

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

1. Introduction
2. Acts 2: Pentecost
3. Acts 2: Peter's speech
4. Acts 6-7 Stephen
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1. INTRODUCTION TO THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

Sequence

- Observations and questions
- Distinctive features
- History?
- Date, authorship, location
- Layout of Acts
- Theological Themes

Observations and questions

- How do you find reading the Acts?
- Anything jump out at you?
- Questions?

Distinctive features

- Starts in Jerusalem and ends in Rome.
- Really the story of Peter and then Paul; Peter peters out.
- Large biblical theology of history, found chiefly in the speeches.
- About one third of Acts is made up of speeches.
- The break with Judaism and the inclusion of the Gentiles.
- The "we" passages in Acts.
- The vast number of characters.
- Certain scenes receive extensive treatment (Cornelius; the journey to Rome).
- Ends happily, but strangely without closure.

History?

- Paul Ricoeur: three kinds of historiography.
- Documentary History.
- Explanatory History.
- Poetic History.
- Marked by divine interventions.
- For example: Acts 16:6-10.
- So, a narrative of origins ("histoire de commencement").
- But also: geography, politics, Roman institutions, place names etc.
- Dionysius of Halicarnassus: 10 Rules for writing history (next slide).

Rules of historiography

1. A noble subject
2. Of use to the readers
3. Objectivity
4. Well-constructed
5. Adequate research
6. Selection of scenes and variety in narration
7. Chronological order
8. Liveliness in the story telling
9. Moderate use of topography

10. Creation of good speeches, bearing in mind characters and contexts

History?

- So, not a novel, nor biography, nor history, nor apologetics in the strict sense.
- Rather, narrative of origins, broadly historical and strongly apologetic, aimed at instructing the hearers / readers at the time of writing.

Date

- Earliest manuscript to come down to us
- Terminus a quo
- 62 AD Paul's arrest and arrival at Rome
- Terminus ad quem
- Earliest reference: 1 Clement? Justin? Irenaeus?
- Papyrus 75
- Papyrus 45
- Contents
- Date
- Provenance
- Definitely post 70 because he uses Mark; the destruction of Jerusalem is already a past event.
- Many scholars: 85-90 AD.
- Probably a good deal later, because.
- The author uses Josephus, so later than 93 AD.
- The author has access to the Pauline corpus.
- Early second century.
- Cf. Reaction to Jewish revolts in the Diaspora (115-117).
- Cf. Context of the Pastorals ("wolves", heresy, rejection of the OT, uneasy with the empire, yet no direct persecution).

Authorship

- Tradition puts much weight on the "we" passages
- This would exclude others mentioned in the third person, such Timothy, Barnabas, Silas, John Mark, and so forth.
- ...and so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and **Luke**, my fellow workers. (Philem 1:24)
- **Luke**, the beloved physician, and Demas greet you. (Col 4:14)
- Only **Luke** is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful in my ministry. (2 Tim 4:11)
- **KATA LOUKAN**
- But Mark was anonymous
- **Tradition** accepted this universally
- Patristic information is dubious
- The "**we**" passages
- But there are better explanations
- **Medical language**
- This hypothesis has been demolished
- The preface in Lk 1:1-4 points out that the author was not an eye-witness to the events he narrates.
- Differences with Paul.
- **Law**—NB Gal 3:19 and Acts 7:38, 53 (mediated by angels).
- **Angels**—in Paul negative (Rom 8:38; 1 Cor 6:3; 2Cor 12:7; Gal 1:8; 3:19); in Acts positive Lk 1:11-13, 30-38, 2:9; 9:26; 12:8; 15:10; 16:22; Acts 5:19; 8:26; 10:3; 27;3).
- **Eschatology**—Paul (short); Acts (extended).
- **Christology**—
- Paul (pre-existence); Acts (doesn't have pre-existence).

