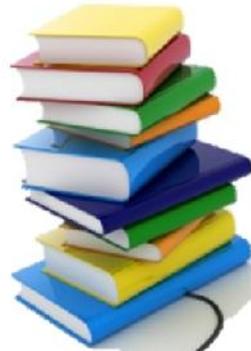


T	01/05	John 19
F		20
M	05/05	21
T		Acts 01
W		02
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M	12/05	05
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M	19/05	10
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M	26/05	15
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**THE NEW TESTAMENT
IN ONE YEAR**

*May : John 19
- Acts 19*

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THE NEW TESTAMENT IN ONE YEAR

Did you know there are 260 chapters in the New Testament? Did you also know that there are 260 weekdays in a year? This seemed like an opportunity too good to miss, so here at Newcraigs we're reading the whole New Testament throughout 2014, from Matthew to Revelation.

How you take part is up to you; you might read a chapter each morning before you start the day or go to work, or read together with your family around the dinner table. You might meet up with a few friends, once a week, to read and discuss that week's chapters, or catch up online during your lunch break.

What really matters is that we're listening to God, as he speaks to us through his Word. We want this to be as flexible as it can be. We don't want to stress you out by giving you another thing you "have to do", or make you feel guilty if you miss a day, but we hope that you can carve out some time this year for READ260. The aim is simple; to listen to God, as we read his Word together, and let him transform us.

Photo:
The Pantheon, Rome



During May we move from the Gospels to the book of Acts. Acts begins "In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach until the day he was taken up to heaven" (Acts 1:1-2). This book is Luke's sequel to his Gospel and his point is that, even though Jesus has ascended to the Father, he hasn't finished building his kingdom; in fact he's just getting started.

Acts 1:8 records a promise that unfolds throughout the rest of the book; Jesus will give his Spirit to his church and they will be his witnesses. With each successive chapter we see the church growing and the message spreading, beginning in Jerusalem and heading towards the furthest frontiers of the known world.

Acts

Chapter 2 opens with the fledgling church receiving the Holy Spirit, as Jesus promised. In an instant they're unrecognisable from the self-centred, unreliable group found in Luke's Gospel. Peter fearlessly declares to the crowd who gather that "God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah" (Acts 2:36) On that day we're told that about three thousand people became Christians. The church is growing.

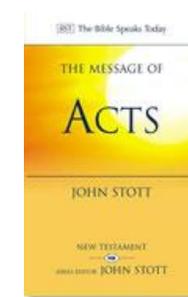
However, extraordinary growth, blessing and miracles are accompanied by opposition. Luke records imprisonment, beatings, threats and martyrdom. And it's at the death of Stephen that we see another marked expansion of Jesus' church. We're told that "On that day a great persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria."

Over the next few chapters the gospel reaches people from Samaria, Ethiopia and Italy. The promise that Jesus' church will be his witnesses "to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8) is being fulfilled. As the book progresses Luke focuses in on one church planter called Paul. In the face of severe persecution, God uses him to establish churches across modern day Turkey and Greece.

The book comes to a close with Paul under house arrest in Rome. We read that even here he "proclaimed the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 28:31).

In Acts we see the Lord Jesus at work, building his church, by his Spirit. What an encouragement to remember that we belong to the same church, that we have the same Spirit and that we serve the same Lord.

Helpful Resources



If you're looking for some help as you read through Acts, or you just want to know where to turn when you don't understand a passage, then I'd recommend The Message of Acts by John Stott. This is the best popular level commentary I've come across and as you should be

able to get hold of a copy for around ten pounds, it's worth every penny. Most editions also come with a study guide at the back, which would be great for group study.

*www.newcraigs.co.uk/online-bookstore