

The Book of Acts

Luke to Theophilus Volume 2

The book of Acts is historical narrative. It has the title “Acts of the Apostles” because it documents the history of apostolic action that fulfilled the promise of Jesus to build His church on Peter (representative of all the apostles). The book narrates how the apostolic gospel of Jesus shifted from “only the house of Israel” (Mat. 10) to “all nations” (Mat.28) by the gift (baptism) of the Spirit to the church empowering commissioned witnesses as Jesus promised (Jn. 14.26; 15.26-27; 16.13). Luke’s first volume to Theophilus records the same promise:

Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures,⁴⁶ and said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead,⁴⁷ and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.⁴⁸ You are witnesses of these things.⁴⁹ 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” (Lk. 24.45-48).

Volume 2 of Luke to Theophilus picks up where Volume 1 left off:

In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach,² until the day when he was taken up, after he had given commands through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen.³ To them he presented himself alive after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God.⁴ And while staying with them he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, “you heard from me;⁵ for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.”

1. From Acts 1.1 & 5, what different and expanded title might we give to book 2? If you add the ideas from Luke 24.47, what might the title look like then?
2. What is it about the book of Acts that makes it difficult to apply its teaching to our experience here and now? Hint: think about its genre and think about its uniqueness.
3. Even though it is difficult to apply, why can we be sure that it is applicable in light of 1 Corinthians 10.11, Romans 15.4, and 2 Timothy 3.16 regarding genre, and in light of Ephesians 2.20 regarding uniqueness? (Note: we must read Acts in light of Scripture as a whole, as we must read any given text)
4. Reading theological narrative, why is it a good question to ask, “What is God’s judgment regarding the events?” and why is asking this question not a complete solution to the application question, though a partial one? In this light, what does it mean to say that we must apply the teaching of Acts *mutatis mutandis* to get from the then and there to the here and now? How might we work this out regarding the account of the snatching away of Philip (**And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him.**³⁹ **And when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord carried Philip away, and the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way rejoicing.**⁴⁰ **But Philip found himself at Azotus, and as he passed through he preached the gospel to all the towns until he came to Caesarea** 8.38-40)?
5. What outline of structure of the entire book of Acts do we get from Acts 1.8? Since the third section of Acts records the actions of Paul mainly, how does Acts 9.15 help us outline major topics of that section?
6. What perspective can we gain on the theme of Luke-Acts from the difference of Volume 1 (Luke) in its movement *toward* Jerusalem from Volume 2 (Acts) with its movement *away from* Jerusalem?
7. Acts ends rather abruptly, at least some think so (cf. 28.14-31); there is no closure as to what happened to Paul, the main character of the third section of the book. Is it abrupt? What impressions does the ending make on our grasp of the things accomplished by Jesus (Lk. 1) and spread everywhere (Acts 28)?