

❖ Other Voices ❖

To many persons this book [of Acts] is so little known, both it and its author, that they are not even aware that there is such a book in existence. For this reason especially I have taken this narrative for my subject, that I may draw to it such as do not know it, and not let such a treasure as this remain hidden out of sight. For indeed it may profit us no less than even the Gospels; so replete is it with Christian wisdom and sound doctrine, especially in what is said concerning the Holy Ghost.

JOHN CHRYSOSTOM (C . 3 4 7 - 4 0 7) , *Homily I on Acts 1:1-2*

A canon which comprised only the four Gospels and the Pauline Epistles would have been at best an edifice of two wings without the central structure [of the book of Acts], and therefore incomplete and uninhabitable.

ADOLF VON HARNACK (1 8 5 1 - 1 9 3 0) , *History of Dogma* (1 8 9 6)

Where, within eighty pages, will be found such a varied series of exciting events – trials, persecutions, escapes, martyrdoms, voyages, shipwrecks, rescues – set in that amazing panorama of the ancient world – Jerusalem, Antioch, Philippi, Corinth, Athens, Ephesus, Rome? And with such scenery and settings – temples, courts, prisons, deserts, ships, barracks, theaters? Has any opera such variety? A bewildering range of scenes and actions (and of speeches) passes before the eye of the historian. And in all of them he sees the providential hand that has made and guided this great movement for the salvation of mankind.

E . J . GOODSPEED (1 8 7 1 - 1 9 6 2) , *An Introduction to the New Testament* (1 9 3 7)

Acts is not mere history written to report like a newspaper the events of those early days of the church. Nor is Acts but an interesting story to divert our attentions from the mundane. Nor is Acts merely a list of theological assertions designed to appeal only to our intellect and volition. Nor is Acts only a prequel to the heights of Paul's writing. Nor is Acts only a sequel to Luke's ministry. Acts is history, literature, and theology, to be sure. Yet Acts is also a call to us, to today's followers of Jesus Christ.

Acts calls us to enter God's family and to join the work of God in the world. Acts declares that the presence of Jesus and the empowering of the Holy Spirit continue unabated wherever and whenever the disciples of Christ gather. Acts recounts how God gathered a people from the many peoples of the world. Acts narrates how the earliest church dealt with the

many diversities of the ancient world. In other words, Acts speaks to many of our contemporary questions through the victories and travails of the earliest church. Yet in the end, God is the character which shines most brightly in Acts. God has acted. God is acting. God will continue to act. That is truly good news, fit to be proclaimed.

ERIC BARRETO, "PREACHING ACTS," *WorkingPreacher.org*
(APRIL 5, 2011)

The Acts, written by Luke as an epilogue to his gospel to show what Jesus 'continued to do and to teach through the Holy Spirit,' is the greatest text-book on missions in existence. Here we see the widening circles by which Christianity spread out from Jerusalem to Rome, the enlarging conceptions wrought in the minds of Christian believers regarding the scope of the gospel, the strategy of occupation devised by master missionaries, and the eternal conflict with evil which the gospel meets in establishing its worldwide sway. Here we find the substance of the missionary message that has power to win the world, —Jesus Christ, Crucified and Risen from the Dead.

HELEN BARRETT MONTGOMERY, *The Bible and Missions* (1920)

Luke shows the church in Acts continuing the prophetic witness of Jesus in the Gospel....The part of the prophetic message that distinguishes the church from Jesus is the proclamation of Jesus as the prophet whom God has raised from the dead and exalted to his right hand. ...The resurrection of Jesus is the source of the gift of the Holy Spirit that empowers his followers and inaugurates a new age. The reality of the resurrection runs through all the speeches of Acts, from Peter's first sermon at Pentecost to Paul's last defense before Agrippa.

LUKE TIMOTHY JOHNSON, *Prophetic Jesus, Prophetic Church: The Challenge of Luke-Acts to Contemporary Christians* (2011)

Repeatedly, Luke demonstrates that human beings do not on their own arrive at a right understanding of Jesus' identity. Instead, they learn it through Scripture, the reading and interpretation of which play a significant role in the church's witness (see esp. Acts 13:15; 15:16-17; 17:2). They learn through instruction within the community, both from apostles and from others (Acts 2:42; 18:24-26; 28:31). That is to say, humans are instructed about the identity of Jesus by God, by the risen Jesus, and by the Spirit. As Jesus himself rejoices, God has hidden insight from those who presume to be wise and understanding and has revealed it to the children (Luke 10:21-22).

BEVERLY ROBERTS GAVENTA, "LEARNING AND RELEARNING THE IDENTITY OF JESUS FROM LUKE - ACTS," *Seeking the Identity of Jesus: A Pilgrimage* (2008)