

FROM JERUSALEM TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH

ACTS

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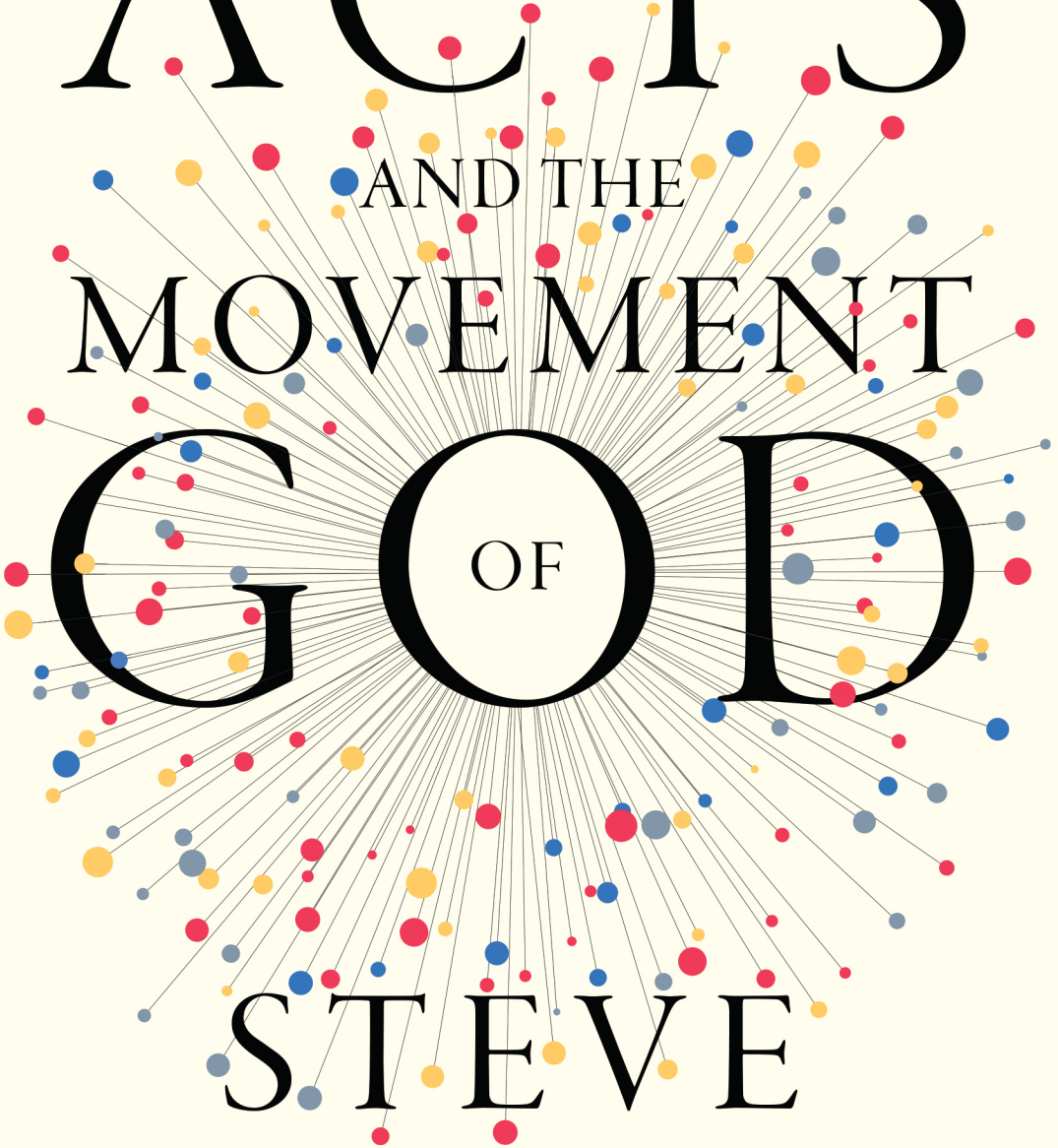
MOVEMENT

GOD

OF

STEVE

ADDISON



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ACTS TIMELINE¹

Date	Event	Reference
26/27	<i>John the Baptist's ministry</i>	<i>Acts 1:5</i>
27–30	<i>Jesus' ministry</i>	<i>Acts 1:1</i>
30	<i>Crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus</i>	<i>Acts 1:1–11</i>
30–41	<i>Mission to Jerusalem</i>	<i>Acts 2–5</i>
31/32	<i>Death of Stephen</i>	<i>Acts 6–7</i>
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	<i>Conversion and call of Saul–Paul near Damascus</i>	<i>Acts 9; Gal. 1</i>
32/33	<i>Mission of Paul in Arabia and Damascus</i>	<i>Acts 9:19–22; Gal. 1:17</i>
34–42	<i>Mission of Peter in Judea, Galilee, Samaria, and the coastal plain</i>	<i>Acts 9:32–43</i>
	<i>Mission of Paul in Syria and Cilicia</i>	<i>Acts 9:19–25, 30; Gal. 1:21–24</i>
37	<i>Mission of Peter in Joppa and Caesarea</i>	<i>Acts 10–11</i>
	<i>Conversion of Cornelius, a Roman centurion in Caesarea</i>	<i>Acts 10</i>
41	<i>Persecution of the Jerusalem church by Herod Agrippa I</i>	<i>Acts 12:1–4</i>
	<i>James the apostle executed by Agrippa I</i>	<i>Acts 12:17</i>
	<i>Peter and the apostles leave Jerusalem for new fields</i>	<i>Acts 12:17</i>
	<i>James and the elders lead the church in Jerusalem</i>	<i>Acts 12:17; 21:18</i>
42–44	<i>Paul and Barnabas active in Syrian Antioch</i>	<i>Acts 11:25–26</i>
44	<i>Church in Antioch provides famine relief for Jerusalem Christians</i>	<i>Acts 11:27–30; 12:25</i>
45–47	<i>Mission of Paul and Barnabas to Cyprus and southern Galatia</i>	<i>Acts 13–14</i>
48	<i>Council in Jerusalem</i>	<i>Acts 15</i>
49	<i>Mission of Barnabas and John Mark on Cyprus</i>	<i>Acts 15:39</i>
49–52	<i>Mission of Paul in Macedonia and Achaia</i>	<i>Acts 16–18</i>

