in *Numbers 20:1-12*?

In what ways can wealth be a wonderful servant of the gospel, but a dangerous master in our lives? *See Matthew 6:24.*

Although God might not strike us down for our greed today, we do dishonour the Spirit's work in us when we are greedy. *Read 2 Corinthians 9:6-11.* What does Spirit-led generosity look like?

In our motivations

In our giving

In our work

Where do you need to grow as a Spirit-led believer? What will this look like?

Big idea: The unity and fellowship of believers is a result of the Holy Spirit's work, but when it is mimicked for personal glory, it is a lie to God.

➔ Read Acts 6:1-7 at home in preparation for next week

The Word Spreads - Acts 6:1-7 (March 15)

Sermon notes

Study #8 – Acts 6:1-7

Kicking off: How have you seen churches respond to conflict in a positive way?

In the last chapter, Luke portrayed a picture of amazing unity and fellowship of the early church, a product of the work of the Holy Spirit. We were also given a clearer understanding of God's commitment to deal swiftly with sin in the foundational days of the church, ensuring His purposes to go forward with boldness.

Read Acts 6:1-7

What are the problems revealed in 6:1-6? How is this a new threat to the church?

How did the apostles set out to solve the problem?

What qualifications were important in the ones chosen for this particular task? Why?

What is the result of prioritising the Word and prayer in church? (see 6:7). Is this guaranteed?

The apostles delegate the practical matters to suitable people. But before they do that, the apostles hear the church members' complaints. They actually listen. They don't get defensive. They listen to the complaint against the perceived failure of Christian standards. They listen, and they act.

People often think the church cannot change. A comment on a newspaper article about Christians in America having less power in the elections went like this:

Hahahahaha Christians! Your stupid, hate-filled and oppressive superstition is slowly but surely dying! Hahahahahahaha!!!!!!!

Really? Are we hate-filled and oppressive? Unfortunately, sometimes. Are we dying? No, Jesus is still on the throne overseeing His mission. Is change needed? Often! Is change possible? Thankfully, yes, change is possible:

'Churches can change. Bitterness can be put to death. Fear can be defeated. Compulsions can be broken. Stony hearts can be made soft, and soft words can come from an acid-tongue. People can have power without becoming corrupt. Churches can be places of safety, love and healing. Change is possible because the King has come, sent His Spirit, and is in the business of change' (Paul Tripp)

And that's what we see in Acts 6. The apostles stop, listen, and act.

Steve Nation, *A Call to Extraordinary Prayer*, pp.56-57

How could our church grow like Acts 6:1-7? What is/might be your role in this?

Big idea: God will see His Word triumph in the face of racial discrimination and church conflict through humble, attentive, other-people serving, Word and prayer prioritising churches.

➔ Read Acts 8:26-40 at home in preparation for next week

Expansion continues – How? - Acts 8:26-40 (March 22)

Sermon notes

Study #9 – Acts 8:26-40

Kicking off: Do you see yourself as an evangelist? Why/why not?

Luke, the historian, has been careful to give us numerical record of the astounding growth of the gospel in the thousands (3000 in 2:41, 5000+ in 4:4), but now focuses in on the conversion of just one man.

Read Acts 8:26-40.

Who was Philip?

6:5-6

8:4-8

21:8-9

What do we know about the Ethiopian eunuch?

List the factors that were involved in the Ethiopian eunuch becoming a Christian.

According to v. 35, Philip evangelized the Ethiopian from Isaiah 53:7-8. What points do you think Philip would have made from this passage to 'tell the good news' to this man? (*Read Isaiah 53:4-12*)

In what ways is this new conversion a significant step in the progress of the gospel and the fulfillment of Acts 1:8?

How has your view of God's acts in the world grown as a result of studying this passage?

What have you learned from this passage that might help you become a more effective witness?

Big idea: God is the sovereign evangelist bringing about the intersection of evangelist and seeker and ordaining the response to His message.

