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INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

The Apostle Luke wrote Acts of the Apostles sometime between 62 and 80 A.D. Luke wrote Acts as the second of a two-volume account of the beginning of Christianity. The first volume was the Gospel of Luke. Luke intended that these two volumes be read together, so reading the second volume requires knowledge of the first. Throughout history, the Church has also recognized the value of reading Acts as a prologue to the Epistles because it tells Paul's story and gives the historical background of the New Testament Epistles.

THE STUDENT GUIDE

The *Student Guide* has four components:

Reading Notes: Read the Reading Notes carefully before reading the assigned chapter. Then, refer to these notes as you encounter the terms in the reading. You do not need to memorize these terms, but if you do not internalize them, then you will struggle to comprehend the reading.

Comprehension Questions: Answer each Comprehension Question after reading the text and provide a citation from the text to support your answer. The Comprehension Questions will reveal whether you understand the narrative flow of the chapter.

Discussion Questions: After completing the Comprehension Questions, answer the Discussion Questions in a group conversation or through a written essay. The Discussion Questions should provide an opportunity for deeper reflection on the text of Acts.

Maps: There are three maps that correspond to Paul's missionary journeys. These maps should be studied closely. Learn to identify each of the cities, regions, or islands located on the map from memory, so that you can follow the geographical details in the text of Acts.

CHAPTER 1

READING NOTES

Theophilus – This name is derived from the two Greek words θεός and φίλος and means "friend of God." No one is certain whether this is a specific person Luke knew or a general address to all friends of God who might read the book of Acts.

John – This John is John the Baptist, known for preaching repentance and baptizing those who believed.

Judaea (Judea) – The Greco-Roman equivalent of Judah, Judea is the land inhabited by the Jews after their return from exile in Babylon. Luke uses the name to signify most of Palestine, though it is, strictly speaking, the southern portion. The author intends that the reader associate Judea with its Jewish inhabitants.

Samaria – It is the territory to the north of Judea. This land was once inhabited by the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh, but it was conquered and assimilated by the Assyrians. Luke intends for his readers to view Samaria as a transitional area leading to the uttermost part of the earth.

Galilee – The native land of Jesus, this territory constitutes the northwest part of Palestine and lies north of Samaria.

Olivet – A mountain that is one Sabbath day's walk, about four hundred yards, to the east of Jerusalem.

Matthias – One of seventy disciples of Jesus who follow Him from the time of His baptism until His ascension. Matthias is chosen to take the place of Judas as an apostle.

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. What is the "former treatise" mentioned by Luke in the first verse of Acts?

2. How long is Jesus with His apostles before His ascension, and about what does Jesus speak to them?

3. From verses 4-5, what is the promise of the Father? (See also Luke 24:49; John 14:15-31, 15:4b-15.)

4. What question do the apostles ask Jesus before His ascension? What does this question reveal about what the apostles want Jesus to do? How does Jesus respond?

5. What is the first decision of the early Christians in the upper room? What is the result of the decision?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why is it so difficult for the disciples to understand what Jesus means by "kingdom of God"?
2. The apostles cast lots as a way to choose between Matthias and Joseph as a replacement for Judas Iscariot. Casting lots was a form of rolling dice. What ways do we use today to try and discern God's will about various matters?