Date	Event	Reference
49	<i>Disturbances in Rome over "Chrestus." Jews expelled</i>	<i>Acts 18:2</i>
50–51	<i>Paul's mission to Corinth</i>	<i>Acts 18</i>
52–55	<i>Paul's mission to Ephesus</i>	<i>Acts 19</i>
	<i>Paul visits Corinth and returns to Ephesus</i>	<i>Acts 20:1–4</i>
	<i>Paul travels from Ephesus to Troas</i>	
	<i>Paul stays in Macedonia over the winter</i>	
56	<i>Mission of Paul in Illyricum (?)</i>	<i>Rom. 15:19</i>
	<i>Paul visits Achaia/Corinth</i>	<i>Acts 20:1–6</i>
57–59	<i>Paul arrested in Jerusalem, imprisonment in Caesarea</i>	<i>Acts 21–26</i>
60–62	<i>Paul a prisoner in Rome</i>	<i>Acts 28:11–31</i>
62	<i>Paul executed (?)</i>	
62–67	<i>Paul released, continued his mission, re-arrested and executed in Rome around the same time as Peter (?)</i>	

FOREWORD

PEYTON JONES

Steve Addison has established himself as the foremost movement scholar in the church today. Steve is not just a theorist, writing dry, dusty, theological treatises; he is also a practitioner, and because of this, his books are a living, vibrant chronicle of how God moves.

In *Church Plantology: The Art and Science of Planting Churches*, I proposed three overlapping circles, focused on timeless principles of planting practiced by the apostles that still apply to planters today; principles for planting anywhere, with anyone, during any time. Those three overlapping circles consisted of 1) the pages of Acts, 2) church history, and 3) global missional practice. I constantly found myself reaching for Steve's books because all three are in his purview of study.

Of all Steve's books, *Acts and the Movement of God* is the one I am most excited to hit the shelves. Not only is it the book I will find myself giving away more than any other, but it has also been the greatest delight to read. That's because it goes straight to the source of all missionary endeavors; the Scriptures themselves. Steve brings his acumen to the book of Acts in a way that I've come to appreciate as a missiologist practitioner. Unlike so many authors, when Steve writes about Acts, it is as if there is no demarcation between what has gone before and what God continues to do in the world; and that is because there truly isn't any.

In reading this book, you will come away with three principles. First, as you are brought into the strange and unfamiliar world of the first century, you will come to see that the challenges they faced are not unlike our own. Steve asserts at the outset that "to ignore the lessons of Acts is an act of pride." If the church in Acts faced similar challenges to us today, is it possible that their solutions could be ours too? Could we not reach back into the past for something to guide us in our present and future? Keep reading, and Steve will convince you that the answer is obviously a resounding yes.

Second, you will be bolstered in the knowledge that what God did then can happen today ... because it already is. In his approach to the book of Acts, Steve brings the knowledge of how movements work all over the world today. Acts was written by a missionary, to a missionary

church. Because Steve is an active practitioner in missionary movements throughout the world, his insight into people, and how they react to the gospel, permeates this book and flavors his exposition of Acts. In this book, Steve is walking with one foot in the past and one in the present; and in both worlds, he seems at home.

Lastly, you will be reminded that we are not left alone to carry out the mission of God; it is God who is on a mission, and we are invited to play a part in what he is doing. That knowledge will energize us all and provide the opportunity to transform us from theorists to practitioners; from a fear of the unknown to a faith born out of experience. It is with this hope that Steve Addison has written this book for you. I am sure that the God of the printed page wants to reveal himself to you as the God who also writes living epistles in our lives as we trust him today, just as the apostles did yesterday. With that kind of faith, new movements will continue to break out all over the world.

INTRODUCTION

Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like.

JAMES 1:23-24

When I was young, there were a few hundred known believers in the Hindu kingdom of Nepal. Now there are over one million.¹

Iran fell to the Islamic revolution in 1979, and yet now the number of believers in that nation is approaching one million.²

A decade ago, researcher Justin Long thought there were around a hundred multiplying movements of disciples and churches around the world.³ By 2017, he'd documented six hundred movements. By 2020, he was tracking 1,369 movements, with at least seventy-seven million disciples in 4.8 million churches; that's 1 percent of the world's population.

There are multiplying movements in China, in India, in the nations of Sub-Saharan Africa, in Latin America, in the United States prison system, and among hi-tech professionals in world cities. And in 1,400 years, we've never seen so many movements in the Muslim world.⁴

Yet despite our history and resources, these movements are the exception in the Western world.

It doesn't have to be that way.

It's time to gaze into the mirror of Acts and allow God to disrupt and inspire us.

Exploring an Unfamiliar World

When we enter the book of Acts, we enter an unfamiliar world, a world in which the good news about Jesus' life, death, and victory is advancing in the power of the Holy Spirit.

God's people are united around the teaching of the apostles in joyful prayer and worship. Their love for one another overflows in generosity. They gather in public places and from house to house. Every day, God adds to their number those being saved. They are fearless in persecution and bold in proclamation. Signs and wonders accompany the spread of God's Word. Troubles abound—false disciples, violent opposition,

internal disputes, limited resources, imprisonment, and danger. Yet the Word continues to advance from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth, and in its wake, communities of disciples emerge in every place.