- Paul (Jesus' life is no kerygma); Acts (Jesus story *is* kerygma).
- Paul (Jesus' death is salvific); Luke (no soteriological value attributed).
- **Ecclesiology** –
- Paul (little formal structure); Acts (Spirit but also presbyters and structured leadership).
- Paul (an apostle!!!); Acts (Paul is *not* an apostle).
- Paul in Acts is subservient to the apostolic college in some contrast with Paul's own attitudes towards them.
- For all these reasons, the author of Luke-Acts, was not an eyewitness and not a companion of Paul.
- So who was the author?
- Well-educated.
- Well-travelled.
- Good Greek.
- At home in the upper middle class of the Hellenistic world.
- Admirer of Paul but does not share Paul's view of himself, has a very different theology and does not represent Paul's theology with accuracy.
- For convenience "Luke", but really unknown.

Location

- No consensus on location or audience
- Antioch?
- Ancient tradition holds Luke came from Antioch
- Peter and Paul were very active there
- Somewhere in the Aegean area linked to Paul?
- The writer does admire Paul, but does not belong to a Pauline school
- Even the Deutero-Paulines have a different view of Paul
- The author of Luke-Acts being together Peter and Paul
- Rome?
- Ancient tradition (e.g. Jerome) located the writing of Acts in Rome
- This could have arisen from Acts itself which *ends* in Rome
- Supporting arguments
- The Roman church began with strong links to Jerusalem and Jewish Christianity
- Paul wrote to them and eventually visited them
- Jewish-Gentile relations was a major concern on Rome
- Supporting indications.
- The size of the Jerusalem church would have been encouraging to the Roman one.
- Acts seems to presuppose the geography and weather of the western Mediterranean. E.g. the south wind brings heat, not the east wind of the Middle East (8:22-23, 33; 12:54-55); roofs are tiled not like the mud and straw of Palestinian houses (Lk 5:19); Luke always uses the term lake for the sea of Galilee (only to the locals was it a "sea").
- The narrative has constantly looked towards Rome and there it come to a close.
- Acts is influenced by Romans, esp. Rom 1:3-4. which portrays a Davidic Christology, rare in Paul but common in Acts.

Layout of Acts

- When writing the Gospel.
- Luke had Mark, Q and many "traditions" unique to him (L).
- When the Acts.
- The author had no documents like Mark or Q.
- The author did have the Pauline corpus.
- The author had no document quite like the Acts as a basis.
- Consequently, the author was much more free in Acts to structure the narrative in terms of his own priorities and goals

Preface	Lk 1:1-4
Part I: The time of Israel reaches its climax	Lk 1:5-2:52
Part II: The time of Jesus	Lk 3:1-Acts 1:26
Part II: The time of the Church	Acts 2:1-28:31
Transition to Part III	Acts 1
Petrine Christianity	
Jewish mission from Jerusalem to Antioch	Acts 2-12
Pauline Christianity	
Gentile mission from Antioch to Rome	Acts 13-28
Petrine Christianity	
Christian beginnings in Jerusalem	Acts 23:1-8:1
The church expands to Samaria and beyond	Acts 8:2-40
Conversion of St Paul	Acts 9:1-31
Key scenes	
Peter, the conversion of Cornelius, and the formation of the Antioch church	Acts 9:32-12:25
Pauline Christianity	
Gentile mission promoted from Antioch	Acts 13-14
Gentile mission confirmed in Jerusalem	Acts 15:1-35
Gentile mission climaxed in Rome (incorporating "Paul's passion narrative")	Acts 15:36-28:31
Paul's passion story	Acts 21:17-28:31

- Of course, things are not so simple!

Theological themes

- God the creator has a plan for universal history
- This plan may be found in Scripture (hence "according to Scripture" in Lk-Acts)
- The plan unfolds in three epochs
- The time of Israel: the kingdom of God *promised*
- The time of Jesus: the kingdom of God *present* in the life of Jesus
- The time of the Church: the king of God *proclaimed*
- The time of the Church is under the impulse and energy of the Holy Spirit
- The Holy Spirit in the life of the church
- The church in a non-Christian culture
- How to become a Christian
- The church as the continuation of the plan and purpose of God
- The relations of Christians to the secular world
- The unity of the one church