

April 20, 2022

New Testament – Acts

Interpretive Challenges with the book of Acts

(Questions from Duvall and Hays, *Grasping God's Word*, 292)

- How does Acts relate to the gospel of Luke?
- Is Acts merely a record of what happened (history), or does it also promote the Christian belief about God (theology)?
- Why did Luke write Acts, and how does its message relate to us?
- How did Luke organize Acts?
- Should we take Acts as normative or descriptive?

Luke + Acts Are One Story

- Both written to Theophilus (Luke 1:1-4 & Acts 1:1-2)
 - Theophilus was probably a new believer of high social standing who may have given Luke the money to publish the two books.
- The end of Luke overlaps with the beginning of Acts

Luke 24:49, 51-52- “And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high... While he blessed them, he parted from them and was carried up into heaven. And they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy.”	Acts 1:12; 2:2 “Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath’s journey away... And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting.”
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How is Acts Organized?

Acts 1:8 – “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

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1-12	The Christian Mission to Jews	Location
1	Preparation for Pentecost	In Jerusalem
2	Pentecost: The Coming of the Holy Spirit	
3-4	The Spirit Works through the Apostles	
5-6	Threats to the Church	
6-8	Stephen the First Martyr	In Judea and Samaria
8	Philip the Evangelist	
9	The Conversion of Paul	
9-11	The Ministry of Peter beyond Jerusalem	
11	Christianity Comes to Antioch	
12	The Gospel Spreads in Spite of Obstacles	
13-28	The Christian Mission to Gentiles	
13-14	Paul's First Missionary Journey	To the ends of the earth
15	The Jerusalem Council	
15-18	Paul's Second Missionary Journey	
18-21	Paul's Third Missionary Journey	
21-23	Paul's Witness in Jerusalem	
24-26	Paul's Witness in Caesarea	
27-28	Paul's Witness in Rome	

(Taken from Duvall and Hays, *Grasping God's Word*, 298)

Peter was the leading figure in _____.

Paul was the leading figure in _____.

Grasping the Message of Acts

What makes interpreting Acts, in a way, more difficult than interpreting the Gospels?

Is the book of Acts normative or descriptive in nature?

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Helpful guidelines to determine the difference between normative and descriptive:

1. Look for what Luke intended to communicate to his readers. What is the main purpose of the passage? "The intent of the author should take precedence over our own curiosity when looking for what is normative in Acts." – Duvall and Hays

Example: *Acts 8*

What are not the main reasons Luke wrote this chapter?

What are the main reasons Luke wrote this chapter?

2. Look for positive and negative examples in the characters of the story.

Are the sign gifts of the Spirit normative or descriptive? How do we know?

3. Look to other parts of Acts to clarify what is normative.

Is Acts 2:42-47 & 4:32-35 normative or descriptive? How do we know?

4. Look for repeated patterns and themes.

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Reflection For the Week:

Take Acts 6:1-7 through all five steps of the Interpretive Journey.

1. Grasp the text in their town. What did the text mean to the biblical audience?
2. Measure the width of the river to cross. What are the differences between the biblical audience and us?
3. Cross the principlizing bridge. What are the theological principles in this text?
4. Consult the biblical map. How does our theological principle fit with the rest of the Bible?
5. Grasp the text in our town. How should individual Christians today apply the theological principles in their lives?

Preparation For Next Week:

Watch Both – <https://www.desiringgod.org/labs/how-to-read-revelation> AND <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=atnP3JYO3qE&list=RDLV2FMut-ChooA&index=2>

Resources For Going Further:

Duvall, J. Scott and J. Daniel Hays. *Grasping God's Word: A Hands-On Approach to Reading, Interpreting, and Applying the Bible*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012.

Kostenberger, Andreas J. and Richard D. Patterson. *Invitation To Biblical Interpretation: Exploring the Hermeneutical Triad of History, Literature, and Theology*. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2011.

Vanhoozer, Kevin J. *Is There Meaning in This Text?: The Bible, The Reader, and the Morality or Literary Knowledge*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1998.