New Testament scholar Eckhard Schnabel writes, “Acts relates what Jesus continues to do and teach, now not only in Galilee and in Jerusalem, but in the whole world, through the witness of his disciples.”⁵

The book of Acts calls us back to the beginning. Luke provides a picture of the movement of God—not just how it *was* but how it’s meant to be *today*. The world may have changed since Luke’s time, but God hasn’t; Jesus promised that the movement of God will continue until his Word reaches every people and every place.

Although we may think there is a sharp distinction between Luke’s day and ours, Schnabel argues that Luke “was convinced that what God was doing through Jesus Christ and through the power of the Spirit, Christians in all churches should experience and be involved in.”⁶ We tame Acts by rejecting its relevance, believing our context to be so different that the lessons of Acts no longer apply. It’s time to tear down the wall we’ve built between Luke’s age and ours. What God was doing through the power of the Holy Spirit is relevant for every generation of disciples. That’s why Luke wrote Acts.

When Luke tells the stories of people like Peter, Philip, Stephen, Barnabas, Paul, Lydia, and Priscilla, he expects us to learn from their example. We are to look for principles, not rigid rules. The repeated patterns we can see in Acts point the way to how God works today.⁷

Acts contains only a few incidental details about church structures and organization. Luke’s focus is on God’s action: how Jesus defines the core missionary task; how God provides the power to overcome unbelief and opposition; how he disturbs his people when they settle down; how he ensures the messengers get to where they need to be at just the right time.

In Acts, there is one gospel message, adapted for different audiences. Yet the response is always the same: repentance and faith, expressed in baptism for the forgiveness of sins; and the gift of the Spirit.⁸ New disciples are added to the community of God’s people. The gospel goes out into unreached fields, disciples are made, and new churches formed; leaders are identified; and churches are strengthened and multiplied from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth. This is the repeated pattern of Acts. Luke is showing us what the movement of God looks like, what it does, and how it achieves its God-given mission. Throughout history, movements rise and fall depending on

their alignment with the life and mission of Jesus—which begins in the Gospels and continues in Acts. We too must align ourselves with the life and mission of Jesus.

To ignore the lessons of Acts is an act of pride. Not to look back is to measure ourselves by ourselves rather than look into the mirror of God's Word. The mirror of Acts shows us how God fulfills his mission in the world and how we are to play our part. We need to be disturbed about the gap between what we read in Acts and our current experience. Despair is a virtue if it drives us to the sufficiency of God. He wants to inspire us to believe that what he did in Acts, he can do today. And around the world, it's already happening.

I'm thinking of Don, who is at the center of a movement of God in the Texas prison system, which began among prisoners in maximum security. Hundreds of prisoner-led discipleship groups have been formed and are spreading from prison to prison. These groups are the body of Christ in the prisons; they just can't call them churches because it's against the regulations.

There is Jeff, a pastor in Canada who has trained teams from his church to go into their suburban community, offering prayer and the gospel, followed by discipleship around the Scriptures. New disciples are being baptized and added to the church, and new churches are popping up in homes and in a local bar.

I'm thinking of my friends Kumar and Lipok in India who are training, coaching, and mobilizing disciples across their nation of 1.3 billion.

I have in mind Oggie, an apostle to the world's one billion Latinos, on both sides of the Mexican border, with refugees and immigrants baptizing new disciples in water barrels, teaching them to form new churches wherever they go.

There's Amid, a Muslim background believer from Afghanistan. He found Christ as a refugee in Greece where he now makes disciples and forms churches among Pakistanis, Afghans, Iranians, and Syrians as they move through Greece on their way into Europe. As they go, they take the gospel with them. When they settle, they know how to make disciples and form simple churches modeled on Acts 2:36–47.

I'm thinking of Cindy, whose online training and coaching has launched and multiplied workers across South Asia and Africa, all of whom are planting churches.

Then there's George, who retrained his band of evangelists across twenty-one African nations as catalysts for church-planting movements.

I have in mind a young American couple who started off making disciples in Long Beach, California and have now launched into a Muslim nation somewhere in Central Asia.

Acts was written for desperate people, for people who want to play their part in God's mission. Like Paul on the road to Damascus, let God unravel you and remake you. Let him shatter your confidence in your gifts, your knowledge, and your experience, and hear his call afresh. Like Paul, he is sending you to open eyes that are blind, to turn people from darkness to light, and to shift them from the power of Satan to God, so they can receive forgiveness of sins and a place among his people.⁹

Scripture is full of the stories of men and women whom God has disrupted and remade so they could play their part in his mission. It's how he works.

Acts is the model, the example to which every new generation of disciples must return for renewal, inspiration, and direction.¹⁰ As we read Acts, we must ask the following questions: What did Jesus do? What did he train his disciples to do? What does the risen Lord and the Holy Spirit continue to do through God's people in Acts? Finally, what does that look like today?

Acts calls every new generation back to the beginning—to a movement born in obscurity without power, wealth, or influence, devoted to prayer and the spread of God's Word, bold in the face of opposition, generous in love, experiencing God's powerful presence, captivated by his saving love in Jesus, on the move from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth.

God wants to disrupt us and bring us back to the life and mission of Jesus.

Is This Book for You?

I'm writing for two groups of people who need to return to the movement of God in Acts.

The first group includes those who may be looking from the outside, wondering if these movements around the world are a legitimate work of God that could happen in their context. The place to start is in Acts. Let the patterns and teaching of Scripture shape your understanding and form the foundation for your engagement.

The second group are those who are already pursuing multiplying movements around the world—cross-cultural workers and national leaders on the frontline. Not everything that multiplies is good, so how can you recognize a movement of God and play your part to ensure its

health and faithfulness to God? Allow Acts to be your yardstick. Let God's Word determine your thinking and actions.

