

6. Where did they write their letters?

The Acts of the Apostles and where all the letters fit in.

This outline of the Acts of the Apostles can be downloaded as a PDF. Go to

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The formation of the church: Acts 1–12 (AD 33–46)

Luke saw the Acts as the epilogue to his Gospel. For us it is the prologue to world evangelism. The dates can only be approximate.

Acts	Date	Location	Events
1:1–11	33	Jerusalem	The final promise and the ascension of Christ.
1:12–26			Judas is replaced by Matthias.
2:1–39			Pentecost and the coming of the Holy Spirit. Peter's first sermon.
2:40–47			Those converted and the life of the early Christian community.
3:1–26			The healing of the lame man and Peter's second sermon.
4:1–22			Peter and John arrested and warned not to preach.
4:23–31			The response of the Christians in prayer.
4:32–37			A further description of the life of the Christian community.
5:1–11			The deceit and punishment of Ananias and Sapphira.
5:12–16			Signs and wonders by the apostles.
5:17–42			Peter and John imprisoned. The miraculous release and a further trial.
			The advice of Gamaliel.
6:1–7			The appointment of some to serve the community in practical matters.
6:8–7:60			The preaching and martyrdom of Stephen.
8:1–3			The Christians scattered through persecution and Saul set to destroy the church.
8:4–40		Samaria	Philip and Simon the sorcerer and the Ethiopian treasurer.
		Azotus	Philip continues itinerant evangelism.

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		Caesarea	
9:1–30		Damascus	The dramatic conversion of Saul and his first evangelism.
		Caesarea	Violent opposition to Saul means that he is sent by the disciples
		Tarsus	back to his home-town of Tarsus via Caesarea.
9:31–43		Lydda	Peter visits the Christians at Lydda and heals Aeneas.
		Joppa	Peter heals Dorcas.
10:1–48		Caesarea	Peter's vision at Joppa and the conversion of the centurion Cornelius and his household.
11:1–18		Jerusalem	Peter reports to the church in Jerusalem God's work among the Gentiles.
11:19–30	45	Antioch (Syria)	As a result of Stephen's martyrdom, the gospel reaches Antioch. The apostles in Jerusalem send Barnabas to check on the church in Antioch; he goes first to Tarsus to take Saul with him. Agabus prophesies a famine across the Roman empire; the Christians at Antioch plan to send help to the Christians in Judaea. Barnabas and Saul return to Jerusalem.
12:1–19		Jerusalem	James, the brother of John, executed on Herod's orders, and Peter imprisoned. His miraculous escape.
12:19–23	44	Caesarea	Herod's arrogance and self-styled deity end with his excruciating death.
12:24–25		Antioch (Syria)	Saul and Barnabas leave Jerusalem and return to Antioch.

The expansion of the church: Acts 13–18 (AD46–52)

The first overseas mission:

Paul and Barnabas from Antioch AD46

Acts	Date	Location	Events	Letters written
13:1–3	46	Antioch (Syria)	Paul and Barnabas are sent to Judaea with gifts.	
13:4–12		Seleucia	The sea-port.	
		Salamis	Sea-port and commercial centre.	
		Paphos	On Cyprus, the home of Barnabas (4:36). The Roman governor, Sergius Paulus, converted. The sorcerer Elymas. Saul renamed Paul.	
13:13		Perga	John Mark leaves Paul and Barnabas and returns to Jerusalem.	

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13:14–52		Antioch (in Pisidia)	Paul preaches in the synagogue. He recounts the history of the Jews up to David and then applies the gospel.	
14:1–7		Iconium	A chief city in the Roman province of Galatia. A division among the Jews, plot to kill Paul, escape.	
14:8–20		Lystra	A cripple healed. Paul and Barnabas mistaken for gods. Timothy's home-town (16:2). Jewish opposition and Paul stoned.	
14:20–21		Derbe	And the surrounding country. Many disciples added.	
14:22–23		Antioch (in Pisidia)	Returning to home base in Syrian Antioch, appointing elders in each church.	
14:24–25		Perga		
14:26		Attalia		
14:26–28		Antioch	Paul reports to the church and stays 'a long time'.	
15:1–2	48		Jewish Christians from Jerusalem arrive with a mixture of law and gospel.	Letter to the Galatians?
15:2–29		Jerusalem	Council to deal with the false teaching.	Letter of James?
15:30–38		Antioch (in Syria)	The letter from the Jerusalem Council read. Paul and Barnabas sent on a second mission	

The second overseas mission: Paul and Silas from Antioch AD49–52

Acts	Date	Location	Events	Letters written
15:39–41			Paul and Barnabas part company: Barnabas takes John Mark	
			to Cyprus; Paul takes Silas with him on mission.	
16:1–5		Derbe and Lystra	Revisiting the churches established on the first mission. Timothy joins Paul and Silas.	
16:6–8		Phrygia and Galatia	Paul restrained by the Spirit from entering Asia and Bithynia.	
16:7–10		Troas	Paul's vision to go to Macedonia.	
16:11–12		Samothrace and Neapolis		

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16:12–40		Philippi	Conversion of Lydia. When a slave girl is converted, Paul and Silas are arrested and imprisoned. The jail is opened and the jailer and his family are converted.	
17:1–9		Thessalonica	Many converted. A riot in the city. Paul and Silas escape.	
17:10–15		Berea	Silas and Timothy left behind to care for the church.	
17:16–34		Athens	Paul debates in the Areopagus with the philosophers. He refers to their unknown god. A few believe.	
18:1–18	51	Corinth	Paul stays with Aquila and Priscilla. Preaches every Sabbath in the synagogue. Silas and Timothy arrive from Berea. The proconsul Gallio dismisses accusations against Paul. This opposition from the Jews convinces Paul he must now concentrate on reaching the Gentiles (non-Jews).	1 and 2 Thessalonians
18:18		Cenchrea	Paul has his hair cut for a vow.	
18:19–21		Ephesus	Paul debates in the synagogue and promises to return.	
18:22		Caesarea	A brief visit by Paul.	
18:22–23		Antioch	Back home for a short while to report.	
18:24–19:1			Apollos from Alexandria in Ephesus. Aquila and Priscilla, who have remained in the city, mentor him. Apollos then leaves for Corinth, where he powerfully debates with the Jews.	

