

Theology of Luke-Acts Notes

General Theology of Acts: Luke's agenda: The "orienting concern" of Jesus – (explain): the *presence* and *advancement* of the kingdom of God (note the bookend of Jesus/Paul).

Luke's order:

- Teaching of (resurrected) Jesus: topic is kingdom of God (bookends with Paul).
- Jesus's final instructions: wait for the Spirit; then, bear witness from Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, ends of earth.
- Ascension of Jesus with promised return.
- Waiting: gather for prayer/preparation, select a replacement for Judas.
- Pentecost: outpouring of Spirit from God through Jesus in fulfillment of prophecy; Jesus is the Lord, the Messiah, maybe even "our God"?

Luke's key theological themes:

Significance of Pentecost & the Holy Spirit for Acts 2:1-12: Pentecost (so what?):

- Check into the reference to the giving of the Law with the reference in Jubilees.
- The giving of the Law is accompanied by theophany (is this in Jubilees too?).

Ascension (so what?):

- A neglected doctrine in evangelicalism?
- Jesus is reigning as prophet, priest, and king.
- Within Judaism – is priest-king appropriate?
- For Luke, relation between earthly/heavenly Jesus?

Messiah who dispenses Spirit (so what?):

- With Judaism, is this significant?

What are the Messianic times supposed to be? (new earth? Kingdom?):

- What is the relation between new earth, new creation, and prophetic promises? Are there more "land" promises in Acts than meets the eye?

Acts 9 Series: Paul is converted (Acts 9:1-10)

- Background information
- Meaning of Jesus's words
- Nature of conversion – darkness/light/blindness in Luke

Paul is commissioned (Acts 9:11-19a)

- Ananias background
- Nature/Purpose of Paul's commission
- Receives the Holy Spirit (empowerment/full conversion)

Paul begins preaching

- Paul's message: "Son of God"; Jesus is the "Christ"
- Jerusalem church is suspicious
- Barnabas comes along to encourage

Adoniram Judson NOTES: Friends, Paul is not unique in this – it's true for every person (pastor, missionary, evangelist, anyone seeking to serve the Lord) – that the sustaining factor in serving Christ in whatever you are

doing, is not the results; it's not in accolades; it's not in fame; it's not in significance; it's in knowing Christ! That Jesus is enough.

Example of Anne/Adoniram Judson

- I want to introduce you briefly to some dead mentors of mine (everyone needs encouragement from dead friends and mentors). I want to introduce you to Adoniram and Anne Judson, the first protestant missionaries in the modern period to leave America for a foreign nation (Burma, today called Myanmar). They arrived in Burma in 1812. They didn't baptize their first convert until 1819 – 7 years! By 1822, 10 years in, there were 18 converts. But during these years they lost children and Anne herself would eventually die.
- What sustained them? The same thing as Paul: devotion to, love for, desire to be with, the Living Jesus Christ. Listen to Anne: *A little sacrifice for the cause of Christ is not worth naming; and I feel it a privilege, of which I am entirely undeserving, to have had it in my power to sacrifice my all for him who hesitated not to lay down his life for sinners.* – Anne (Nancy) Judson
- According to one of Judson's biographers, his life text was Eph. 3:17-19, a text where Paul extols about the love of Christ:
- *"The love of Christ!"* he says again and again, in his letters, *'the breadth and length and depth and height of the love of Christ!* If I had not felt certain that every additional trial was ordered by infinite love and mercy, I could not have survived my accumulated sufferings."*"* – F. W. Boreham on Judson's testimony
- Advising those interested in pursuing missions, Judson said:
- *"If any of you enter the Gospel ministry in this or other lands, let not your object be so much to 'do your duty' or even to 'save souls,' though these should have a place in your motives. [Instead let it be] to please the Lord Jesus. Let this be your ruling motive in all that you do."* – Adoniram Judson, address to Boardman Missionary Society
- At the close of another address to college students, Judson wrote: *"Jesus loves you; how can you avoid loving him with all your heart, and mind, and strength? You cannot hesitate to be and to do all that he requires at any and every conceivable cost."* – Adoniram Judson, address to students at Madison University, 1845.
- Finally, on his death bed, Judson on his death bed: "Later, when confined to his berth, he would talk of nothing else. 'Oh, the love of Christ! *The love of Christ!*' he would murmur, his eye kindling with enthusiasm and the tears chasing each other down his cheeks. *The love of Christ — its breadth and length and depth and height —* we cannot comprehend it now — but what a study for eternity!" And, even after he had lost the power of speech, his lips still framed in silence the familiar syllables *'The love of Christ! The love of Christ!'*" - F. W. Boreham on Judson's death
- "O the love of Christ" – this and this alone sustains us. There is no other foundation on which we can stand, no greater agenda to give ourselves to, and no other purpose for living life – with all its trials, ups and downs, heartaches, and sorrows. If it is not for Christ and because of Christ, what hope do we have?

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Summary: Why Acts? The book of Acts reminds believers that *God's ultimate plan* is to spread His *global kingdom* by exalting Jesus as Christ/Lord through a *Spirit-empowered church*.

Jesus rises from the dead (Acts 1:1-5)

Jesus commissions the Apostles (Acts 1:6-8)

Jesus ascends to the right hand of God as Messiah-Lord (Acts 1:9-11)

God's pours out His Spirit through Jesus (Ezekiel 36:26-27; Acts 2:29-36; 2:38-39; 2:42-47)

The gospel of Jesus invites persecution (Acts 13:44-52)

Crisis: what is the gospel? (Acts 15:12-21)

The gospel goes to Europe (Acts 16:8-10)

Application: So what?

You have a *Savior to trust*

You have a *Calling to pursue*

You have a *Future to anticipate*

Question for Small Groups:

- 1) What is the ultimate plan God has for His church in Acts?
- 2) In what ways is Christ exalted (made known) throughout Acts? How does Acts help you to find ways to exalt Jesus in your own life?
- 3) How does the Holy Spirit "empower" the church in Acts? How is the Holy Spirit at work in your own life? What does being a "witness" look like in your life?
- 4) How does Acts help shape your perspective on what God is up to in the world today?