SMBC Mission week (March 29)

Sermon notes

SMBC Mission week (April 5)

Sermon notes

Good Friday (April 10)

Sermon notes

Resurrection Sunday (April 12)

Sermon notes

Unlikely Christians #1 - Acts 9:1-20 (April 19)

Sermon notes

Study #10 – Acts 9:1-20

Kicking off: It's good to reflect on the work of God in our lives. What was it like when you became a Christian?

Saul's 'Damascus Road experience' is the most famous conversion in church history. Luke is so definite about its importance that he repeats it three times in the Acts narrative. You may be helped to read all three accounts for a fuller perspective (9:1-20; 22:1-22; 26:1-32).

Read Acts 9:1-20

How would you describe Saul in vv. 1-2? What do we know about Saul already from Acts? (see Acts 7:58 and 8:1-3).

Given these details how likely is it (humanly speaking) that he would have become a Christian?

'Sovereign grace is gradual grace and gentle grace.' (John Stott) How do you see this statement illustrated from this passage?

Can you illustrate it from your own experience?

What do we learn about Jesus from this passage?

How did your conversion compare or contrast with Saul's?

How might you expect to see God working in the lives of people around you who are not Christians?

Big idea: God triumphs over the rage of His persecutor, converting Saul into His apostle to the Gentiles.

➔ Read Acts 10:1-11:18 at home in preparation for next week

Unlikely Christians #2 - Acts 10:1 – 11:18 (April 26)

Sermon notes

Study #11 – Acts 10:1-11:18

Kicking off: When have you felt separated from people because of cultural or racial differences?

Luke now turns briefly from Saul to focus on Peter and his role in the preparation for the gospel to be taken to the Gentiles. Note: it would be a good idea to read the whole account of the conversion of Cornelius in one sitting (*10:1-11:18*).

What do we learn about Cornelius and the reputation he had (10:1-2; 22)?

In light of the above, why was it necessary for Cornelius to hear and respond to Peter's message? Are there people who you are tempted to believe may not need to hear the gospel?

What evidence is there in this passage of the extent of the division between Jews and Gentiles at this time? (see also 11:1-3)

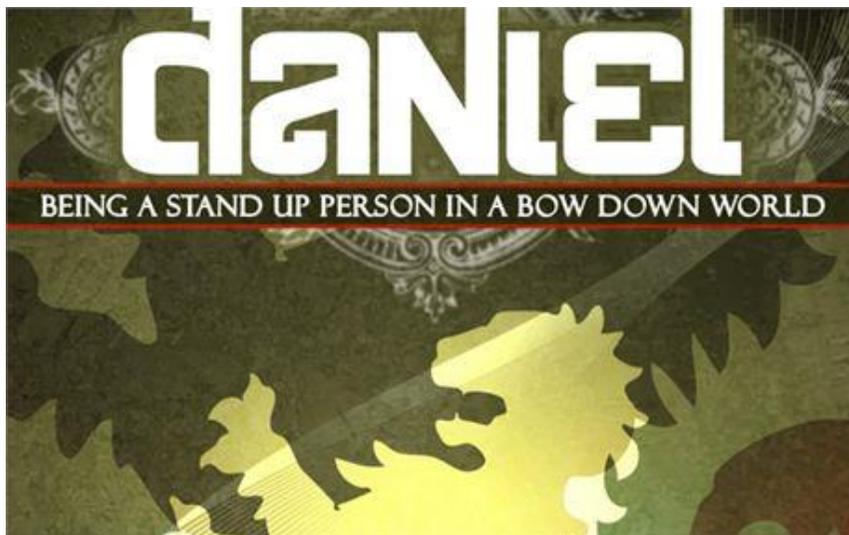
You could say that the real thrust of this passage is not so much the conversion of Cornelius as the conversion of Peter and the apostles. Discuss.

Who in your life or our local community needs to hear the message of Jesus? Don't just say 'everyone'. Identify them. How can we reach them with Jesus? Think concretely.

Big idea: God leads the church to remove its prejudices so that His gospel reaches all people.

For prayer

Term Two: The Book of Daniel



Term Three: Hebrews continued