This is a book for people who want to rediscover the reality of the movement of God in Acts as the foundation for pursuing the movement of God today. Acts reveals that the risen Lord is on a mission to get his Word from where you are to the ends of the earth—every people, every place. As the Word goes out in the power of the Spirit, it leaves in its wake disciples and churches to the glory of God. Is that what you long for? Then you've come to the right place.

A Roadmap Through Acts

We'll be going on a journey through Acts, chapter by chapter, story by story, to discover God's purposes and what it means to be a movement that multiplies disciples and churches. As you read, you'll find *Deeper* sections, which take an in-depth look at important themes that arise across the whole of Acts. You'll also find *Movements Today* sections, which give examples from around the world of the lessons from Acts lived out today. I can vouch for each story I tell, but for good reasons I can't always identify the exact location or names of the people involved.

Read this book with Acts open beside you. For those who want to capture and apply the learning, there's a 4-Fields Discovery Worksheet with instructions in the appendix (see pages 221–23). To lock in the learning, you can form a group to share your insights and action steps.

There are many excellent academic commentaries on the book of Acts. You'll find them in the notes. This book is different. It's an attempt to bridge the gap between our understanding of Acts and our engagement in reaching a lost world.

Acts is both a serious work of history *and* the living Word of God. It tells the story of salvation through Jesus Christ, the crucified, risen, and exalted Lord. It describes how the Spirit came upon his disciples, granting them power to be his witnesses from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth. Acts shows how God works through ordinary people, sustaining them in troubles and conquering every obstacle and enemy.

What if Luke isn't just telling us, "This is how it was," but he's also saying, "This is how it can be"?



THE MISSION OF THE RISEN LORD

(1:1-11)



YOU WILL BE MY WITNESSES (1:1–11)

Luke wrote a second book because the story of Jesus was not finished. The story that began with Jesus' life, death, and resurrection continues. Luke's Gospel is about what Jesus *began* to do and teach.¹ Acts is about what the risen Lord *continues* to do through his disciples in the power of the Holy Spirit. He is not just the God who acted in history. He is not just the God of the early church. He is the God of today, the One who rose from the dead and is living and active among his people and continues to lead the way.

When Jesus rose from the dead, he encountered a band of disciples who were defeated and disillusioned. They had given up everything to follow him. They believed he was the Messiah. Yet at his arrest they fled in fear, and they watched him die alone.

Jesus had forty days to turn these failed followers into a missionary movement that would go to the ends of the earth. He began by providing convincing proofs of his resurrection. If Jesus had not risen bodily from the grave and planted his feet on solid ground, his death would have had no power, there would be no forgiveness of sins, and our reconciliation with God would not be possible. Jesus would have been just another messianic pretender.

Over forty days, Jesus taught them that God had broken into history to establish his rule over the whole world. He took his disciples through the whole of the Old Testament, explaining how the Messiah must suffer and rise again and how repentance for the forgiveness of sins would be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.²

The kingdom came in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus—and it's still available to all who repent and believe in the good news of salvation in Christ. We can experience the kingdom now, yet we await its fullness in a restored creation.³ The encounters Jesus had with people demonstrated the presence of the kingdom. He healed Peter's mother-in-law. He brought peace to a deranged man oppressed by demons. He forgave the sins of the woman who wept tears of joy at his feet. He brought salvation to the house of Zacchaeus and set him free from the love of money. He promised paradise to a criminal hanging on a cross.

In Acts, the spread of God's rule takes place as the Word goes out in the power of the Holy Spirit, and new communities of disciples are formed from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth.

As he sends his disciples to the ends of the earth, Jesus promises to pour out his Spirit upon them. To be baptized in the Holy Spirit is to be immersed, overwhelmed, and flooded with the presence of God. The Spirit is both the foretaste of the kingdom and how the kingdom comes, as Jesus' disciples bear witness to him throughout the world.

The Spirit is the true sign of conversion and inspires the new believers to declare the wonders of God in the languages of the world, filling them so they can proclaim the gospel boldly in the face of violent opposition. Despite persecution, the disciples are filled with joy and the Holy Spirit. The Spirit opens and closes doors for the messengers as they go out—when the Spirit is poured out in Samaria, thousands turn and put their faith in Christ. The Spirit removes the obstacles to the Gentile mission. The apostles choose leaders who are filled with the Holy Spirit, and he appoints leaders over the churches. Stephen, the first martyr, dies filled with the Holy Spirit, and it is the Spirit that enables Saul to see again. The church is built up and strengthened by the Holy Spirit, and he speaks to believers through visions and dreams.⁴

The Spirit has one unifying goal in all his activity—he comes to bear witness to the Lord Jesus. Without the Spirit, there would be no missionary movement.

The prophets linked the pouring out of the Spirit with the restoration of Israel.⁵ The disciples want to know if this is the time for the restoration of the kingdom to Israel. They want the certainty of a timeline. Will God now overthrow the Roman oppressors and set up his kingdom over Israel? Yet the Father will determine when and how the kingdom comes in its fullness. What should matter to his disciples is the task he has given them. Jesus' answer turns their attention away from dates and timelines to their mission to be his witnesses throughout the world.

As the prophets predicted, the Spirit will be poured out, and Israel will be restored, but not as an earthly kingdom. The twelve apostles are the nucleus of the restored people of God, who will fulfill Israel's calling as a light to the nations, proclaiming salvation to the ends of the earth.⁶

When the gospel of the kingdom has been proclaimed throughout the whole world, the end will come, and Jesus will return to judge the world and establish the kingdom of God in its fullness.⁷ This is God's mission, and Jesus still calls every disciple to play their part.