The third overseas mission: Paul from Antioch AD 53–59

Acts	Date	Location	Events	Letters written
19:1–41	55–56	Ephesus	A slow journey through Galatia and Phrygia brings Paul to Ephesus where he stays for two or three years. The disciples of John the Baptist.	1 Corinthians
			Paul debates in the synagogue and the lecture hall of Tyrannus and accomplishes 'extraordinary miracles'. The Jewish 'exorcists' fail. Many converts abandon their occult practices and burn their books. A riot instigated by the silversmiths over the goddess Artemis (Diana).	

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20:1–2	57	Macedonia	Preaching through the area. Thessalonica?	2 Corinthians
20:2–3		Greece	In Corinth for three months.	Romans
20:3–6		Philippi	Paul and Luke sail from Philippi.	
20:7–12		Troas	Paul preaches at length; Eutychus falls from the window but is healed.	
20:13–16		Assos	All these en route to Jerusalem.	
		Mitylene		
		Kios		
		Samos		
20:17–38		Miletus	Paul calls the elders from Ephesus and encourages them to stand firm in the face of false teachers and persecution. He prepares them for his own death.	
21:1–16	59	Cos	The journey to Jerusalem.	
		Rhodes		
		Patara		
		Tyre	Paul and Luke stay with the disciples for a week. An emotional farewell on the beach.	
		Ptolemais	A day with the Christians there.	
		Caesarea	Paul and Luke stay with Philip the evangelist.	
			Agabus prophesies Paul's arrest in Jerusalem. Paul's response.	

From Jerusalem to Rome

Acts	Date	Location	Events	Letters written
21:16–26	59	Jerusalem	Paul stays at the home of Mnason. Paul reports to the Christian leaders in the city. They encourage Paul to dispel the rumours that he is opposed to the Mosaic law; he undergoes a purification rite.	
21:27–40			The Jews assume Paul has taken Trophimus, a Gentile, into the temple court; a riot begins and Paul is dragged from the temple. He is rescued by the Romans.	
22:1–29			Paul's speech to the Jewish crowd. Mistakenly flogged by the Romans.	

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22:30 –23:11			Paul defends himself before the Sanhedrin.	
23:12–22			The plot to assassinate Paul.	
23:23–35		Caesarea	Paul transferred to Caesarea, the headquarters of Rome in Judaea. He is held here for two years.	
24:1–27			The trial before Felix, the Roman governor.	
25:1–12			The trial before the new governor, Festus. Paul appeals to the emperor for justice.	
25:13 –26:32			The trial before Festus and Herod Agrippa.	
27:1–12	60/61		The journey to Rome. Under the charge of Julius, the centurion, and accompanied by Aristarchus from Thessalonica.	
		Sidon	Julius allows Paul to stay with his friends.	
		Myra	Here they changed ships.	
		Cnidus		
		Lasea	A sheltered bay called Fair Havens. Paul warns of the loss of the ship and cargo if they proceed further because winter is approaching. The pilot and owner overrule.	
27:13–44			The storm and shipwreck.	
28:1–10		Malta	The hospitality of the islanders. Paul invited to stay with Publius. Publius' father healed.	
28:11–16		Syracuse	They stay here for three days here on the final journey to Rome.	
		Rhegium		
		Puteoli	Paul and Luke stay a week with Christians here.	
		Forum of Appius	Brethren from Rome come to meet Paul. The Three Taverns.	
28:17–28	62	Rome	Paul's speech to the Jewish leaders in Rome.	
28:30–31			Paul spends two years under house arrest preaching and teaching.	Paul writes letters from prison: Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon, Philippians

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62?		After those two years it is thought that Paul was released and continued his mission work, possibly visiting Spain, which he had wanted to do (Romans 15:24).	1 Timothy and Titus
67?		Paul was rearrested and martyred on the orders of the emperor Nero. The second letter to Timothy was written when Paul anticipated his imminent death.	2 Timothy

For the authorship and date of the following letters, see pages 335–342.

There is debate around the authorship of **Hebrews** since no name is attached. However, the earliest tradition (from Clement in AD 95) is that Paul was the author; there is no conclusive reason to dispute this. If it is from Paul, it was most likely written prior to AD 64.

The **two letters of Peter** were almost certainly written sometime prior to AD 64.

According to Josephus, the first century Jewish historian, **James**, the author of the New Testament letter and brother of Jesus, was martyred in AD 62. If so, the letter must pre-date this.

Dating of the letter of **Jude**, another brother of Jesus, is uncertain, although it is likely to have been sometime prior to AD 70.

The **three letters from John** were most likely written after the death of Paul and Peter, who were almost certainly martyred during the reign of Nero. If John was exiled to Patmos under the emperor Diocletian (AD 81–96), the book of **Revelation** must have been written sometime after the year 81.