

Introduction to Acts - Part 1

EMC Wednesday Night Bible Study - 9-7-16

Introduction

Primary resource - *The Message of Acts*, *The Bible Speaks Today*, by John Stott

- Billy Graham after Stott's death (2011) - "The evangelical world has lost one of its greatest spokesmen, and I have lost one of my close personal friends and advisors."
- Methodology and interpretive approach: Apply the text of Acts to us today without manipulating it to suit our own preconceived notions.
 - Some 'events' are _____ (resurrection, ascension, Pentecost, etc)
 - Exercise caution in reading into the narratives
 - Local church elections by drawing lots? (1:23-26)
 - Hold all our possessions as common? (2:44-45; 4:32 ff.)
 - All conversion experiences include bright light and an audible voice? (9:3 ff.)
 - Goal: determine what is being taught within its _____ context, then in what the _____ says elsewhere, then within the broader context of _____ as a whole.
- Stott's aim: Original meaning + its contemporary _____
 - Word of God = relevant, but not purely _____
 - Proper order: Historical/Scriptural context, history of interpretation, THEN what does it mean "to me"
 - 2 Tim. 2:15 - "rightly dividing the word of truth"

The goal of Bible study

- To _____ (Jeremiah 31:10)
- To _____ (1 Sam 3:9)
- To _____ (Luke 11:28)

The Value of Acts

_____ record

- See Appendix I - A Chronological Table
- Controversy:
 - 18th and early 19th C.s - radical biblical criticism (F.C. Baur and the Tubingen School) - Acts = composition of a 2nd century anonymous author with unreliable historical data.
 - End of the 19th C. conservative biblical scholarship supported the historical reliability and Lucan authorship of Acts.
 - Sir William Ramsey - archaeological findings
 - A.N. Sherwin-White - portrayal of Roman dynamics
 - Martin Hengel - historical reliability
 - F.F Bruce (1954), I. Howard Marshall (1980), Richard Longenecker (1981), and Colin Hemer (1989)

Contemporary _____

- Comparisons
- Recapturing vs. romanticizing
- Follow their _____ while learning from their _____

_____ relevance

- Acts addresses many of the same questions we face today: The baptism of the Spirit; charismatic gifts, signs, and wonders; the economic sharing of the Christian community; church discipline; diversity of ministries; Christian conversion; racial prejudice; missionary principles; cost of Christian unity; motives and methods of evangelism; the call to suffer for Christ; relationship between church and state; divine providence; etc.

Introduction to Luke

Authorship of Acts - unanimously _____ in the early church

- Both the gospel and Acts (circa 62 AD) - a continuous pair
 - Addressed to Theophilus
 - Same literary Greek style
- Assumed to be a _____ (Colossians 4:10-11, 14)

Purpose in writing

- Luke as _____
 - Researching and laying out a truthful account (Luke 1:1-4 - preface to BOTH)
 - “fulfilled” - not _____ events, but things foretold from the OT
 - “eyewitness reports...from early disciples” - apostolic witness
 - “carefully investigated” - he did not receive this tradition without _____
 - “many people have set out to write accounts...I also have decided to write an **accurate** account” - Tradition > investigation > writing
 - The Scriptures = accurate record of *kerygma* - the irreducible essence of Christian apostolic preaching
 - “you can be certain of the truth” - ground of Christian faith and assurance.
 - Qualifications for writing history:
 - An educated _____ (Col. 4:14)

A CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE*

<i>Acts narrative</i>	<i>Roman Empire</i>						
AD 30	AD 14-37	The crucifixion, resurrection and ascension of Jesus (1:1-11)	Tiberius, emperor	52-55	Paul in Ephesus (19:1 - 20:1a)	52-59	Felix, procurator of Judea
32, 33	26-36	Pentecost (2:1-41)	Pontius Pilate, procurator of Judea	55-56	Paul in Macedonia (20:1b-2a)	54-68	Nero, emperor
35 or 36		Stephen is stoned (7:54-60); Saul is converted (9:1-19)		56-57	Paul winters in Corinth (20:2b-3a)		
43 or 44	37-41	Paul's first visit to Jerusalem (9:26-28; Gal. 1:18-20)	Caligula, emperor	57	The voyage to Jerusalem, via Macedonia, Troas and Miletus (20:3b - 21:17)		
46 or 47	41-44	James the apostle is executed (12:1-2)	Herod Agrippa I, king of Judea	57-59	Paul is arrested in Jerusalem (21:27-36) and tried before Felix (24:1-22)		
47, 48	41-54	Paul's second visit to Jerusalem (11:27-30; Gal. 2:1-10)	Claudius, emperor	59	Paul's Caesarean imprisonment (23:23 - 24:27)		
49	45-47	The first missionary journey (13 - 14)	Famine in Judea	59-60	Paul is tried before Festus and Agrippa (25:6 - 26:32)	59-61	Festus, procurator of Judea
50-52	49	The Council of Jerusalem (15:1-30)	Claudius expels Jews from Rome	60-62	The voyage to Rome (27:1 - 28:16)		
52	50-c. 93	The second missionary journey begins (15:36ff.)	Herod Agrippa II, tetrarch of Northern territory	64	Paul's Roman imprisonment (28:16ff.)	64	Nero begins persecution of Christians
	51-52	Paul in Corinth (18:1-18a)	Gallio, proconsul of Achaia		The probable martyrdoms of Peter and Paul in Rome	70	Fall of Jerusalem
		Paul returns to Syrian Antioch via Ephesus and Caesarea (18:18b-22)					
		The third missionary journey begins (18:23ff.)					

(* Based on the work of Colin Hemer, pp. 159-175 and 251-270, and used by permission.)