Meanwhile, when the Spirit comes, the Word will go out, and thousands of disciples will be added to the community. But they are not to settle in Jerusalem and wait for the world to come to them. Their call is the same as ours. They are to go. Their destination is the ends of the earth. Jesus' words are a command in the form of a promise, "You *will* receive power. . . . You *will* be my witnesses . . . to the ends of the earth."⁸ The mission is to proclaim the good news of Jesus in cities and towns in every region of the earth.⁹

As eyewitnesses, the Twelve know the events of Jesus' life and ministry; they know his teaching. Their witness is unique. Our role today is to bear witness to what the apostles have seen and heard from Jesus.

Jesus' disciples are "to reach people wherever they live with the news about the offer of salvation, whether they are Jews, or Samaritans, or Gentiles."¹⁰ As far as there are people, that's how far Jesus' disciples are to go. We are called to go to the ends of the inhabited world—every place and every people.¹¹ That's why Acts is structured around geographic divisions: Jerusalem (Acts 1–7), Judea and Samaria (Acts 8–12), the ends of the earth (Acts 13–28). The plan was not gradually developed by the disciples but was gradually revealed and extended by God.¹²

Acts finishes in Rome, but Rome is not the ends of the earth. Rome is a new starting point from where the gospel is proclaimed until it reaches every place and every people group.¹³ The task remains unfinished. Luke writes because every new generation, including our own, must take up the challenge until the task is complete.

When Jesus finishes what he needs to say, a cloud descends, and he is caught up into the glory of God's presence.¹⁴ He will return in the same way. He is gone, yet he is with his people. From his position at the Father's right hand, he will send the Holy Spirit who still leads and energizes this missionary movement today.

The mission began with Jesus' command, it is sustained by his presence, and it will end when he returns to judge the world. The challenge the angels gave the first disciples remains for us today: Stop looking up to heaven; you have work to do on earth!¹⁵

By the time Jesus was finished, these men and women were grounded in his Word, dependent on the Holy Spirit, and committed to the core missionary task. Jesus turned shattered disciples into a movement of God. He did it for them, and he can do it for us. His mission begins and ends, not with our knowledge and resources but by returning to the life and ministry of Jesus. That's what we're trusting him to do as we allow the book of Acts to disrupt us.

DEEPER: THE FATHER'S PLAN

*If it is from God, you will not be able to stop these men;
you will only find yourselves fighting against God.*

ACTS 5:39

Acts is not just a book about the early church. Acts is a book about God and how he brings salvation.¹⁶ Luke writes so that we can see what God is doing and align ourselves with his purposes.

The Father's plan is centered on his Son, whose obedience to death brought forgiveness of sins and a restored relationship with the Father. Now risen and enthroned, the Lord Jesus rules through the Spirit, who empowers the disciples to proclaim this salvation to all. As the Word spreads, the Spirit forms those who repent and believe into the new people of God who are witnesses to the ends of the earth.¹⁷

God is the chief character, and his Word is the driving force propelling the story forward.¹⁸ Angels appear, prophets speak, prison doors open, houses shake, thousands believe, persecutors fall to the ground, the Scriptures are fulfilled—God directs the mission.

Luke places Acts in the widest possible context. It looks back to the life and ministry of Jesus; his death, resurrection, and exaltation, as well as his future role as universal Judge. Acts looks back to the call of Abraham and the unfolding story of Israel. The plan of God stretches back to creation and stretches forward to the final judgment and to the end of history.¹⁹ Then and now, God acts in history to bring salvation to people who are far from him.

The risen Lord makes God's plan clear to his disciples—repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be proclaimed in Jesus' name to all nations.²⁰

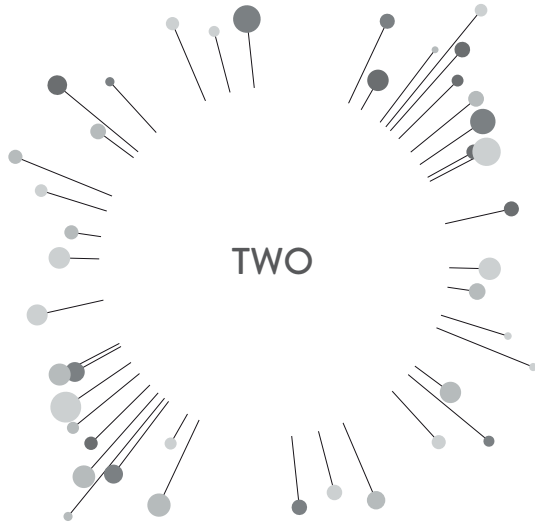
God fulfills his promise to send the Spirit at Pentecost to breathe life into the restored people of God who will become a light to the nations. God ensures the gospel goes beyond Jerusalem and Judea to Samaria and then to the world. He works through Peter, Stephen, Philip, through the unnamed disciples who flee persecution, and through Paul and Barnabas. God gets Paul to Rome safely through riots, murder plots, beatings, prison, endless legal proceedings, and wild storms at sea. Although human beings can oppose God's will, God can make their disobedience serve his purposes.

At the very center of this mission is the witness to the life, death, and victory of Jesus, calling everyone to turn and believe in him and leading to the formation of communities of disciples in every place. Every obstacle will be overcome, not by the believer's might and intelligence but by God who intervenes on their behalf.

God moves powerfully, filling his servants with boldness, sending angels to rescue them from prison, striking down evil rulers, healing the sick, and freeing the demonized. As Jesus faced rejection and suffering, so do his followers. The messengers experience both the cross and the resurrection power of Jesus. Their experience will be ours.

From creation to the final judgment, God is working out his plan. He fulfills his promises. He directs the life and mission of Jesus and his disciples, as his Word goes out from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth.²¹ Then the end will come, and Jesus will return to judge the world and establish God's rule over all things.

