



A 10-WEEK ONLINE SERIES BY DEACON JIM MCFADDEN

Acts of the Apostles is Luke's attempt to follow up on where his Gospel left off, narrating the spread of the gospel from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth. Let us embark on a journey with the apostles and disciples and learn about their mission that will bring martyrdom to some, hardship to most, and the gospel to all.

DATES: 9/16/24—11/18/24 TIME: 7:00 P.M.—8:00 P.M.

Week 1: September 16— Introduction

The Acts of the Apostles is an attempt by the early Christians growing curiosity that "after the Resurrection, what happened next?" In writing his two-volume tome (the gospel and Acts), Luke was striving to write a foundational narrative that had been accomplished by Jesus and by believers so that future converts to the faith would know that they are standing on solid ground.

Week 2: September 23— Prequel to Acts

Luke-Acts go together: the Gospel according to Luke is the Prequel and Acts is the conclusion. But, the question arises, is there a unity between the two books? Should Luke-Acts be read as continuous story with characters and actors in the first volume foreshadowing events in the second with the Apostles. Or, is the reader to regard them as separate entities, literary works that have their own integrity? The unity of the two books has implications regarding its narrative structure and overall purpose.

Week 3: September 30— Geography in Acts

The followers of Jesus, his disciples, were followers of the Way, and Luke pays particular attention to geography. While some of his references may not always be accurate, his use of geography serves as a literary device, situating the spread of the Gospel within physical places. But, as we will be seen with Jerusalem, geography also has a theological significance.

Week 4: October 7— Pentecost

The Pentecost Event: Until the Holy Spirit descends, the Apostles and disciples are undirected. With the Pentecost experience, everything changes. The once timid and confused followers are emboldened and set forth to preach the Good News.

Week 5: October 14— Work of the Deacons

As the Church grew, the need for ordained assistants to the apostles and their successors, the episkopos or bishop grew. Deacons emerged, were ordained, to assist the apostle/bishop to serve the emerging people of God. Besides serving the people, especially those in most need, they were also preachers as witnessed by Stephen and Philip.

Week 6: October 21— From Saul to Paul

Following his Damascus experience, Saul has had a remarkable change of heart as he goes from being the arch-persecutor of the fledging Church bent on destroying her to being her most zealous advocates as he becomes the Apostle to the Gentiles. This abrupt turn-around would be hard to believe, but in chapter 22, Paul goes to great lengths to explain his remarkable conversion. It is through Paul, under the power of the Holy Spirit, that the Way becomes a universal religion.

Week 7: October 28— The Peter Narratives

When we encounter Peter in the Acts of the Apostles, he will no longer be known by his double-name, Simon-Peter. He is clearly chief among the apostles and its upon his shoulders that the Twelve be reconstituted to form the apostolic foundation of the Church. In Acts chapter one, he launches into a speech about Judas, replete with biblical references. In similar fashion, Peter interprets the Pentecost event in which the people from Galilee are speaking in the native language of those gathered. It is clear that Peter is the Rock upon which the Church will be built with Jesus as her capstone.

Week 8: November 4— The Question of the Gentiles

The faith couldn't spread far without coming face to face with the question of the inclusion of the Gentiles. How much of Jewish tradition should Gentiles follow? What was Luke thinking when it situated the first Gentile convert in the unlikely person of a Roman centurion? We will explore this pivotal event which culminates in the first ecumenical council of the Church at Jerusalem.

Week 9: November 11— Paul's Missionary Journeys

While the first part of Acts focuses on Peter, the second part of Acts, which focuses on the preaching to the Gentiles, in which Paul gets top billing as he sets out on three missionary journeys. Each of these introduces the reader to new locations, new believers, and new threats from those who are threatened by the proclamation of the Good News.

Week 10: November 18— Telling the Good from the Bad

As the fledging Church gradually spreads throughout the Roman Empire, spearheaded by Paul and his companions, our final session will take a step back and reflect upon how Luke treats the new people who are entering into the Church. A good story must have protagonists and antagonists and indeed we find many in Acts of the Apostles. Luke portrays three basic types: those who oppose the Way (villains), those who suffer for the sake of the Gospel (victims) and those who triumph (victors). So, this session is about Villains, Victims, and victors.

To register for the series, please email Theresa Grant at tgrant@talkpathlive.com. You will receive an email prior to the scheduled session with the Zoom link & instructions. Please check your spam/junk mail in case you do not receive the email in your inbox.