It's his mission, and he will fulfill it his way. So often his power is revealed in our weakness. When we least expect it, he brings the breakthrough. All he wants from us is faith expressed in obedience.



FILLING JERUSALEM

(1:12-5:42)



LET ANOTHER TAKE HIS PLACE (1:12–26)

Jesus' disciples return to Jerusalem. Among them are the women who had come with Jesus from Galilee, some of whom had been with him from the beginning.¹ Jesus' mother is also there, as well as his brothers who previously thought he was mad.² The risen Lord had appeared to his brother James who may have converted his three younger brothers.³ Despite the group's diversity, it was Jesus who brought them together.

They meet on the top floor of a large house, probably in the wealthier district of Jerusalem.⁴ Peter stands up among the believers. He is not the Peter we encountered in the Gospels. He is not the Peter who stood between Jesus and his calling to suffer and die in Jerusalem. And he is not the Peter who boasted of his willingness to die for Jesus and then denied him three times. This is a Peter who has been transformed by the risen Christ, prepared for this moment by Jesus who has opened his mind to understand God's purposes in the Scriptures.⁵

Before the Spirit comes and the mission begins, the Twelve must be reconstituted. Peter explains how the Scriptures were fulfilled by Judas's treachery and why Judas must be replaced.⁶ Judas had forfeited his place in the Twelve, not by his death but by his betrayal. As Israel had twelve patriarchs over twelve tribes, now the twelve apostles will become the core of the new Israel, made of those who have responded to the gospel with repentance and faith.⁷ They are the faithful remnant who will take the gospel to the nations.

Because the witness of the Twelve is the unique foundation for this new movement, the one who takes Judas' place must have been with Jesus from the beginning—he must bear witness to Jesus' ministry and teaching and to his death, resurrection, and ascension.⁸ There is no other Jesus than the one revealed in the books of the Old and the New Testaments. We know him because of the apostles' witness, and we know him experientially through the Holy Spirit. These two ways of knowing are the basis of our witness and must align.

Assured that the Lord Jesus who chose the original twelve apostles was present, they cast lots according to the Old Testament pattern, a method to discern God's will that was not repeated once the Spirit came.⁹ With the appointment of Matthias, the Twelve are restored.

As the disciples wait for God to fulfill his promise, they pray constantly.¹⁰ Prayer is evident in almost every decisive moment in the

advance of this new movement.¹¹ They have been with Jesus, and he has prepared them for this time. Unlike the Sadducees, who control the temple and the priesthood and who have the ear of Rome, these disciples have nothing but their faith in the promises of God. New movements are only formed when we are aware of our own weakness and our dependence on God. Perhaps that's why, throughout history, the breakthroughs in the renewal and expansion of the movement of God always occur on the fringe, never at the center of power.¹²

DEEPER: ACTS OF THE RISEN LORD

*In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about
all that Jesus began to do and to teach*

ACTS 1:1

Following his death and resurrection, Jesus ascended to the right hand of the Father from where he lives and rules as King. That does not mean he is now absent from the world. He is powerfully present through the Holy Spirit whom he has poured out on his people.

The book of Acts tells the story of the continuing mission of the risen Lord.¹³ All who respond to him with repentance and faith are added to God's people.¹⁴ Because Jesus' reign is universal, the gospel must go to all—every people group and every place.

The living and reigning Lord directs this movement,¹⁵ whether it's restoring and instructing his fallen disciples, sending the Holy Spirit, or appointing witnesses. The living and reigning Lord is present with his people. As Stephen faces death, Jesus appears to him as the Son of Man, standing at the right hand of God. He appears to Paul, bringing salvation, a missionary commission, and later standing with him in persecution and prison.¹⁶ And when Paul and Barnabas appoint elders, they commend them to the Lord who will protect and lead them.¹⁷

The risen Lord is present with his people, just as Yahweh was present with Israel.¹⁸ When the early church grows in number, it is the Lord who adds those being saved.¹⁹ When they are persecuted, he is persecuted.²⁰ When they don't know how to defend themselves, he provides words and wisdom that no adversaries can resist or contradict.²¹

The Jesus of Acts is the Jesus who is present with us today, as we seek to step out to obey his command to make disciples.



SUDDENLY, A SOUND ... (2:1–13)

AD 30

Everything is ready. The Twelve are restored. The disciples are together, united in prayer. They have Jesus' mandate to take the gospel to the world. There's just one more thing . . .

It is early in the morning on the fiftieth day since Passover; the day of Pentecost, a harvest festival that has come to be linked with the giving of the Mosaic law and the renewing of the covenant between God and his people.²² It is one of the three great pilgrimage festivals of Judaism, and Jerusalem is packed with people. All work has stopped.

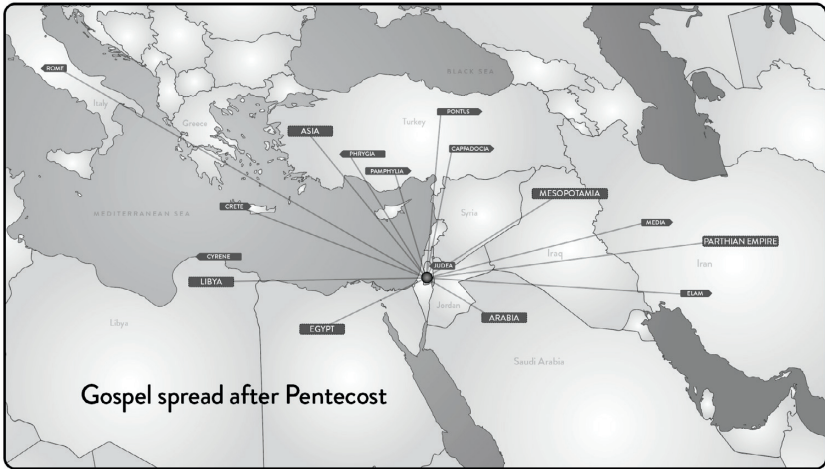
There are 120 men and women gathered in the upper room when the Holy Spirit comes with a sound like the blowing of a violent wind from heaven. Tongues of fire rest on each person. God shows his awesome presence among them through wind and fire. The disciples, filled with the Holy Spirit, begin declaring the wonders of God in languages they have never learned nor needed. Right from the outset, the Spirit empowers God's people to cross the boundaries of culture, language, and race with the message of salvation.²³ As this new movement begins, God has the whole world in his sights.

As Acts unfolds, God scatters his people in ever-widening circles of cross-cultural engagement. The Spirit is the architect of each breakthrough, and tongues are a sign of what God has done. Later, the Samaritans, the Gentiles, and the disciples of John praise God in unknown languages, just as the Jews did at Pentecost. For Luke, the experience of speaking in tongues is a reminder of the Spirit's work to take the gospel to every place, every people, and every language.

These strange signs of the Spirit are God's way of disrupting his people—his ways are not their ways—and realigning them with his purposes.²⁴ The words of the prophets have been fulfilled: The age of the Spirit has begun, and the Spirit is on the move. Previously, God dwelled in the temple in Jerusalem, but now the glory of God dwells in common houses, among ordinary people, all of whom are empowered as witnesses.

The sound of worship in many languages draws a crowd, and soon the worshippers spill out onto the streets. At some point, they move

to the vast temple courts that could accommodate up to seventy-five thousand people.²⁵



At Pentecost, there were Parthians, Medes, and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs (Acts 2:9–11).

The crowd includes Jews living outside of Israel from the diaspora or dispersion. They are the descendants of those who, over the centuries, had been exiled by the powers of Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome.²⁶ Some were pilgrims visiting Jerusalem for the feast. Others lived permanently in Jerusalem. Together they represent the whole Jewish world. They are amazed to hear these Galileans, who normally spoke a dialect of Aramaic, speaking in their local languages.²⁷

God is gathering and restoring his people through his Messiah Jesus. The prophets spoke of the day when the Spirit would come, a new covenant would be made between God and Israel, and the light of God's glory would go to the nations.²⁸

The Spirit comes upon them so they can proclaim the mighty works of God and extend Israel's salvation to the whole world. God intends to form one people from every tribe and language under the rule of his Son.²⁹

The movement of God cannot be copied, bottled, or franchised. It cannot be explained by natural causes. There is only one foundation of this movement of God: the life, death, and victory of Jesus; and the energizing power of the Spirit propelling God's people out from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth.

What would happen if the Spirit came in power today, as he did at Pentecost? I imagine we might try and camp in that upper room if we could, day and night soaking in God's presence. No doubt, before long, someone would set up a live video feed so the world could watch. Soon pilgrims would start arriving to visit this scene of revival, only to find the upper room empty and that the Spirit has left the building.

For when the Spirit came in power at Pentecost, God's people were propelled onto the streets to proclaim the message of salvation, and as a result, three thousand disciples were baptized and added to the community of God's people. Pentecost didn't end with a spiritual experience contained in the upper room. The fruit of Pentecost was disciples and churches to the glory of God, throughout Jerusalem and the nations. Without the coming of the Holy Spirit, there would be no worldwide mission.³⁰

If you want to see a movement of God, live in these first two chapters of Acts. Make them your home. Form a group and start working through Acts, a section at a time, with the 4-Fields Discovery Worksheet in the appendix (see page 221). With God's grace, let the Word and the Spirit lead you to obey what you learn. Our traditions, our strategies, and our best thinking must be laid aside to learn from what God did in Jerusalem that day and receive what his Spirit is calling us to do today.

DEEPER: THE MOVEMENT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

In the last days ... I will pour out my Spirit on all people.

ACTS 2:17

Acts is not about a bygone era. Jesus continues to reign; his mission continues; and he is still looking for willing disciples who will spread the word, empowered by the Holy Spirit.³¹

There are two opposite errors regarding the work of the Holy Spirit today. One is to confine the work of the Spirit to the pages of Scripture and banish him from contemporary experience. The other is to pursue personal experiences of the Holy Spirit as the destination. Luke wrote Acts to remind every generation that the Spirit is given to bear witness to Jesus throughout the world. The one who empowers is also the one who unsettles God's people, ensuring they remain on the move. We are in as desperate need today for the power of the Holy

Spirit as that first generation of disciples. How are we to recognize a true work of the Holy Spirit? When the Spirit moves in power, we'll see the life and ministry of Jesus lived out by disciples in communities, spreading from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth.

The Spirit serves the expansion of the Word.³² Luke says it is the Word, not the Spirit, that grows, and the outcome is communities of disciples.³³ And so, on the day of Pentecost, the outpouring of the Spirit reaches its climax in the proclamation of the Word to the nations and the formation of the church in Jerusalem.³⁴

Out of the nations of the world, the Holy Spirit creates the people of God—Jews, Samaritans, Ethiopians, Romans, Syrians, Greeks, Galatians, Lycaonians, Macedonians, Achaians, and Asians—united in their faith in Jesus as Savior and King.³⁵ This work of the Spirit is at the heart of God's mission.

The Spirit breathes life into this movement of God, directing, intervening, propelling, correcting. There are apostles, prophets, evangelists, teachers, and elders, all gifted by the Spirit, but they don't direct the movement; the Spirit does, and he uses whomever he chooses.

As the movement expands, it is the Spirit who forms new disciples into churches and strengthens the life of the churches, enabling them to live in the fear of the Lord, encouraged and increasing in numbers.³⁶ When Ananias and Sapphira deceive the community, it is the Holy Spirit who protects the purity of God's people.³⁷ When the mission to the nations languishes, the Spirit uses persecution to get Philip to Samaria.³⁸ When the Samaritans believe, the Spirit confirms their place among the people of God.³⁹ It is the Spirit who brings Peter to the house of Cornelius; and as Peter preaches, the Spirit falls upon Gentiles, demonstrating acceptance by God through faith in Christ alone.⁴⁰ The Spirit is given to the Samaritans and the Gentiles, just as it was to the Jews at Pentecost. The Samaritans and Gentiles will also now bear witness to Jesus throughout the world.⁴¹ When the barrier between Jewish and Gentile disciples must be removed, it is the Spirit who guides the Jerusalem Council.⁴² The Spirit appoints both leaders within the churches and leaders who multiply churches in new fields.⁴³

It is the Spirit who blocks Paul and his missionary band from pushing further into Asia Minor, and it is the Spirit who then flings open the door into Europe.⁴⁴ After his final mission as a free man, Paul is compelled by the Holy Spirit to go to Jerusalem, which brings about his arrival in Rome, where he will bear witness to the emperor.⁴⁵ The

book of Acts ends with Paul in chains, awaiting trial in Rome. The missionary is bound, but the Word still goes out in the power of the Spirit. The mission will continue, despite what happens to Paul. The story is not finished, and so the Holy Spirit continues to work, as a new generation of disciples accept the challenge of taking the gospel to the ends of the earth.

Without the work of the Spirit, there would be no proclamation, no conversions, no churches, no power to release Satan's captives, and no missionary movement.⁴⁶

MOVEMENTS TODAY: BEHIND BARS IN RIO

Sociologist Andrew Johnson wanted to understand the impact of Pentecostalism in Brazil's prison system. So he went behind bars to find out.

He recalls how at exactly 6 a.m., the war cry of the *Comando Vermelho* (Red Command, Brazil's oldest criminal gang) rose from the cells of Rio prison.⁴⁷ A lone voice was answered by four hundred inmates living in gang-controlled cells:

"Comando Vermelho!"

"Comando Vermelho!"

"Comando Vermelho!"

"Comando Vermelho!"

"Comando Vermelho!"

But earlier that morning, another war cry had sounded—by the Heroes for Christ at the close of their worship.

"By what are we saved?" the leader cried.

"By the blood of Christ!" thirty inmates responded.

"If he is your Shepherd ..." called out the leader.

"We lack nothing!" replied the members.

Johnson found movements of multiplying disciples and churches flourishing inside Rio de Janeiro's gang-controlled prisons. The prison system is an extension of Rio de Janeiro's impoverished *favelas*, where the drug gangs rule, and the police dare not enter. On the inside, it is the gangs, not the prison officials who rule. Yet, where the gangs are strongest is where the churches are thriving. Faith in Christ has enabled desperate men in appalling conditions

to reject death and embrace life. The churches have adapted to this harsh environment by taking on the structure and function of the prison gangs. Prisoners run the prison churches. Members are easy to identify: They dress differently, they quit drugs, and spend time studying the Bible.

The relationship between the churches and the narco-gangs is characterized by respect. The churches treat gang members as people worthy of redemption but do not condone their activities. The gangs tell their members to treat the church members and pastors well and to acknowledge their authority in the community.

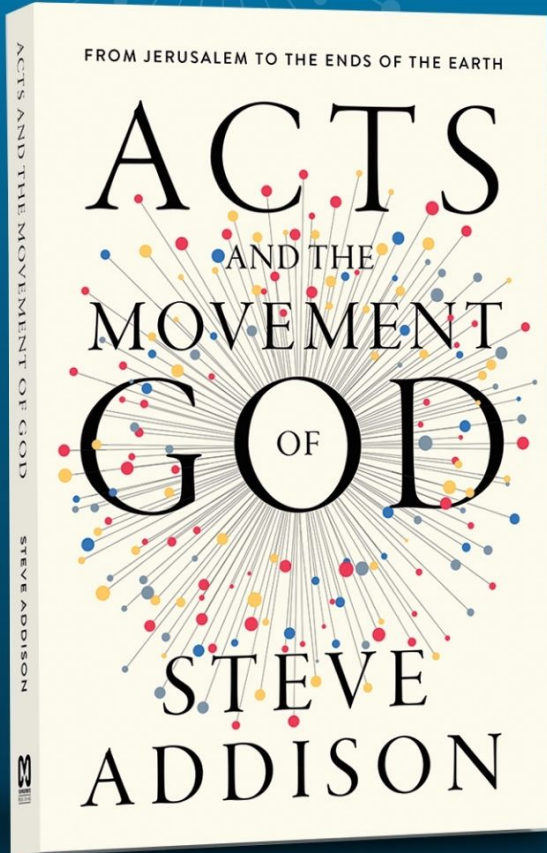
The local leader preaches, sings, prays, fasts, suffers, and praises alongside the other disciples. Inmates not only set the vision for the future of the churches, but they also negotiate with gang and prison officials and make themselves available to meet the spiritual and sometimes physical and emotional needs of inmates twenty-four hours a day.

If the Pentecostals practice what they preach, they are safe from prison violence and are allowed to occupy space in the prison.

Rio's most stigmatized residents have built churches where they experience joy, brotherhood, and dignity in one of the city's most apparently God-forsaken places.

The living Word of God and the power of the Holy Spirit are the one driving force in every genuine movement of God. Together, the Word and the Spirit witness to the life, death, and victory of Jesus through his disciples, in every place and among every people group throughout the world.

If God's light can shine through convicted criminals in a Rio prison, it can shine anywhere in this lost world.



LET GOD DISRUPT YOU
AND SHOW YOU WHAT
HE CAN DO.

COMING MAY 2023
movements.net

“

Compelling!

-Dave Ferguson